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## The Unknown Soldier in the 21st Century: War Commemoration in Contemporary Canadian Cultural Production

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English

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## Abstract

Over the past two decades, expressions of Canadian national identity in cultural production have become increasingly militarized. This is particularly noticeable since the late 1990s in the commemorative works that have been created, renovated, or re-inscribed in Canada or in important Canadian international sites such as the Vimy Memorial in France. An integral component to this militarization is the paradoxical figure of the Unknown Soldier, both a man and a symbol, known and unknown, individualized and universal. Despite its origins in Europe after the First World War, the Unknown Soldier Memorial tradition has been reinvigorated in a Canadian context in the twenty-first century resulting in an elevation of white masculine heroism while curtailing criticism of military praxis. Its contradictory nature provides an informative filter through which to view both recent reflections and commemorations of the First World War and Canada's recent military role in Afghanistan.

In this dissertation, I examine selected works by Jane Urquhart, Jack Hodgins, and Joseph Boyden in relation to their exploration of war commemoration. Each chapter analyzes a novel that addresses war and its commemorative impact in relation to other forms of comparable and relevant cultural production. In Chapter 1 I examine the connections between Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers* and the new Canadian War Museum, illustrating how both use the contradiction of the Unknown Soldier to articulate the twenty-first century Canadian experience of war loss. Chapter 2 evaluates Hodgins's *Broken Ground* and Paul Gross's film *Passchendaele* in terms of the works' pedagogical focus and interrogation of Canada's martial founding myths. Chapter 3 addresses Boyden's *Three Day Road* and commemorative approaches that are inclusive of Indigenous experiences. Chapter 4

considers Urquhart's *Sanctuary Line* in relation to the Highway of Heroes phenomenon, evaluating the continued relevance of the Unknown Soldier in commemorating those lost in contemporary warfare.

**Keywords**

Unknown Soldier, First World War, war in Afghanistan, Canada, nationalism, commemoration, race, gender, education, war writing, Paul Gross, Nichola Goddard, Jane Urquhart, Jack Hodgins, Joseph Boyden.

## **Acknowledgments**

Sincere thanks to the many people who helped me during my time in the PhD program. First and foremost, thank you to my supervisor, Dr. Manina Jones, for working with me and helping me develop into a better scholar and better writer. Your unwavering support and your generosity with both your time and expertise made a considerable difference in my work. Perhaps most importantly, your acceptance and encouragement helped me push through the most difficult aspects of this process. Thank you to my second reader, Dr. Pauline Wakeham. Your enthusiasm for my work and your willingness to share your knowledge helped improve this project and my writing. You both put in a tremendous amount of time and effort to help me see this through and I am grateful for it.

My time at Western was enriched by the support of many excellent professionals working in the English Department and greater university community. I would like to thank Leanne Trask and Vivian Foglton for their incredible hard work and friendly, timely reminders. My thanks go out to Lee Ann McKivor, Terri L. Tomchick-Condon, and Debbie Sims who provided invaluable advice, assistance, and much appreciated behind-the-scenes work that allowed my project to progress.

I would like to thank the members of my examination committee, Neta Gordon, Alison Lee, Donna Pennee, and Jonathan Vance, for their participation in the examination process and their sincere engagement with my work.

I would like to thank Kent Monkman and Joanne Tod for granting me permission to reproduce their artwork in this dissertation. I would like to thank Marlee Choo for her efforts and Harbourfront Centre for granting me permission to use copyrighted material in this project as well. Many thanks to Susan Ross for her quick responses and timely assistance.

Thank you to the Canadian War Museum for allowing me to include photos I took at the CWM in this dissertation.

My academic adventure began in earnest at the University of Ottawa and my time there nurtured my interest in these topics; especially fruitful were the opportunities I had to learn from Dr. Betsey Baldwin, Dr. Tom Allen, Dr. Victoria Burke, and Dr. Craig Gordon.

A most sincere thank you to the friends and colleagues I met have along the way. It is my great fortune to have maintained connections to some truly terrific people I met during my time in Ottawa, especially Brenda Dunn, Holly Warren, Zac Billard, Phil McKnight, and Bryan Rogers. You have been generous with your knowledge, expertise, and time. It has been a lot of fun having you by my side. Another most sincere thank you to those I met during my time in London, especially Andre Cormier, David Drysdale, Phil Glennie, David Hickey, Jenna Hunnef, Raj Kapila, Erica Leighton, Tina Northrup, Stephanie Oliver, Sarah Pesce, Stephanie Rade, Alicia Robinet, and Tara Tobler. I miss our movie nights and hangouts, and continue to appreciate your acceptance, kindness, and hospitality. To the friends I have met through the hockey world, especially Nate Brown, Erika, Zoë Hayden, Clare Hutchinson, Atif Kukaswadia, Christy “Babs” Maggio, Luke Peristy, Peter Raaymakers, James Romanuk, Joanna Rozanski, and Yahong: you have helped me in more ways than I can count and have helped me find my voice. I can’t imagine this process without you.

These acknowledgments would be incomplete without mentioning the incredible support I have received from my family. Thank you to my grandparents, Joe and Maria Tavares and John and Irene Lubowitz, and to my extended family. I wish all of you could be here to see this project concluded, but I carry your love and support with me each day. To my aunt, Virginia Mair: your generosity has made an enormous difference in my academic life.

Thank you to Mom, Dad, and my siblings, Liz, Terry, Audrey, and Giancarlo Irwin, I will be forever grateful for your support and love. You were my first teachers and set me on a course of lifelong learning. You never tried to direct my intellectual curiosity or my studies to a path you preferred and deemed more worthy, choosing instead to let me chart my own course. You have helped me unwind and enjoy my life during the dissertation process, and for that I indebted to you. Simply put, I could not have done this without the six of you.

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## Introduction

The landscape of memorialization has changed in Canada. In the spring of 2000, the federal government created a Canadian Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, situated on the site of the National War Memorial (1939) in Ottawa. The soldier, taken from a cemetery near Vimy Ridge, lies in a sarcophagus modelled after the altar at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France (unveiled in 1936). While Canada's thousands of war dead with no known graves have, since the end of the First World War, been represented by the Unknown Soldier resting in Westminster Abbey, in London, England, the ceremony in Ottawa in 2000 ushered in a period of renewed interest in, and awareness of, how the national consciousness shapes commemoration of war losses in Canada.

Since the First World War, the Unknown Soldier has been a complicated symbol of the cost of war, in terms of war's toll on human life and on the spirit and resources of the nation. The figure's complexity allows for the Unknown Soldier to continue to be used by successive federal governments as a contemporary commemorative symbol. The four novels in this study – Jack Hodgins's *Broken Ground* (1998), Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* (2005), and Jane Urquhart's two works, *The Stone Carvers* (2001), and *Sanctuary Line* (2010) – have been chosen because they challenge the twenty-first century repurposing of the Unknown Soldier that has occurred in forms of both official and unofficial commemorative cultural production in Canada. The three authors in this study interrogate the Unknown Soldier's pervasive hold on the nation's war commemoration. At its heart, the memorial is a type of metonymic remembrance. Unknown Soldier memorials located in the capitals of First World War combatant nations

use the remains of one unidentifiable soldier as a stand-in for thousands of soldiers who were killed and cannot be identified. Further, the Unknown Soldier became a metonym for the horrors of war in civilian understanding (Wittman 3). This creates the fundamental paradox of the Unknown Soldier Memorial as both the grave of an individual soldier and a symbolic grave to thousands. It is at once an individual but also many. In this way, the Unknown Soldier recalls the “radically ambiguous” nationalism literary scholar Jonathan Kertzer describes: “It presents itself as both universal and unique, natural and artificial, ancient and modern. It encourages diversity but insists on homogeneity” (8). Since the First World War, technological advancements have changed the nature of anonymity on the battlefield and in memorial culture. Canadians have seen a dramatic decrease in wartime casualties since the First World War, resulting in a different scale of loss. These two factors have led to a public individualization of war loss at the same time the Canadian government reinvests and utilizes the Unknown Soldier as part of its commemoration of Canada’s casualties of the war in Afghanistan, a war in which Canada participated from 2001 until 2014.

Both a representation of the human body as well as of the body of the nation (Wittman 3), the memorial has been altered in Canada by the needs of a maturing nation. The Unknown Soldier was always a signifier for all soldiers who died anonymously in war but remains relevant despite technological advancements that make it much more difficult for military casualties to remain unidentified. A century on from its introduction, the paradoxical tension at the heart of the Unknown Soldier is most keenly felt between the universal and individual aspects of the figure. More recently, the tendency to individualize war loss has been most clearly seen by the public sharing of personal loss.

Intimate details about each Canadian soldier lost in Afghanistan help create a litany of characteristics of the typical Canadian soldier.<sup>1</sup> Archetypal casualties have emerged in this process and become contemporary signifiers of all military casualties, such as Canadian Forces Captain Nichola Goddard, killed in action in 2006, who will be discussed in Chapter 4. I will show that these public, personal depictions obscure certain realities about soldiers and the military more broadly for the sake of creating a contemporary, universal expression of martial value and loss in Canada, leaving the soldier in question just as unknown as the unidentified remains of the original Unknown Soldier.

Historian Jay Winter's description of a similar Australian repatriation seven years prior, in 1993, is transferrable to the Canadian context. Australians were "no longer satisfied with the 'collective memory' attached to the British unknown soldier buried in Westminster Abbey, who might well have been Australian; no one knows" (Winter, *Remembering* 155). For the former colony, it had become important to make that ubiquitous symbol of the British Empire's loss during the First World War national and to have that sacred ground<sup>2</sup> be on national soil. Winter believes that as populations age

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<sup>1</sup> The dead we often characterized as loving and caring spouses and parents, exceptional and selfless Canadians ("3 Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan", Downs et al.). Often the dedication and patriotism of soldiers who died while serving in Afghanistan is expressed through loyalty to specific hockey teams or to the game itself ("Calgary soldier", "3 Canadian soldiers killed by a roadside bomb", McArthur et al.). Perhaps most significantly, the deceased soldier's commitment and belief in Canada's mission in Afghanistan is stressed ("Canadian soldier killed", Chase "Cpl. Kenneth", Hawthorn). What these personal details shared by friends and family create are conventional depictions of Canadian soldiers that resonate with Canadian civilians and reflected Canadian traditions and pastimes. Emphasizing that a soldier who died while serving their country was committed to that cause underscores that such commitment should also be conventional.

<sup>2</sup> The British Tomb of the Unknown Warrior is located in Westminster Abbey in London and his body was reinterred in the Abbey on November 11, 1920, the same day the French Unknown Soldier was reinterred in Paris (Wittman 3). For many in the British Empire, including in Canada, the great losses of the First World War were read as heroic Christian sacrifice (Vance, *Death* 36). The soldiers were Christ-like

and patterns of immigration and emigration shift, so too does a changing population shift the nation's collective memory. According to Winter, this results frequently in the "recasting of acts of remembrance into more discrete, distinctive national forms" (155). With the First World War moving from memory to history in the past two decades as the last remaining survivors of the war have died, it became important in Australia to recast traditional symbols of sacrifice from that conflict as national, instead of continuing an outdated association with empire.

Repatriating the body of an anonymous Canadian soldier ensured that the public memory of the First World War was registered in terms that were noticeably national. This soldier's return home included a ceremony at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France before his remains boarded a military aircraft to Canada – a precursor to the Afghanistan ramp ceremonies<sup>3</sup> that would begin two years later for contemporary war dead. The First World War resulted in the creation of vast military cemeteries in Europe in which the Canadian dead were buried. Left without sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers to bury in Canada, Canadians established memorial traditions at the local and national level, which reflected not just a national mourning but

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crusaders marking both the ground where soldiers fell and their final resting spots as sacred as "the Western Front had become a Holy Land" (Vance, *Death* 56). The sacred and memorial culture became entwined as "pilgrims" visited battlefields, cemeteries, and memorials; "Vimy Ridge became a new Mecca or Canterbury; it was a magnet to the faithful, who made the journey in the same spirit of piety that had animated the soldiers" (60).

<sup>3</sup> Afghanistan ramp ceremonies were the ceremonial send-offs fallen Canadian soldiers received at Kandahar Air Field during Canada's mission in Afghanistan. Those gathered for the ceremony would include service people from several nations (primarily the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Afghanistan) and would feature an honour guard to watch pallbearers walk the casket or caskets of the fallen up ramps and into cargo planes for the journey home.

a justification of the cause of war.<sup>4</sup> The Second World War and the Korean War mirrored the memorial conditions of the First World War (the dead remaining overseas), allowing for a relatively seamless merger of commemorative activity. The repatriation of the Canadian Unknown Soldier was a break from more than eighty years of tradition regarding Canada's war casualties but both created continuity with established commemorative traditions and spoke to the contemporary moment. The repatriation of the Canadian Unknown Soldier was in the national consciousness when another generation of Canadians died in war during the recent war in Afghanistan. The desire to bring home the Canadian Unknown Soldier and model contemporary ceremonies for Canadian war dead on that repatriation illustrates the type of shift Winter classified in regards to Australia.

The Unknown Soldier is part of the material culture of war, and the meaning of the physical space it inhabits has changed over time. As British anthropologist and archeologist Nicholas J. Saunders indicates, cenotaphs are sites of transition: "Symbolic empty tombs (cenotaphs) are a material focus for changing relationships between the living and the dead in a cross-generational interplay of past and present" (6). Saunders's

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<sup>4</sup> In his chapter "If Ye Break Faith," in *Death So Noble: Meaning, Memory, and the First World War* (1997), historian Jonathan Vance indicates the interwar years were a period in keeping with the tone of John McCrae's celebrated poem, "In Flanders Fields": "Many Canadians accepted the poet's advice, and the interwar era saw a burst of memorialization that was unparalleled in the nation's history" (202). These memorials took many forms, such as street and town names, renaming of landmarks such as mountains, naming of children in honour of battles or famous figures, and of course, the ever-present civic memorials and cenotaphs (201-205). As Vance writes, "In this way, the act of commemoration stood as public affirmation of the people's desire to keep the faith: the erection of a memorial was a tangible sign of the community's determination to remember the fallen and, by extension, the values for which they had died. In many cases, the sentiment was expressed through implicit or explicit references to 'In Flanders Fields'" (210). Nationally, the Armistice Day ceremony served to further underscore the message of memorials in towns and cities. Vance states that before the Second World War, Remembrance Day had come to commemorate "the version of the war that existed in Canada's collective memory. In short it became a public statement of the myth of Canada's war" (216). The myth of the war that was being remembered and commemorated and was that of a just war and emergence of a nation (216).

extensive, six-year anthropological study on the material culture of the First World War, which produced three separate books,<sup>5</sup> focuses on “the physical and symbolic worlds” created by war and the impact of technology on material objects in various combatant nations (5). His focus on material culture is applicable to discussions of commemoration that are distinctly national. Saunders suggests that many objects of war (bullets, vehicles,

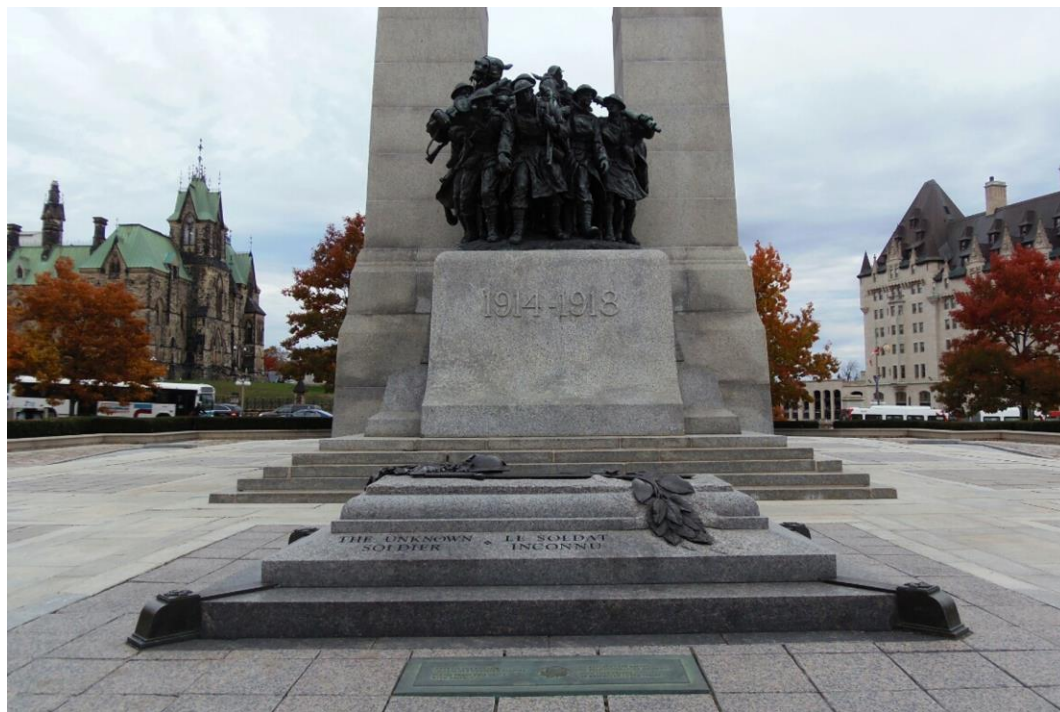


Figure I.1: Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, pictured in front of the National War Memorial, Ottawa. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz

battlefield landscapes) “survive as expressions of ‘war beyond conflict’, revitalising meanings and creating new engagements between people and things” (6). Such objects become part of the memorial landscape of communities and nations; military vehicles are adorned with plaques and placed in parks or in front of government buildings and serve

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<sup>5</sup> Saunders’s works on the material culture of the First World War include *Trench Art: Materialities and Memories of War* (2003), *Trench Art: Lost Worlds of the Great War*, with Dominiek Dendooven (2004), and an edited work, *Matters of Conflict* (2004).

as a reminder of past conflicts, victories, and losses. No longer just instruments of war, these objects generate new discussion between object and viewer about war beyond the object's original purpose. Objects such as cenotaphs go through a similar transition over time and become the focal point for new confrontations with war and its repercussions, reflecting shifting attitudes toward conflict and spirituality (6). The memorial spaces used to commemorate war are fluid, subject to change, and at times insufficient in addressing the needs of veterans, mourners, and the nation.

The repatriation of the Unknown Soldier to Canada in 2000 illustrates this fluidity. The construction of the Canadian Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the accompanying ceremony signalled a liminal moment in our national understanding of war itself: coming at the beginning of the first decade of a new century, it marked perhaps the last time the nation would bury an "unknown" soldier. Technical advancements in military records, including the inclusion of dental and DNA records, and military procedure (double dog tags, returning the fallen immediately to home soil) have greatly reduced the likelihood of unidentified military remains in this country.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the public awareness of and participation in the individual mourning of each Canadian soldier lost in Afghanistan, including knowledge of each soldier's name, signals a new kind of commemorative experience in Canadian society. Despite the fact that the Canadian military no longer experiences unknown casualties during war, the Unknown Soldier still has symbolic importance. The Canadian Unknown Soldier's repatriation ceremony provided the essential signposts for official military commemoration in Canada in the first two decades of the new century. An "invented

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<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, unknown casualties of war still exist, especially in regards to civilian war casualties.



tradition” in historian Eric Hobsbawm’s sense, the ceremonies that were part of the Unknown Soldier’s repatriation quickly became part of the standard protocol for commemorating war dead in Canada. Hobsbawm defines “invented tradition” as “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or



Figure I.2: Members of the public lay poppies and personal mementos on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Remembrance Day 2016, Ottawa. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz

symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (1). As I will illustrate, from the late 1990s, when the war memorial site was being re-envisioned, to the present day, a variety of institutions and individuals established an “invented tradition” in Canada as it relates to the reshaping of memorial practices. Traditions such as laying poppies and Canadian flags on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, now codified, are more recent ceremonial additions to the memorial landscape. These traditions helped normalize the dramatic increase in Canadian military casualties, beginning in 2006.

This normalizing process has also been termed “the Vimy Effect”. When former Chief of the Defence Staff Rick Hillier coined the phrase “the Vimy Effect” he was suggesting that the success of the Canadian Expeditionary Force during that specific First World War battle resulted in increased international relevance for the nation and was an example for the current Canadian Forces to emulate (Caldwell).<sup>7</sup> However, the Vimy Effect has also been used to describe more generally how Canada’s military role and casualties in Afghanistan have been normalized through renewed commemorative practices. Journalist Noah Richler discusses this process in his book *What We Talk About When We Talk About War* (2012), suggesting that

it was the new emphasis on ritual, the idea of the hero and the country’s military history that made the Forces’ new ascendancy possible. Although the change was politically led, journalists as well as academics, contributing regularly to the editorial pages of Canadian newspapers, played their own significant role. The changes in the way that the country has commemorated Remembrance Day over the course of the last ten years, more so the manner in which they have been reported, provide a benchmark of altered social attitudes (and of others that were imposed), though it is the extolling of the story of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and its troops’ performance in the First World War that is the most accurate barometer of the country’s turn-of-the-century passage.

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<sup>7</sup> Rick Hillier on the “Vimy Effect”: “They [Canadian soldiers who fought at Vimy] learned the lessons of the other countries that had tried to go up the Ridge. They empowered their soldiers and their junior leaders. Ninety-one years later, that has strategic implications for Canada and continues to shape our nation on and off the battlefield” (qtd. in Caldwell).

A curtailed recollection of Canadian military history of the First World War provided, from 2001, expedient means of eradicating the peacekeeping myth that had lain at the root of the Canadian public persona for so long. As a catalyst of national revisionism and of patriotic fervour, the story of the First World War was so useful that its influence would come, in time, to be known as the “Vimy Effect”. (69-70)

This effort emphasizes both the foundational importance the First World War is still granted today and the necessity of martial commemoration to ensuring that national mythology is viewed through a lens of military achievement.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, it is hardly surprising that efforts to commemorate Canada’s role in Afghanistan were given significant attention.

The lasting images in Canadian media of more than a decade of Canada at war in Afghanistan<sup>9</sup> were not images of war and violence, nor images of peaceful interactions

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<sup>8</sup> The “Vimy Effect” has been utilized by a variety of different sources. During the rededication ceremony for the Vimy Memorial in 2007, Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated that the Battle of Vimy Ridge represented Canada’s origin myth while remarking on Canadian Forces deaths in Afghanistan in the same address, connecting contemporary losses with a tradition of military sacrifice (“Vimy part”). In *Warrior Nation*, Ian McKay and Jamie Swift describe Harper’s emphasis (on the occasion of Australian prime minister John Howard’s 2006 visit to Canada) on the British Empire’s response to global conflict. McKay and Swift write that “Harper assured Parliament that troops from the white dominions had fought together in both world wars, in Korea, and now in Afghanistan to promote human rights, democracy, and peace,” emphasizing a linear historical frame charted through military accomplishment (12). The increased emphasis on Canada’s historic connection to the British Empire and contemporary attachment to the American-led Anglosphere naturalizes current militarism in Canada, according to McKay and Swift: “So it was that we learned about the straight and glorious military line between Vimy Ridge and Kandahar. Both struggles were, it seems, all about freedom and peace” (12). In their book about the origins of Canada’s participation in the war in Afghanistan, *The Unexpected War*, Eugene Lang and Janice Gross Stein also contribute to the elevation of martial identity in Canada: “This image of the peacekeepers was not only deeply ingrained in the public, but it was also wildly popular. That it did not fit well with Canada’s history did not much matter to public opinion” (19).

<sup>9</sup> Canada joined the war in Afghanistan – part of the larger War on Terror resulting from the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States – in the fall of 2001, with the secret deployment of members of the elite Joint Task Force 2 (Pigott 86). The first detachments of regular Canadian troops began arriving in the winter of 2002 (87). Canada’s role and casualties increased at a dramatic rate when the Canadian Forces was given operational command in Kandahar province in 2006 (Windsor et al. xviii). The bulk of

between Canadian soldiers and Afghan civilians, but were images of commemoration: ramp ceremonies in Kandahar, processions along the Highway of Heroes, citizens placing poppies at cenotaphs and memorials. A collaborative relationship from the start, many commemorative activities are the result of coordination between various levels of government and citizens, and these events navigated the public/private commemorative divide. For almost half a century commemorative gestures were associated with peacetime and thus limited potential controversy regarding the legitimacy of military action. More recent commemorative efforts served the dual purpose of making a long-term and controversial military engagement appear to be in the past like previous conflicts, subjecting Canada's role in Afghanistan to narratives of remembrance and the allegedly apolitical realm of memorial culture.

The other purpose commemorative efforts served was to naturalize loss. War deaths, after an almost fifty-year absence in Canada, were initially shocking to Canadians and Canadian media. Commemoration of soldiers killed in Afghanistan linked contemporary losses to those of previous wars and made casualties seem an inevitable, but necessary, part of Canadian martial tradition. What had initially been shocking was now presented as a normal part of national life, as it had been during previous wars. It was a commemorative decade in Canadian culture, and the forms that official, government-sanctioned commemoration took were similar to the more organic, unofficial

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Canadian combat troops left Afghanistan in the summer of 2011 and a complete pull out of combat personnel and equipment was completed by December 2011. Canada's presence in Afghanistan continued until March 2014, when a training mission involving the Canadian Forces concluded (Chase "Last Canadian").

commemorative efforts embarked on by individual citizens. I will show that events such as the Highway of Heroes gatherings combined both spontaneous action from individual Canadian citizens and co-ordinated effort and organization from emergency service personnel and various levels of government, creating a tradition that felt grassroots but was at the same time officially sanctioned. With the repatriation of the Unknown Soldier, commemorative forms were adapted to suit a new twenty-first century experience in Canada. In some cases, commemorative spaces from the First World War, such as the National War Memorial in Ottawa, have been the focus of larger gatherings as Canadians searched for ways to honour those in the military who died in Afghanistan. Monuments such as the National Vimy Memorial in France have been renovated, renewing the battle and memorial's prominence during a time of war loss.

The repatriation of the Unknown Soldier and rededications of sites such as the Vimy Memorial codify a government-authorized version of Canadian history. In *Uses of Heritage* (2006), heritage theorist Laurajane Smith writes about Western culture and the work that officially sanctioned heritage does: it authorizes specific "Western elite cultural values as being universally applicable" and validates "both popular and expert constructions of 'heritage' and undermines alternative and subaltern ideas about 'heritage'" (11). While not specifically about Canada, Smith's work nevertheless applies to a Canadian context as war commemoration has helped solidify successive federal governments' rebranding of Canada during the last two decades, most notably under Prime Minister Stephen Harper's leadership, as a "warrior nation" (McKay and Swift 9-10). It marks a shift, at least superficially, from a branded peacekeeping identity that had characterized Canada since the era of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson. This rebranding

has taken hold in part because it has used Canada's participation in previous wars and the subsequent commemoration of those conflicts as proof of a longstanding and natural "warrior" culture. Key to the legitimation of this cultural shift in Canada is the concept of the Unknown Soldier, despite its status as a commemorative mode fraught with complication.

In this dissertation, I use the term "Unknown Soldier" to refer to the representations of the generalized, physical body of anonymous soldiers made to represent national loss. My references to the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" relate to the site-specific Canadian memorial that is part of the National War Memorial complex in Ottawa, and my references to the "Unknown Soldier Memorial" refer generally to the larger practice of establishing such memorials undertaken by combatant countries after the First World War. The Unknown Soldier Memorial represented a break with earlier martial commemorative traditions; it was created by the British, French, and Italians as the war neared conclusion but was an idea shared by all combatant nations (Wittman 3). Literary scholar Laura Wittman notes that during the war and its immediate aftermath, the Unknown Soldier represented both the devastated physical and national body: "The Unknown Soldier was at once a representation of the body of the nation and the human body, both felt to be ruptured, perhaps permanently, by the war and by modernity" (3). The Unknown Soldier reflected an existential anonymity, a result of war and the modern moment (10). Because it broke with previous martial traditions, the Unknown Soldier Memorial possessed an appealing "strangeness":

a monument to anonymity was a shocking acknowledgement of modern warfare's unprecedented reduction of the individual to an expendable cog

in the machine; and the attribution of anonymity to a single body was not only an entirely new type of memorial, but one that emphasized physical suffering, transforming it into spectacular abjection, forcing us to witness the price of war. (9)

Despite the attempts of various governments around the world, most notably that of Benito Mussolini,<sup>10</sup> to infuse the Unknown Soldier Memorial with politics and control its meaning, the Memorial contains both pacifist and bellicist meanings (6). Wittman argues that the persistence of the Unknown Soldier is due to the flexibility of its meaning (7). The flexibility of the Unknown Soldier is employed with varying aims by the three authors studied in this dissertation.

What literary historian Paul Fussell said of the First World War, that it was the first “vigorously literary” conflict, cannot be said of the Afghanistan War almost 100 years later (195).<sup>11</sup> In an age of cell phones on the battlefield, streaming video, and social media, examining contemporary commemoration through the lens of literature does not on first glance make as much sense as it did for Fussell writing about the earlier war. However, a discussion of contemporary war commemoration in Canada is a discussion of nationalism, and since the 1960s literature has played a vital role in shaping English Canada’s sense of self. In addition, the novels in this study respond to prevailing national concerns while operating as works of commemoration. Each author has stated such a

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<sup>10</sup> Mussolini, the leader of the National Fascist Party and Prime Minister of Italy for two decades, co-opted the meaning of the Italian Unknown Soldier. Originally associated with the “materiality of suffering, and the embodied sense of mortality,” the original meaning was “completely and deliberately erased” (Wittman 226). According to Wittman, “the Unknown Soldier Memorial was central to Fascist rituals, starting on 4 November 1922, when Mussolini took great pains to identify his body with that in the tomb” (120). Mussolini associated “his vigorous body with the Unknown Soldier, in order to create a vision of wartime sacrifice that denied mortality rather than confronting it” (227-228).

<sup>11</sup> American literary theorist Lynne Hanley noted that Paul Fussell focused primarily on “white Anglo-American males of literary inclination who served on the Western Front” (qtd. in Vance, *Death* 5).

commemorative goal indirectly in the novel itself or in interviews about the work. Moreover, fiction allows these authors to engage with the paradoxical nature of the Unknown Soldier, constructing unique relationships with a national symbol that cannot be explored in commemorative modes that prioritize the historical record. In addition, these authors engage with the commemorative process as part of their fiction, creating a tension between the commemoration fictionalized in each text and each novel's relative success as a work of commemoration. None of these works is explicitly critical of traditional or contemporary modes of war commemoration in Canada. All are respectful of the sacrifice of soldiers. However, these books also seek to honour and articulate other important personal engagements with soldiers.

The most prominent commemorative symbol from the First World War to achieve renewed relevance in recent years is the Unknown Soldier. The symbol has a complex mythology that is touched on by each of the four Canadian novels I examine in this study, each published within a decade of Canada's initial troop deployment to Afghanistan in 2001. It is the fluidity of the Unknown Soldier for a contemporary experience of a Canada once again at war that illustrates the adaptability and continued relevance of the commemorative activity that emerged from the First World War. In addition, places such as the Canadian War Museum and the National War Memorial are realizations of Smith's assertion that "place is both an expression of, and has a consequence for, human experience and inter-relations" (79). Consequently, Canadian places of commemoration are places "where meanings are contested and negotiated" (79). Meaning is also contested in the novels of Hodgins, Boyden, and Urquhart, each of whom engages with the Unknown Soldier mythology as a way of exploring what is gained and lost by the



nation by elevating war commemoration. These works complicate depictions of the Unknown Soldier as a symbol of universally similar experiences of war, suggesting instead that such experiences are shaped by race, gender, and location, ultimately revealing the Unknown Soldier to be a figure of white masculine heroism.

The works in this study react to the evolution of the Unknown Soldier Memorial in the contemporary moment. *Broken Ground* was published before the installation of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Ottawa, but during a period when Ottawa's memorial landscape was being reimagined and the repatriation first considered. *The Stone Carvers* and *Three Day Road* were published after the installation of the Unknown Soldier in Ottawa, and *Sanctuary Line* was released near the end of the active combat portion of Canada's mission in Afghanistan. These novels respond to a changing understanding of the importance of the Unknown Soldier in a variety of ways. *Broken Ground* critiques the educator's role in creating and maintaining war mythology and puts particular focus on the concept of the Unknown Soldier through the characters of Hugh Corbett and Donald MacCormack. In *Three Day Road*, Cree snipers Xavier Bird and Elijah Whiskeyjack are part of a narrative of inclusion, one that highlights oft-ignored Indigenous contributions during the First World War while articulating a commemorative framework for honouring Indigenous military contributions that is consistent with Indigenous knowledge and traditions. *The Stone Carvers* challenges the Christian allegory of the Unknown Soldier,<sup>12</sup> by individualizing the iconic Canadian National Vimy Memorial. In the process, Urquhart creates a new monument in the text to personal loss and intimate

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<sup>12</sup> The Unknown Soldier had Christian overtones from its earliest beginnings. The suffering embodied by the figure was often associated with Christ's Passion (Wittman 116).

love. *Sanctuary Line*'s exploration of a female Canadian soldier's death in Afghanistan (modelled closely on the real-life casualty Captain Nichola Goddard) depicts the contemporary transition from conceptualizing military losses as "unknown" to present-day re-imaginings of a soldier perceived to be deeply known, while also highlighting some of the most problematic elements of contemporary military commemoration. Taken together, these works provide a strong challenge to traditional uses of Unknown Soldier mythology, including its deployment as part of an increasingly martial national identity steeped in white masculine heroism.

### **Individualization and War Dead Traditions since the First World War**

The re-emergence of the Unknown Soldier may seem odd at a time when Canadian war casualties are no longer unknown. Yet, these seemingly unrelated phenomena are connected. The Unknown Soldier was initially a response to the terrible losses of the First World War and the many that perished without an official resting place. The Canadian ceremony in 2000 in Ottawa reflected this longstanding tradition. While every Canadian soldier who was killed in Afghanistan was in fact known by name, the recent repatriation ceremony of an unknown Canadian First World War soldier from France to provided the framework for discussing and conceptualizing these contemporary losses.

Beginning with the first Canadian casualties in Afghanistan in 2002 in the Tarnak Farm Incident<sup>13</sup> – Sergeant Marc Leger, Corporal Ainsworth Dyer, Private Richard

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<sup>13</sup> On 18 April 2002, Canadian troops participated in a night time live-fire training exercise as part of their combat mission in Afghanistan (Lang and Stein 19). The training was held at Tanark Farms, formerly an Osama bin Laden residence, and is notable because an American fighter pilot mistook the training exercise

Green, and Private Nathan Smith – and continuing throughout the Canadian Forces’ time in Afghanistan, Canada’s casualties<sup>14</sup> are no longer unknown but are instead represented in the mainstream media as deeply familiar. Canada’s mission in Afghanistan began when a small group of Canadian Forces soldiers, members of the elite, special operations unit Joint Task Force 2 (JTF-2), were sent to Afghanistan in October 2001 (Maloney 50). Canada’s ground effort began in earnest in January and February of 2002, when Canadian battalions began Operation Apollo, part of the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom (58).<sup>15</sup> The Canadian Forces finally left Afghanistan more than a decade later on March 12, 2014, when the last of Canada’s 950 members of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, undertaken in 2011, left Afghanistan (Chase, “Last Canadian”). Each Canadian fatality has returned home after a ramp ceremony at Kandahar Airfield (KAF), and each has had their photo circulated in newspapers and on *Hockey Night in Canada*. The merger of national pastime and recognition of Canada’s fallen took many shapes, including on the weekly Saturday night hockey broadcast, initially a spontaneous action on the part of celebrity commentator Don Cherry, an outspoken supporter of Canadian troops abroad, but became just one of the rituals connecting hockey and participation in

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for enemy fire and dropped a bomb on the Canadian troops, wounding several soldiers and killing Sergeant Marc Leger, Corporal Ainsworth Dyer, Private Richard Green, and Private Nathan Smith in a case of “friendly fire” (19).

<sup>14</sup> Canada’s Afghanistan fatalities included 158 soldiers and 4 civilians (“Canadian death toll”). As of November 2016, at least 70 Canadian Forces personnel and veterans have taken their own lives after serving in Afghanistan; these numbers are not included in the official total of mission fatalities and were revealed by a *Globe and Mail* investigation (D’Aliesio et al.)

<sup>15</sup> In the summer of 2003, Canadian soldiers were deployed to Kabul and Canada was tasked with commanding the new International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) at Kabul as part of Operation Athena (“Archived”). In 2005 Canadian Forces serving in Operation Athena were redeployed to the volatile Kandahar region (“Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan”). The Canadian government renewed its military commitment in Afghanistan in February 2006 and Canada’s combat mission in Kandahar continued until December 2011 (“Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan”).

Afghanistan to be codified as part of the “invented” traditions of the new century. While the KAF ramp ceremony was not a uniquely Canadian phenomenon, as these ceremonies are also held for the fallen of all allied nations, the significance of this ceremony was replicated on Canadian soil in a unique way, with the Highway of Heroes tributes.

The scale of this conflict, as well as technological advances in warfare and forensics, has afforded Canada the opportunity to bring back every Canadian who died in Afghanistan. It is this return journey that allows for the production of a sense of intimacy between the fallen and the mourner, creating an understanding of which specific individuals were being sacrificed for this cause. Journalist Stephen Marche writes, “The personalization of every soldier’s death is unprecedented. The fallen in other wars have been memorialized in monuments – huge masses of stone recognizing a collective experience, not a personal one.... It is very clear who is being sacrificed for this effort” (Marche). A public individualization of Canada’s war dead has occurred but like the Unknown Soldier, this individualization is complicated. In the past, a greater number of Canadians had personal and familial connections to those Canadian soldiers serving during wartime. As the scale of Canada’s wartime commitments has decreased, this public, personal individualization ensures martial action remains in the public consciousness. The more Canadian casualties were individualized in this manner, and the more casualties there were in total, the more the individualization became convention and thus universalized. The public expression of personal, individualized loss has helped to create an archetypal Canadian soldier that mirrors the popular impact of the Unknown Soldier. This contradiction is seen in the tension between the individualized and the universalized war losses represented in the four novels examined in this study.

In this dissertation, individualization will refer to the recent trend, beginning in 2002, of the widespread media coverage of deceased soldiers' personal lives, of the publicity those details garnered, and the sentiments of personal attachment these details generated in the Canadian public. This individualization differs from previous memorials and tributes from earlier conflicts in key ways. The individualization of the dead from Canada's mission in Afghanistan extended beyond official headshots and names in newspapers. At the national level, details of soldiers' personal lives became public and more casual photos from Facebook and Twitter were widely circulated, reflecting wider social media trends and technological advancements. The death of Corporal Nathan Cirillo, fatally shot in October 2014 while serving as a ceremonial guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Ottawa, illustrates that this trend has continued even though Canada's mission in Afghanistan has ended. Personal anecdotes and casual photos of the fallen with family and friends continue to be shared publicly. An extension of the rise of social media and the greater tendency to share personal experience publicly now, these anecdotes and personal photos are disseminated quickly and illustrate what type of person the deceased soldier was away from the military. Photos of Cirillo, for instance, show him in civilian clothing, smiling and cuddling with his dogs, suggesting a warm and caring man (Blatchford). These civilian photos often present poses and facial expressions similar to those seen in more casual photos of military life. Soldiers' personal photos of participating in training exercises or in theatre show the now-deceased soldiers smiling, laughing, and embracing, ostensibly illustrating what kind of people they were. Because of their similarities, these photos have become conventional as is their presentation in national newspapers and weekly broadcasts such as *Hockey Night in Canada*. Even here

we see the influence of the Unknown Soldier: comprehending Canada's losses in Afghanistan by universalizing those individual losses and rendering them conventional.

These contemporary techniques of individualization differ from the individualization of soldiers that began during the First World War. The individualized burial and memorial practices that grew out of that conflict ensured that each body that could be identified was buried in an individual grave and that the names of the missing and the dead with no known grave were inscribed on monumental memorials such as the Menin Gate<sup>16</sup> in Ypres, Belgium. However, the scale of the conflict and of the resulting casualties – in addition to the monumental aesthetics of many memorial projects by Allied Powers, such as the countries of the British Empire – created a sense of collective loss and a different relationship between mourner/citizen and the war dead than is present in the current, publicly intimate individualization on the national level of martial casualties in Canada. Despite the tremendous losses, in the years immediately following the First World War, the conflict was seen as good and moral by the majority of Canadians, and as historian Tim Cook writes, “The just war needed memorials that marked it as such” (*Shock Troops* 623). Commemorating the fallen fostered a sense of unity and was also less contentious than interrogating the causes of the First World War. As historian Roger Sarty writes, “Remembrance of sacrifice provided common ground for commemoration more readily than a narrative of Canada's participation in the war,

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<sup>16</sup> The Menin Gate, located in Ypres, Belgium, was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield and included sculpture by William Reid-Dick (“Cemetery Details”). Unveiled in 1927, the site was chosen because of its significance as a gateway to the battlefields during the First World War (“Cemetery Details”). Engraved on the interior walls of the large, monumental archway are the names of more than 54,000 casualties with no known grave from Australia, Canada, India, South Africa, and the United Kingdom who perished in the Ypres Salient (“Cemetery Details”). 90 years after its unveiling, the “Last Post” is still played every evening at eight o'clock to mark the sacrifice of those who perished (“Cemetery Details”).

divisive as this participation had ultimately proved to be” (117). Canada’s participation in Afghanistan as a member of the Coalition forces was part of the U.S.-led War on Terror, and had the potential to be disruptive politically on the home front, especially as casualties increased. Connecting the dead of the Afghanistan War to the First World War had the dual effect of engaging more Canadians with the comparatively fewer casualties of Canada’s role in Afghanistan and memorializing those losses within the “just war” commemorative traditions of the First World War.

To better understand the individualization of war dead as a result of the First World War, a greater knowledge of the changes in martial burial practices is needed. During the First World War and in subsequent twentieth-century conflicts in which Canada participated, the war dead were, in essence, buried where they had fallen, interred in hundreds of overseas cemeteries. In 1915, the French government consented to creating military cemeteries funded by the French state for all Allied soldiers (Winter, *Sites of Memory* 23); however, in 1916 the British established the Prince of Wales’ Committee for the Maintenance of Military Tombs to oversee the creation of burial grounds for British, Imperial, and Dominion war dead (23). The following year saw the creation of the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC), which had its origins in the Prince of Wales’ Committee. The Commission had strict aesthetic concerns and enlisted many established British artists and architects, such as Sir Edward Lutyens, to design the cemeteries and the memorial components of the grounds (Vance, *Death* 60). These efforts would replace the temporary battlefield graves, typically marked with a wooden cross, found all over No Man’s Land (Geurst 96). Through its efforts, war cemeteries in which Canadians and Newfoundlanders were buried were laid out and managed by the

IWGC (later the Commonwealth War Graves Commission), beginning in 1917 (Winter, *Sites of Memory* 23; Vance, *Death* 60). According to historian Jonathan Vance,

The commission's work was based on two fundamental principles. In the first place, no repatriation of bodies from the war zones was permitted.... This stipulation was partly symbolic. It reflected not so much the notion that a soldier should lie where he fell (the reorganization of the cemeteries to eliminate isolated plots meant that many soldiers did not in fact lie where they had fallen) but that he should rest with his comrades. (*Death* 60)

Further, Vance notes that "all graves, regardless of the individual's rank or social station, would be marked with a standard headstone, a slab of Portland stone with a gently curved crown" as a primary guiding principle of the IWGC (61). By rule the standard headstone would include the deceased's name, regiment, rank, service number, military decorations and the date of his death (Geurst 96-98). The inclusion of a cross was typical; however, other religious emblems, such as the Star of David for Jewish soldiers, were also included instead of the cross, where applicable (96-98). For Canadian soldiers, the top of the headstone featured a maple leaf design authorized by the commission (96-98). While this condition met with the IWGC's aesthetic concerns, it also marked a shift from the commemoration of nineteenth-century warfare (Vance, *Death* 61).

In contrast to the nineteenth-century, First World War commemorative traditions included low-ranking officers and enlisted men. Whereas previously individual soldiers were often forgotten in official commemorations of war in favour of traditionally significant persons (generals and admirals), in the aftermath of the First World War



enlisted men and officers achieved an unprecedented equality in death (61). As Vance states, “The general and the private may have had little in common in life, but both had died for the same principles. One sacrifice had not been any greater or more selfless than the other” (61). Part of this equality was the result of pressure on the home front, in countries such as Canada, by relatives of the fallen whom the IWGC worried would insist on repatriation of the dead, itself a logistical headache, if loved ones did not receive proper burial in European cemeteries (60-61). Indeed, the headstones, upon which the IWGC allowed only a short motto as a means of personalization, acknowledged this new equality: “standard markers affirmed that all soldiers were equal in death” (61). The IWGC and its successor, the CWGC, continued to establish and maintain cemeteries and commemorate the dead including the Canadian fallen from the Second World War and the Korean War.<sup>17</sup> The Commission carries on its work with the guiding principle of “equality of sacrifice,” and, consequently, the dead continued to be “treated as equals, irrespective of rank, civilian status, race or religion” (“Canada - Netherlands”).

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<sup>17</sup> Originally the Imperial War Graves Commission (1917), the CWGC had its charter expanded in 1940 to incorporate care for those who died in WWII (“Canada - Netherlands”). A third charter in 1960 official changed the name of the IWGC to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (“Canada – Netherlands”). Members of the Commission include Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India and the Republic of South Africa and operating costs are covered by each member nation proportional to their dead (“Canada - Netherlands”). The CWGC maintains the graves of the 1,695,000 war dead of the British Empire from WWI and WWII spread across “more than 23,000 burial sites in 140 countries around the world and the names of those whose final resting places are unknown are commemorated on more than 200 memorials erected in the areas where they fought and died” (“Canada - Netherlands”). The cemeteries are uniform in appearance, each one “marked by a large stone Cross of Sacrifice bearing on its shaft a crusader’s sword of bronze, and in the larger cemeteries there is also a Stone of Remembrance, an altar-like monument bearing the words: *Their Name Liveth For Evermore*” (“Canada - Netherlands”). The majority of Canada’s Korean War dead are buried in the United Nations Memorial Cemetery at Busan (“United Nations”). The cemetery contains the remains of 2,300 soldiers including 1,588 Commonwealth servicemen; of these, 376 were Canadians (“United Nations”). This cemetery contains a memorial to Commonwealth soldiers: “A stone memorial with bronze panels was erected to commemorate Commonwealth soldiers who died and whose burial places are unknown. Twenty-one are listed on the bronze plaques of the memorial on which the following inscription appears: ‘On this memorial are inscribed the names of men from Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa who died in the Korean War and have no known grave. They died with men of other countries fighting to uphold the ideals of the United Nations’” (“United Nations”).

The IWGC made a concerted effort to commemorate the dead individually, on specific headstones when possible, and through inscription on memorials to the fallen for those with no known grave. While this effort to name each of the fallen marked a considerable departure from previous martial traditions of mass burial, it was also done for logistical and symbolic reasons. Logistically, repatriating the fallen would have been an enormous task: “Because of the chaos on the former battlefields and the sheer number of bodies, the repatriation of human remains would have created immense administrative difficulties” (Vance, *Death* 60).<sup>18</sup> The “beautification” of cemeteries was done partly so that families would not press the government and the IWGC for the repatriation of their loved ones (62). Symbolically, the Commission’s guiding principle of “equality of the fallen,” coupled with the unprecedented number of dead interred in war cemeteries and the tens of thousands of names included on memorials to the dead with no known grave, represent commemorative experiences that grapple with the unprecedented scale of loss in the First World War. Immense monuments to those with no known grave, such as the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France,<sup>19</sup> primarily convey the unparalleled death toll and extensive nature of suffering through their size and number of names inscribed. Designed by Edwin Lutyens, the Stone of Remembrance is found in larger cemeteries (usually those containing over 1000 graves) and is a rectangular stone slab “based on studies of the Parthenon” (“Our Cemetery”). The biblical passage adapted by Rudyard

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<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Vance highlights the difficulty of repatriation in the First World War by citing the example of the United States: “The American government committed itself to offering next of kin the choice of repatriating remains or leaving them in the battle zones (roughly 70 per cent of families chose repatriation) but may have cause to rue this decision; Fabian Ware reported that the head of the American graves service in France resigned because he could not guarantee that the right bodies would go to the right relatives” (*Death* 60-61).

<sup>19</sup> Designed by sculptor Walter Allward, the monumental memorial features two soaring white pylons, allegorical figures, and includes the names of those Canadians who were declared missing and presumed dead while fighting in France (66-70).

Kipling “Their name liveth for evermore”<sup>20</sup> was chosen for inscription on all Stones of Remembrance (Vance, *Death* 60). As a Stone of Remembrance was included in only larger cemeteries, the inscription became synonymous with loss on the largest of scales. This phrase and another by Kipling – “A Soldier of the Great War – Known Unto God,” which was used for individual headstones marking unidentified remains (60) – have become conventional expressions of large-scale martial loss in the almost 100 years since the conclusion of the First World War. Because of the sheer number of unidentified remains from the First World War, “A Soldier of the Great War – Known Unto God” became not an expression of an individual loss, but rather an expression of the enormity of large-scale martial loss.

The majority of Canadian war dead from the First World War were buried in these IWGC cemeteries; consequently, Canadians marked the disappeared and the dead with cenotaphs and other memorial sites on home soil in the absence of bodies and graves. To evaluate how the building of cenotaphs and memorials in the inter-war period, such as the Vimy Monument, strengthened national mythology in Canada, it is essential to grasp how national mythology and memorial culture are related. Political scientist Benedict Anderson, in his landmark work *Imagined Communities* (1983), states that the nation should be defined as “an imagined political community” with good reason (6). He explains 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 them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). Despite this division, the nation

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<sup>20</sup> Adapted from Ecclesiasticus 44:14 in the Authorized King James Version of The Bible: “Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth for evermore” (*The Bible*, Ecc. 44:14).

remains a community because it is “conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). The technological developments of the Industrial Revolution and the resulting political and economic revolutions created rapid social change in nineteenth-century Europe, causing many to look to the past and national origins for the security lacking in a cultural life with eroding religious beliefs (Huysen 191, Landsberg 6). According to Anderson, national culture and the birth of the “imagined community” were dependent on “two forms of imagining which first flowered in Europe in the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper,” because “these forms provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation” (*Imagined Communities* 24-25). Canadian literature has often played a role similar to the one Anderson describes. Kertzer chronicles this national interest in Canadian literature as far back as the early nineteenth-century poetry of Oliver Goldsmith (66-67). While all four novels in this study have certain resistant qualities, they are still concerned with issues of nationhood.

Just as newspapers and novels were capable of simultaneously presenting narratives to bind the nation together, so too were monuments used to cement the “imagined community”. According to Andreas Huyssen in “Monumental Seduction,” nineteenth-century monumentalism differed from earlier forms of monumentalism primarily because of the motivation behind the nineteenth-century aesthetic. Huyssen writes that this aesthetic was in response to the turmoil of the period: “We have come to read this nineteenth-century obsession with origins and their mythic grounding as fulfilling the culturally legitimizing needs of the postrevolutionary bourgeois nation state in the grip of accelerating modernization” (192). The answer to such rapid change was the monumental: the architectural examples of the monumental from antiquity, such as

obelisks, temples, and burial towers, “seemed to guarantee permanence and to provide the desired bulwark against the speed-up of time, the shifting grounds of urban space, the transitoriness of modern life” (192).

It was to these monumental sites that French historian Pierre Nora turned in his seven-volume study of French cultural history, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1984-1992). Attempting to ascertain French national culture by “examining the principal places or sites in which collective memory was rooted,” these national sites stood for Nora as repositories of memory (Landsberg 6). In the aftermath of the First World War, when Canadian communities built so many cenotaphs and the federal government embarked on memorial campaigns in Europe, the crowning achievement of which was the Canadian National Vimy Memorial, it becomes easier to see these sites as “repositories” of national memory, creating and cementing a mythology to bind the nation. The continued changes to the site of the National War Memorial over the past two decades<sup>21</sup> illustrate the continued relevance of the work of these scholars in relation to memorial cultural production in Canada. However, as recent cultural production in Canada illustrates, the meaning of these sites is contested.

The repatriation of the Unknown Soldier marked a shift in Canadians’ collective usage of domestic sites. No longer sites of memory in Nora’s understanding of the term, these sites have become active and reinvigorated places in the twenty-first century, as Canada once again grapples with war loss. Ceremonially linked sites such as the National

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<sup>21</sup> Remodelling of the site began in earnest in the late 1990s to improve pedestrian access (Greenberg 187). In 2000, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was added to the site (187). The Valiants Memorial was added to the location in 2006 (Curry). The monument itself was rededicated for a second time (it had been previously rededicated in 1980 to include the dates of the Second World War and the Korean War) on 11 November 2014 to include the dates of the Boer War (1899-1902) and Afghanistan (2001-2014), as well as the words “in service to Canada” in English and French (“Remembrance Day”).

War Memorial, the Unknown Soldier Memorial, the Parliament buildings, and the Canadian War Museum result in a collective instructional purpose: to convey to the viewer that martial sacrifice leads to and protects democracy. In this way, Canadian experience of wartime trauma, loss, and victory is understood as occurring not on foreign battlefields but on Canadian soil. For Canadians, the experience of war in Afghanistan began when the fallen arrived home. Yet this change is not merely symbolic of a growing patriotism generated by the national rebranding during the Harper era; rather, it also reflects the effort of the novelists to come to terms with Canada's contemporary war loss.

The emphasis on the return journey of fallen soldiers in contemporary Canadian media is reflected in the novels in this study. These books contain return journeys of the dead but also contrast these journeys with those of the living. Since the First World War, technology has changed mourning by removing barriers to identifying soldiers in death. These novels present another way of understanding "Unknowns" apart from recent technological advancements because fiction allows the authors in this study to explore both the individualized and universalized Unknown Soldier symbolically. Literature recognizes a type of knowledge not dependent on historical or military records, resulting in varied connections to the Unknown Soldier and its place as a national symbol. When it was first created a century ago, the Unknown Soldier Memorial made use of an individual deceased soldier as a representation of universal loss. This paradox was transcribed at the Unknown Soldier Memorial in Ottawa when it was repatriated in 2000. However, the Unknown Soldier still resonates with the contemporary moment and understanding of war losses in Canada. The personalized portrayals of recent Canadian war dead speak to the individualizing aspect of the Unknown Soldier while making a

specific casualty, such as Nichola Goddard, the ubiquitous representation of Canadian service and loss, and speaks to the Unknown Soldier's universalizing features.

The fictional elements of these novels allows for divergence from the historical record and modification of the symbolism of the Unknown Soldier; however, these books are also part of a longstanding tradition of historical fiction and war fiction in Canada. Consequently, just as it is important to situate the subject matter of these novels in their proper historical context, it is also critical to establish the ways these works connect with and diverge from their respective genre. The four novels in this study participate in contemporary commemorative culture in a variety of ways that complicate and reinforce dominant modes of war commemoration in Canada. To better understand how these texts achieve this complication and how they differ from earlier, similar works, a greater understanding of the conventions of the Canadian war novel is needed, in addition to its contextualization within the tradition of Canadian historical fiction.

#### **Four “Phases” of Historical Fiction in Canada**

In their separate works, literary critics Dennis Duffy, Herb Wyile, Dagmar Novak, and Neta Gordon have identified a framework for the discussion of the historical war novel in Canada. Not all war novels are necessarily historical as shown by the earliest Canadian novels about the First World War, which were written during the conflict, and by the inclusion of Urquhart's *Sanctuary Line* in this study.<sup>22</sup> Nor is

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<sup>22</sup> As Novak illustrates in her study *Dubious Glory: The Two World Wars and the Canadian Novel* (2000), since the First World War, there have been Canadian war novels writing during periods of warfare (13). Novelist Ralph Connor, who served in the First World War, wrote three books about the First World War, the first, *The Major* (1917) while the conflict was still on-going, and the second *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* (1919) immediately following the war's conclusion; the same year Basil King's *The City of*

historical literature the only type of literature in Canada with a focus on national concerns.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the evolution of the historical novel in Canada is a useful starting place for examining war fiction. Wylie's assertion that the Canadian historical novel is "increasingly speculative" is particularly beneficial (*Speculative Fictions* xii). He notes that "more important than the recognition that history has been narrowly defined has been the increasing recognition of history as a kind of constructed consensus about the past rather than a narrative about a 'given' historical reality" (7). The three novelists discussed in this dissertation seek both a more inclusive narrative and an evaluation of the constructed narrative process.

Cumulatively, Duffy, Novak, and Gordon have identified four phases of historical fiction in Canada and while discrepancies exist between the dates these critics use to define these phases, taken together their works chart the history of First World War literature in Canada. These phases are divided chronologically: the first spans the years from 1832 until the mid-1920s, the second from the late-1920s until 1970, the third from 1970 until 1995, and the last from 1995 to the present. In *Sounding the Iceberg* (1986), one of the first critical studies of Canadian historical fiction, Duffy maps the course of the historical novel but does not focus exclusively on war fiction. He suggests that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Canadian writers were concerned with the

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*Comrades* (1919) was published (13). *Sanctuary Line* fits within this tradition as it was published in 2010, a year before Canada's combat role in Afghanistan ended and several years before the departure of the last of Canada's troops in the country in 2014.

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Kertzer's *Worrying the Nation: Imagining a National Literature in English Canada* (1998) takes issue with English Canadian literature's "modest but persistent nationalism" (3). While he recognizes a particular uncertainty in English Canadian literature, his study is very much influenced by the time in which he was writing: "My worries arose partly in response to the October 1995 Quebec referendum, which loomed and passed as I wrote most of this book" (35).



distance of the past, and so the historical novels of that period underscored “overtly or implicitly the otherness of that past” (iv). Novels in Duffy’s study are divided into three phases. The first begins with John Richardson’s *Wacousta* (1832), and ends after the First World War (1). He notes William Kirby’s *The Golden Dog* (1877) and Gilbert Parker’s *The Seats of the Mighty* (1896) as the pinnacle of this era (11). The novels in Duffy’s second phase abandon the romanticism of the works in the first phase and he states that the novels from this middle period are increasingly more realistic (24). The publication of Anne Hébert’s *Kamouraska* (1970, in English 1974), initiates a mature, third phase of Canadian historical fiction for Duffy. Among the significant works written in English during this phase are *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973) by Rudy Wiebe, Timothy Findley’s *The Wars* (1977), and Graeme Gibson’s *Perpetual Motion* (1982) (54). The books examined in his study are thematically linked through nationalism; indeed, he sees nationalism and nationalist myths as thematic concerns underpinning the genre (iii), and he argues that it is only with *The Wars* that this begins to change (66). Ultimately, *Sounding the Iceberg* charts the linear progression of the Canadian historical novel from immaturity to sophistication; Duffy proposes “a story of how the historical novel in Canada moved from a popular and revered form, to a merely popular one, and then finally to its position among serious fiction of our time” (iii). What Duffy’s book indicates is that the historical novel, and by extrapolation the Canadian war novel, did not reach maturation until the 1970s, with the publication of Findley’s work.

Novak’s and Gordon’s studies model the progression of the sub-genre of Canadian war fiction on Duffy’s established structure for the historical novel. Novak’s book, *Dubious Glory: The Two World Wars and the Canadian Novel* (2000), “is

groundbreaking, but by introducing readers to a vast array of forgotten and second-rate novels she eschews critical depth in favour of bibliographic comprehensiveness” according to literary scholar Peter Webb (6). Novak’s study of Canadian war literature from the First and Second World Wars uses the stylistic characteristics that Duffy identifies for each of his three phases of Canadian historical literature and applies these characteristics to Canadian literature about the two World Wars. One of the ways in which Novak’s study differs from Duffy’s is that the works in her first phase were not written as historical fiction but were contemporary with their time. Despite this difference, Novak still notices the same romanticism in war novels as there is in historical novels of the same period. She identifies three phases of Canadian war fiction. The initial phase includes a group of 30 novels written between 1914 and the mid-1920s that are “Rhetorical, romantic, idealistic, and national” in content and “written for an Anglo-Saxon, Protestant community which enthusiastically embraced the cause of the cause of the Allied war effort in 1914” (Novak 7). These novels, such as Ralph Connor’s *The Major* (1917) and *The Sky Pilot in No Man’s Land* (1919), do not completely overlook “the brutality of war”; however, their authors “chose to promote the positive themes of patriotism and honour, religious idealism and sacrifice” (7). Thematically, the justness of the British cause is paramount, and, as Novak writes, “The British invariably, are the standard bearers of political and social morality; the Central Powers in general, and the Germans in particular, are obsessed with the idea of world domination” (21).

The second phase that Novak identifies is that of the realistic war novel. Such novels are markedly different from the novels of the first phase; however, features of the romance persist (53). With the exception of Ralph Connor, none of the Canadian authors

whose books fall into her first phase actually served in the First World War (12). This changes in the second phase: “the novels of the thirties deal with the war itself. And they are written by those who actually participated in it” (53). Among these works, Charles Harrison’s *Generals Die in Bed* (1930) has received the most critical attention. Harrison’s book is part of a larger canon of anti-war books published during the “war book boom” beginning in 1928, but this canon had its roots in the protest literature of e.e. cummings in the early 1920s (Vance, *Death* 186). Edmund Blunden’s *Undertones of War* (1928), R.C. Sherriff’s *Journey’s End* (1928), Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929), Richard Aldington’s *Death of a Hero* (1929), Robert Graves’s *Goodbye to All That* (1929), and Siegfried Sassoon’s *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930) are among the most notable examples of (non-Canadian) anti-war texts from this era (186). *Generals Die in Bed* is part of a Canadian contingent of anti-war novels from the period; other noteworthy titles include Peregrine Acland’s *All Else is Folly* (1929) and Will Bird’s *And We Go On* (1930) (186). However, as Vance notes, the reception these anti-war texts earned in Canada was not as exuberant as has been conventionally thought because of the way in which these novels challenged existing nationalist narratives about the war that were popular in Canada (186-187).

Dismissed by many Canadians, these anti-war books challenged narratives of Canada’s role in the war that had already become canonical. As Vance indicates, “Canadians dismissed these books as invalid ... because they cast Canadian soldiers in a bad light. One of the distinguishing features of the canon of anti-war literature was its negativity. Generally speaking, it refused to recognize anything positive in the war experience, seeing it as a destroyer of human body and spirit” (187-188). This depiction

contrasted sharply with established portrayals of the soldiers in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF):

To many people, universalization was in fact defamation: these books tarred Canadian soldiers with the sins of others by claiming that, like all other soldiers, the men of the CEF had been brutalized and dehumanized by war. The antiwar vision suggested that the war erased the soldier's individuality and identity, transforming him into a pawn whose suffering and death were of little consequence to anyone, even himself (191).

Harrison's allegation that Canadian troops (specifically members of the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion) had committed atrocities at Arras led to dismissals of the book as "fabrication", "libellous", and "obscenity" (193-194). Despite increased knowledge of the grim aspects of the First World War during the interwar period, Canadians held onto representations of their soldiers as "ordinary people in extraordinary situations," as this "was the only characterization of the Canadian soldier that could be compatible with the memory of the war" (197).

Novak's third phase contains one work, Findley's *The Wars*. Novak indicates that Findley wrote through the lens of the Vietnam War and the disillusionment that war created, allowing him to capture "the wartime spirit in early twentieth-century Toronto" (Novak 131). Findley's work makes use of the conventions initiated by earlier Canadian writers, such as "the idealistic romance of Gordon, the grim realism of Harrison, and the quest for meaning in the novels of McDougall, Allister, and Jackson" but how these elements are utilized in *The Wars* differs greatly (Novak 132). In Findley's work, Canadian war literature finally achieved the ironic sensibility Fussell identified in British

war literature from decades earlier, a marked difference from the novels of the fourth phase.<sup>24</sup> Novak writes: “In *The Wars*, a work of considerable irony, Findley holds up the myths of the Great War to careful scrutiny, only to find them wanting” (139). Robert Ross, the hero of *The Wars*, could never be a hero who fit the stylistic conventions of the first phase, as Ross does not die nobly in battle (140). “Instead,” Novak argues, “a striking irony exists in Findley’s emphasis upon Robert’s rebelliousness and in his action, which stands, in effect, as a demand for justice and mercy for the innocent victims of war” (143). *The Wars* is noted for its complex form and use of an archivist character; this archivist examines Ross’s family photos and archival records, and conducts interviews with those who cared for him as he recovered from injury in England (*Speculative Fictions* 142). As Wylie writes in *Speculative Fictions: Contemporary Canadian Novelists and the Writing of History* (2002), “Findley’s narrative strategies as most critics have noticed, emphasize that the past is not immediately available to the reader/researcher, but must be reconstructed through a process that is analogous to the construction of fiction itself” (142).

Gordon constructs her study, *Catching the Torch: Contemporary Canadian Literary Response to World War I* (2014), as an extension of Novak’s research but also draws on the stylistic characteristics first identified by Duffy. She follows Novak’s characterization of the first three phases of Canadian war literature and indicates that the tendency of the first phase novels towards “uncritical patriotism” has resulted in this

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<sup>24</sup> Fussell’s landmark study, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) suggests a modern, ironic sensibility as the primary feature of the writing from the First World War: “I am saying that there seems to be one dominating form of modern understanding; that it is essentially ironic; and that it originates largely in the application of mind and memory to the events of the Great War” (41). Findley uses romance conventions and the “myths of the Great War to create in Robert Ross a hero who tries to transcend the limitations of that war’s traditional heroes” (Novak 131).

phase receiving “little critical response except regarding its reflection of Canada’s political naïveté and literary crudeness” (Gordon, *Catching the Torch* 85). She notes that the second, or “realistic,” phase of Canadian war literature has benefitted from greater analysis, and often features a protagonist who “is identified with the combatant author, especially as the protagonist’s status as a hero is based primarily on having simply endured the horrors of war” (85). Like Novak, Gordon identifies *The Wars* as the maturation of the war genre in Canada (86). As Gordon writes, the novel’s “juxtaposition of archival fragments collected by a researcher and scenes that an anonymous narrator constructs about Robert Ross’s life” work primarily “to undermine the distinction between fact and fiction and disclose how meaning is ideologically assembled” (86). Ultimately, it is the archivist figure who “marks a decisive difference between this kind of First World War fiction and combatant or even home front literature that does not explicitly negotiate the issue of temporal distance” (10). Findley’s interest in historical and narrative reconstruction has led to *The Wars* being regarded as one of the primary Canadian examples of what literary theorist Linda Hutcheon termed “historiographic metafiction” (88). Hutcheon’s definition of historiographic metafiction identifies historical novels that are ““very metafictional in their attention to the processes of writing, reading, and interpreting. They are both self-consciously fictional but also overtly concerned with the acts (and consequences) of the reading and the writing of history as well as fiction”” (qtd. in Gordon, *Catching the Torch* 88). Duffy, Novak, and Gordon all identify this third phase as “taking up a parodic view of ‘official’ history”, suggesting the writers of this period are sceptical the past can be objectively represented (90). Gordon’s discussion of Findley complements Duffy’s and Novak’s; however, her

proposal of a fourth phase sets her work apart from that of her predecessors. Gordon builds off the work of Wylie in *Speculative Fictions*, in which he identified slight differences in the works written after *The Wars*.

The works Gordon examines in *Catching the Torch* were published between 1995 and 2007, and address either the First World War directly or that conflict's aftermath. Early examples included in Gordon's fourth phase are Kevin Major's novel *No Man's Land* (1995), Guy Vanderhaeghe's play *Dancock's Dance* (1996), Jane Urquhart's novel *The Underpainter* (1997), and Jack Hodgins's *Broken Ground* (1998). More recent examples are Kevin Kerr's play *Unity (1918)* (2001), David French's play *Soldier's Heart* (2001), R.H. Thompson's play *The Lost Boys* (2001), Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers* (2001), Stephen Massicotte's play *Mary's Wedding* (2002), Mary Swan's book *The Deep* (2002), Frances Itani's novel *Defeating* (2003), Alan Cumyn's books *The Sojourn* (2003) and *The Famished Lover* (2006), Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* (2005), Michael Poole's novel *Rain Before Morning* (2006), and Vern Thiessen's play *Vimy* (2007). Wylie, writing more generally of the Canadian historical novel, suggests that recent novels "come across as less profoundly sceptical about historiography, less concerned with fracturing and interrogating retrospection, and largely, if somewhat ambivalently, rooted in the historical verisimilitude and an engagement with (rather than abandonment or disruption of) the historical record" (263). Gordon builds on Wylie's observations and describes this fourth phase of Canadian war literature as a "post-historiographic metafictional" period in which "authors began to signal a distinctive interest in dialogue with the past, a dialogue that, paradoxically, seeks out a sense of stability rather than ambivalence and flux" (91). The stability Gordon refers to is the

tendency in the works of this phase to work with the historical record rather than undertaking a parodic interrogation.

Gordon defines the novels in her study in contrast to the earlier periods examined in the work of Duffy and Novak: “the works examined do not actively engage in the question of the veracity of the historical record, even when they seek to expand the borders of whose histories should be included in that record” (26). She explains that there is a departure in Urquhart’s work from the researcher/archivist character and the related historiographic reflexivity that distinguished novels such as *The Wars* apart from earlier war fiction (86). Instead, Urquhart centres the novel on the figure of the artist and in doing so, suggests “that public, commemorative practice should concern itself with the building of shared, necessarily emblematic – as opposed to historically accurate – narratives” (87). Consequently, *The Underpainter* and *The Stone Carvers* are concerned with commemoration, not interrogation of the process of writing history (86). Gordon points out that Boyden’s examination in *Three Day Road* of the marginalization experienced by Indigenous soldiers during the First World War out of necessity “embraces the myth that the war transformed Canadians into a cohesive, collective force” (22). Gordon sees the release of Paul Gross’s film *Passchendaele* (2008) as the end point of this latest phase and argues that “it has become more difficult for Canadian writers to make productive use of this part of our past” because, as Canada’s participation in the war in Afghanistan illustrated, “War is something real for Canadians again” (170).

While Gordon’s suggestion that the sheer volume of Canadian First World War literature might decrease in the coming years may prove accurate, I disagree with her belief that *Passchendaele* is an endpoint and I suggest that the First World War can



remain “productive” and fruitful for Canadian writers as a way of discussing more recent conflicts, especially if the scale of Canadian involvement in those conflicts continues to decrease. Unlike during the World Wars, when war was omnipresent in Canada, contemporary military engagements such as Canada’s participation in the war in Afghanistan have not required the full resources of the nation. As a result, commemorative practices play a vital role in acknowledging and remembering those who participate in such efforts while emphasizing the relevance of the military. In addition, many commemorative modes are still infused with traditions from the First World War, such as the continued commemorative impact of the Unknown Soldier, especially in the four novels discussed in this study. Furthermore, the celebration of significant First World War anniversaries (such as the ninetieth anniversaries of the Somme and the Battle of Vimy Ridge in 2006 and 2007 respectively), the passing of the last remaining veterans of the First World War, and ongoing centennial celebrations beginning in 2014, created a scenario in which government and cultural production in the new century obliquely considered Canada’s mission in Afghanistan in accounts of the First World War. Ceremonies designed to convey Canadian origin narratives about the First World War confirm contemporary military casualties are a natural progression of the nation’s founding mythology. Not only does the First World War form the basis of commemorative convention in Canada because of its widespread impact on a young nation, it became relevant once again leading into the war’s centennial; however, this relevance is more than a trend brought on by significant anniversaries, nor do I believe it has it run its course. The First World War is still a beneficial source for government-generated cultural production in Canada because while the First World War remains

questionable in terms of its origins and cause as a “just” war, its commemorative tradition works to erase political and ethical controversy in favour of an idealized vision of a nation united.

This dissertation is not intended as a response to Gordon’s work nor is it intended to provide the scope of Novak’s study. Instead, it highlights a contemporary moment that illustrates a shift in the relevance of Canadian war literature. The novels examined in this dissertation have been selected for several important reasons. As part of a larger trend of Canadian First World War fiction, these works confront the question of commemoration through the symbolic legacy of the Unknown Soldier. They also relate to other modes of Canadian cultural production about war. For example, pedagogy plays a central role in Hodgins’s novel. Hodgins’s examination reflects a historical tradition which has evolved over the past fifty years of First World War study in Canada but contrasts significantly with other contemporary sources exploring pedagogy and First World War history in Canada such as the film *Passchendaele* and the digital archive *The Memory Project*. *Three Day Road* addresses a contemporary resurgence of national mythologies surrounding the First World War by using specific battles to chart a linear progression toward a fully internationally recognized Canadian nation, accomplished by the victory of all four Canadian divisions at Vimy Ridge, but *Three Day Road* is ambivalent about this narrative. Urquhart’s *The Stone Carvers* is also invested in the mythic centrality of Vimy because her novel focuses on the creation of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial. These recent works are responding to a contemporary revival in traditional narratives about war and nation in Canada. *Three Day Road* and *The Stone Carvers* participate in what Vance calls the “colony to nation” paradigm by reaffirming the centrality of Vimy

in the Canadian nation's history (10). *The Stone Carvers* anticipates military commemoration in a contemporary context and uses the same source material as the commemorative undertakings at the new Canadian War Museum, but with considerably different results. Urquhart's *Sanctuary Line* also problematizes recent commemoration with regards to the war in Afghanistan. The novel directly addresses the contemporary mythology of Canada's first female combat death, Captain Nichola Goddard, as well as the government and media attempts to frame Goddard's death as a modern universal loss in the vein of the Unknown Soldier.

All four works interact with the mythology of the Unknown Soldier in Canada, but each does so in distinct ways. The official insistence on renewing the Unknown Soldier strengthens its suitability as a method of interpreting and understanding Canada's losses in Afghanistan; however, this official stance has been met with resistance from multiple commemorative modes. These novels clearly challenge this official authority by individualizing and contextualizing loss. Hodgins's novel interrogates the pedagogical impact of universalizing tendencies, indicating that the "Unknowns" lost in war need not just produce the semblance of being known, but must be present for war's impact to be realized. *Three Day Road* actively resists the ways in which Indigenous presence is erased in military service. The novel challenges the mythology of the Unknown Soldier and the universalized and celebrated white male soldiers on which the symbol rests. As such, martial commemoration, rooted in the traditions of the First World War such as the Unknown Soldier, are another way in which Indigenous presence is erased. Boyden's dual focus on the battlefield and the home front takes aim at and undermines the national mythology of Canada as a nation of peacekeepers and peacemakers, a mythology often

embraced by those who reject recent attempts to revive a martial ethos. Boyden's exploration of the home front uses the settler/colonizer dynamic to disrupt claims of a peaceable nation. In doing so, the conventional belief that the thousands of unknown dead from the First World War died to achieve peace is further disrupted. *The Stone Carvers'* insistence on inscribing personal loss onto the grandest Canadian allegorical commemoration of the First World War (the Vimy Monument) renewed public interest in the memorial and helped to bring about the renovation of the deteriorating site. *Sanctuary Line* challenges whether modern military fatalities can ever truly be known and in the process examines how the nation determines who is worthy of remembrance. Despite this, much of the work that these texts are doing to challenge the codified Unknown Soldier has not been critically examined.

### **Chapter Overviews**

The first chapter of my dissertation discusses the role and commemoration of the Battle of Vimy Ridge since the beginning of the current century with specific focus on Jane Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers*. In many ways, the Battle of Vimy Ridge has functioned as a synecdoche for Canada's experience in the First World War. Vimy functions this way in terms of representing both the hardships and successes experienced by Canadian soldiers and by providing a formative moment of national unity for the young country. I examine the ways in which the fictional commemorations in *The Stone Carvers* relate to the construction and exhibits of the new Canadian War Museum (CWM), completed in 2005, with specific focus on thematic motivations represented in the CWM's Regeneration Hall. I consider how both the CWM's recovery of Canadian

sculptor Walter Allward's Vimy Monument, in the form of the installation of numerous plaster models in Regeneration Hall, and Urquhart's literary representation of the construction process of the Vimy Memorial in France invert the monumental scale of the original work and alter the piece's original meaning. Urquhart's literary creation is a deeply personal memorial, while the real-life Allward's memorial was allegorical in nature.

For the fictional Allward as Urquhart represents him in *The Stone Carvers*, the memorial must represent the totality of the monumental loss of the First World War and as such, he adamantly insists on a universal quality to all of the figures on the memorial. Klara, the novel's protagonist and master carver and seamstress, suffers a series of familial losses over the course of the novel's narrative, including her lover's death during the First World War. Her insistence on carving an individual face into the monument, her lover Eamon's, anticipates a twenty-first century experience of Canadian warfare, when casualties are individualized and publicly mourned at the national level. *The Stone Carvers* illustrates that moving beyond monumental memorials can lead to changed modes of commemoration. Urquhart's fictional Allward initially accepts and promotes the traditional, universalizing tendency of First World War memorials. But it is an encounter with Klara, Urquhart's protagonist, after she has re-carved the allegorical figure of the Torchbearer with the face of the lover from her youth, that creates a personal, life-sized space out of the monumental that even the fictional Allward can appreciate. Klara's act not only undermines the monumental but also the mythology of the Unknown Soldier – along with the belief that one universal memorial can stand for all those who were lost.

The second chapter of my dissertation examines Jack Hodgins's novel *Broken Ground*, which explores the impact of the First World War on issues of pedagogy, representation, and fidelity to authorized history. The significance of Hodgins's representations of pedagogy, war, and remembrance can be brought into focus by considering the novel's depictions of pro-war pedagogy in the early twentieth-century settler culture in relation to a contemporary example of nationalistic education tactics that mobilize a variety of popular media. Paul Gross's film *Passchendaele* (2008) was designed in part as a teaching project; at the time of the movie's release, a 12-page "Passchendaele: Education Guide" was released and made available on *The Memory Project* site, an online multimedia archive of soldiers' and familial war memories, and was promoted as a companion resource to the film for secondary school teachers and students.

In *Broken Ground*, the link between how we teach and how we construct history becomes clear as the wartime trauma experienced by the post-war settlers of Portuguese Creek, British Columbia, pervades the settlement and affects the settlers' experience with the fire that destroys much of the settlement in 1922. This is clearest in the novel's discussion of two Unknown Soldiers: the Crucified Canadian, a well-known myth from the First World War, and a living "unknown," the injured Donald MacCormack. In contrast to Gross, Hodgins de-mythologizes the Crucified Canadian and restores the spectral MacCormack to a place of centrality in the text. MacCormack's erasure and restoration focuses the novel's discussion of commemoration and pedagogy. *Broken Ground* illustrates an alternative pedagogical approach to the nationalist mythology that was taking hold at the time of its publication. The novel does not celebrate the "breaking

ground” of an agrarian settlement but instead, as the title suggests, represents a failed progress. Consequently, in addition to challenging the First World War’s place as a formative experience for Canada, *Broken Ground* undermines Canadian agrarian progress as another foundational experience that led to nationhood.

My third chapter considers non-traditional narratives about the First World War with a specific focus on Joseph Boyden’s *Three Day Road* (2005). Throughout the novel, Xavier and Elijah are racialized as “other” while their military superiors try to turn them into living “Unknowns,” an effacement that attempts to contain the pair in a traditional narrative of the First World War as formative for the Canadian nation. Boyden’s inclusion of a second narrative, Niska’s oral history of the devastation caused by white settlement for James Bay Cree communities, like Xavier’s resistance, undermines the apparent universality of Unknown Soldier, revealing a particular white masculinity at the heart of the symbol. Niska’s story is one of presence, which articulates identities in opposition to the erasure of military experience at the frontlines.

During the past two decades, successive federal governments embarked on a consensus-seeking campaign to shift understanding of Canadian identity from one steeped in the often feminized mythology of peacekeeping to that of a traditionally masculine “warrior nation”. At the same time, it is significant that Indigenous groups in Canada have renewed commitment to sovereignty with movements led by women such as Idle No More (formed in 2012), particularly given the patriarchal and white settler overtones of the “warrior nation” shift at the national level. While Boyden reinforces conventional, national mythology to confirm the narrative of inclusion, which celebrates the achievements of the fictional Xavier and Elijah and by extension historical

Indigenous soldiers, he undermines the belief that Canada was ever a peaceful nation – the myth often held up in opposition to the “warrior nation” – by his exploration of the violence of colonialism in Canada. What the novel makes clear is that both national narratives serve the interests of the colonialist majority.

My fourth chapter discusses another Urquhart work, *Sanctuary Line* (2010). A departure from the previous texts studied in this dissertation, this most recent novel illustrates that not only is the First World War a filter through which to view contemporary conflicts but that contemporary conflicts are often understood through the commemorative traditions of the First World War. In Afghanistan, Canada had no “Unknown Soldiers,” which could have made one of the nation’s most powerful commemorative symbols obsolete. Yet the Unknown Soldier has renewed relevance as Canadians attempt to commemorate those who have died in Afghanistan because its paradoxical nature resonates with how contemporary Canadian casualties have been honoured. The reintroduction of traditional iconography from the First World War over the past two decades would seem to be at odds with the press and government reaction to Captain Nichola Goddard’s death, Canada’s best-known casualty of the Afghanistan War. However, the Goddard character created in official narratives of the Canadian Forces captain reflects the universalizing tendency that has been so appealing in the past, particularly in relation to the Unknown Soldier. The official treatment of Goddard’s death personalizes the Canadian Forces captain as an individual to indicate the justness of the Canadian mission, a conventional elevation used during the First World War in Canada. In contrast, in *Sanctuary Line*, a novel about Liz Crane’s search to understand multiple familial migrations as she spends a summer at her family’s farm, Urquhart insists on



personalizing her officer, Liz's cousin Mandy, modelled on Captain Goddard, even in death. This individual identity explores issues of sexuality and gender, which were present in the media and government's depictions of Goddard, but rarely acknowledged. By examining the real-life Goddard, the fictional Mandy, and other familial deaths in the novel, it becomes clear that what is at stake in modern commemoration is the question of whose lives are worth remembering and how those lives should be commemorated.

The first chapter of this dissertation provides the framework for the changing memorial landscape in Canada. This dissertation is organized chronologically; the first three chapters focus on contemporary works of Canadian First World War fiction set before, during, and in the aftermath of the war and builds to the final chapter, which focuses discussion on a novel set during a more contemporary conflict, Canada's recent mission in Afghanistan. The final chapter is an exploration of how the commemorative traditions of the First World War are utilized to discuss contemporary conflicts, illustrating both the continued importance of the First World War as well as who is deemed valuable and therefore worthy of mourning and commemoration. Understanding how the repurposing of the Unknown Soldier has impacted memorial culture in Canada and the four novels examined here is integral to this study. To do this, a better understanding of how that memorial landscape has changed over the past two decades is necessary. Beginning this study with an examination of Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers* allows readers to see the physical changes to Ottawa's memorial spaces as well as how this contemporary period, in comparison to Findley's era, reflects more conservative commemorative concerns.

## Chapter One:

### **Beyond the Monumental: Jane Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers*, the Canadian War Museum, and Ottawa's Contemporary Commemorative Landscape**

#### **Introduction**

Jane Urquhart's commemorative war fiction speaks to a twenty-first century-experience of war loss. Her novel *The Stone Carvers* (2001) anticipates the personalization of commemorative production in Canada since the repatriation of the country's first casualties of the war in Afghanistan in 2002. Recent commemorations of early conflicts in the nation's history, such as the First World War, reflect the experience of a country that spent more than a decade at war in Afghanistan. Prime Minister Stephen Harper made this connection clear in his remarks during the rededication ceremony for the newly restored Vimy Monument in France on 9 April 2007, the landmark battle's ninetieth anniversary. He suggested that the First World War in general, and the battle of Vimy Ridge in particular, were formative events for Canada: "Every nation has a creation story to tell. The First World War and the Battle of Vimy Ridge are central to the story of our country. 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 of Vimy best of all" (*Vimy Ridge* 90 1:14:49-1:15:09). Vimy's centrality in Canadian mythology is longstanding. As historian Tim Cook explains:

Canada, of course, was not born at Vimy, and had been a country for fifty years. But nations, and especially young ones, need symbols. The victory at Vimy had been achieved by all four Canadian divisions, which drew

men from across the country. It had been accomplished against what many considered to be nearly insurmountable odds – and while the stronger British and French forces had failed on the flanks. This failure alone has appealed to many Canadian nationalists, wallowing over the decades in feelings of colonial inferiority to the parent countries. Vimy was a success that Canada could call its own, even though many of the gunners, logistical units, and even infantry brigade were British. But in the nation's memory, Vimy is actively constructed as a Canadian battle; it remains an important symbolic signpost in Canadian history – and it should be.

*(Shock Troops 148)*

This was never more apparent than at the Vimy Memorial rededication ceremony in 2007. Many of the Canadians in attendance that day were wearing pins, baseball caps, and clothing bearing the slogan “Vimy 1917: Birth of a Nation” (646). However, the rededication festivities for the landmark battle were also used to discuss recent casualties in Afghanistan. In a speech to Canadian veterans in France the day before the rededication ceremony, Harper announced that six Canadian soldiers had died in Afghanistan. Harper noted that to “these men and women, the terrain of Kandahar province today looks as desolate and dangerous as Flanders Fields did 90 years ago,” linking the country's worst day of fatalities in Afghanistan with the country's tremendous losses from the First World War (“Harper honours”). Furthermore, the comparison illustrated that the character of Canadian sacrifice has changed: the overwhelming nature of loss during the World Wars has evolved into a type of loss where it is possible for the nation to experience each war loss individually.

*The Stone Carvers* parallels two construction sites: the building of a stone church, the Immaculate Conception, on a hill in southwestern Ontario in the late nineteenth century,<sup>25</sup> and the creation of a great Canadian memorial to the fallen of the First World War on a hill at Vimy, France in the 1930s. The novel juxtaposes two dominant narratives of Canada's origins: that of the immigrants who establish community out of



Figure 1.1 (Top left): Church of the Immaculate Conception, Formosa, Ontario. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz.

Figure 1.2 (Top right): Interior view from nave, looking toward sanctuary/alter, Church of the Immaculate Conception, Formosa, Ontario. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz

the backwoods of Canada, and that of a Canada coming of age in battle during the First World War. Urquhart's novel also contains twin visionaries: the priest and German immigrant Father Gstyr, sent to Canada to serve the growing German community in

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<sup>25</sup> Based on the real community of Formosa, Ontario and the real-life Father Gstyr, who was funded by King Ludwig II of Bavaria (Richards).

southwestern Ontario, but who dreams of a great stone cathedral to unite his ministry, and that of Canadian sculptor Walter Allward, the creator of the Vimy Monument. Bridging these worlds is Klara Becker, granddaughter of a skilled seamstress from Shoneval, Ontario (the site of Gstir's church) and a woodcarving German immigrant named Joseph Becker. Taught skills by her grandparents who outfitted the church, especially her grandfather Joseph, Klara is haunted by two departures: her brother Tilman, burdened with *wanderlust*, who runs away as a child and spends his early life wandering the fields and back roads of Ontario, and her lover Eamon O'Sullivan, who is killed during the First World War. Reunited as adults many years after the First World War when Tilman unexpectedly walks back into his sister's life, Klara and Tilman seek to commemorate their losses by joining the Vimy Monument's carving team in France. While Gstir's story will be touched on, Klara's narrative of war loss and commemorative recovery will be the focus of much of my critical attention in *The Stone Carvers* for the purposes of this chapter because of its connection to the Vimy Memorial and its thematic exploration of individualizing and universalizing tendencies in memorial production.

In this chapter, *The Stone Carvers* will be considered within the historic context of the Vimy Memorial and in terms of the recent additions to Ottawa's commemorative stage. The new Canadian War Museum (CWM), which opened in 2005, is a site where traditional methods of remembrance and contemporary commemorative practices function simultaneously. The CWM has frequently been celebrated for its evocative architecture, compelling exhibits and use of the museum's vast war art holdings. No

room is more striking than Regeneration Hall, a space repurposing the majority<sup>26</sup> of sculptor Walter Allward's original plaster maquettes for the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France. The Vimy monument's allegory has both religious<sup>27</sup> and political<sup>28</sup> meaning and these meanings are entwined. The original monument contends with a similar structuring paradox to the Unknown Soldier Memorial: the Vimy Monument is both allegorical in nature and specifically individualized. Given commemorative trends during the interwar period and after the opening of the Menin Gate in Belgium in 1927,

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<sup>26</sup> The CWM houses seventeen of the twenty original plaster figures (or maquettes) cast by Allward (Brandon 9). The remaining three, including Canada Bereaved (also known as Mother Canada and Canada Mourning), are located at the Military Communications and Electronics Museum at the Department of Defence base in Kingston, Ontario (9).

<sup>27</sup> The Vimy Memorial is allegorical in design and execution because of the twenty symbolic figures that are part of the monument that together convey narratives about the justness of soldiers' sacrifices during the First World War, the Christian nature of that sacrifice, and the importance of that sacrifice in terms of the nation's identity. As Dennis Duffy describes the memorial, it is "Devoid of irony, it stands at the opposite of any modernist sculptural statement. Nothing should surprise us in the memorial's anti-modernism, since the sculpture enacts a kind of idealized national image-making implicit within the wider habit of Canadian nationalist discourse at the time, discourse that the artist's government patrons sought to augment" ("Ideal Solution" 168). Allward submitted to his government backers an "allegorical schema" that divided the figures into three allegorical groups (172). Situated at the base of the memorial are the Defenders, made up of two statue groups consisting of the figures the Breaking of the Sword and the Sympathy of the Canadians for the Helpless, representing the thousands of Canadians who volunteered (172). Located above the Defenders the figure of Mother Canada gazes below at the graves of the dead and at a symbolic empty sarcophagus of an Unknown Soldier, lined with helmet and laurels (172). The massive white pylons symbolizing the armies of Canada and France soar behind Canada Bereaved and between them is positioned the Spirit of Sacrifice, a figure throwing a torch (a reference to the famous John McCrae poem) with arms extended, striking a pose similar to one of crucifixion (172-173). Finally, at the top of the pylons are the figures of Peace and Justice (172). The monument has distinct religious meaning as Duffy indicates: "The specifically religious intimations of the memorial – implicit in the Madonna-like statue of Canada Bereaved – emerge from its centrepiece, the quasi-crucified figure whom the artist terms 'The Spirit of Sacrifice' .... Together with the veiled and mourning woman, this contorted figure is the other half of a decoupled pieta," a popular type of Christian sculpture, most often depicting the Virgin Mary and a dead Christ, during the Renaissance (173).

<sup>28</sup> Duffy notes that the memorial continued the wartime trend "of conflating the sword with the cross," and suggests that Allward "had fashioned a conduit channelling sacred and secular alike into a stream of transcendental nationalism" (175). Jacqueline Hucker suggests that the religious and political allegory of the Vimy monument is intertwined and the twenty figures depict "interrelated allegorical themes evoking the Christian myth of sacrifice, death, and resurrection and giving expression to the obligation owed to the dead by the living" ("Battle and Burial" 99).

pressure mounted on Allward<sup>29</sup> to include the names of the Canadian missing at Vimy, despite his resistance to the idea (Duffy, “Complexity” 194). When the Vimy memorial was unveiled in 1936, the names of the 11,285 missing Canadians presumed to have died while serving in France were carved on the wall of the monument (194). While Allward’s allegorical figures present a narrative about Christian martial sacrifice, national identity, and the universal nature of loss during the First World War, the inclusion of specific names carved into the monument individualized that sacrifice and created tension with its allegorical and more universal meanings.

Originally intended as a temporary exhibit in Regeneration Hall, Allward’s maquettes garnered significant attention and as a result have become a permanent exhibit. CWM architect Raymond Moriyama wished the space to reflect an “architecture of remembrance and regeneration” (45), in which the Hall would become a “repository of experiences that speak to the future and to hope” (103). Allward’s allegorical figures are essential to this hope; however, in Regeneration Hall the monumental scale of Allward’s original First World War memorial is compressed to a human size. Removed from its battlefield location, and with key figures like Mother Canada/Canada Mourning missing from the CWM, the allegorical meaning of the maquettes changes. The Christian overtones are diminished and the arrangement of the maquettes suggests a more nuanced, yet no less bellicose understanding of national identity. In Regeneration Hall the models are life-sized, individualized figures strategically arranged around a window with views of Parliament Hill, and crucially the Peace Tower, suggesting the martial sacrifice the

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<sup>29</sup> Allward was so resistant to the idea of including the names of the Missing on the monument itself that in 1927 he proposed “to relegate the names of the Missing to the pavement stones,” a suggestion the Canadian Battlefields Memorial Commission rejected (Duffy, “Complexity” 194).

figures represent is key to democracy. The scale of the figures and the lack of surrounding monumental construction creates a different kind of memorial effect in Regeneration Hall. The names of the fallen are not listed in Regeneration Hall as they are at Vimy; however, the contradictory impulses of universalized loss Allward wished to convey and the individualized names he was forced to include on the memorial are present at the CWM in the life-sized allegorical maquettes. While still allegorical, the maquettes' size forces a consideration of the body similar to that of the Unknown Soldier Memorial. Regeneration Hall reflects contemporary individualized war losses and not the mass fatalities of Canada's previous wars. Consequently, the consideration of life-sized individualized figures of loss exhibited in a space that recalls contemporary ramp ceremonies situates the visitor within representations of the losses of the war in Afghanistan. Ultimately, Regeneration Hall serves as a reminder of the dominant narratives, which echo First World War mythology, about Canadian participation in the war in Afghanistan: that sacrifice and sometimes death are required in achieving democracy.

The past two decades have seen considerable renovation, augmentation, and rebuilding of Ottawa's commemorative spaces. The National War Memorial has undergone several phases of renovation and additions such as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (detailed in the Introduction) and the Valiants Memorial (2006). The Valiants Memorial features five statues and nine busts of men and women whose heroism represents "critical moments in Canada's military history" ("Valiants Memorial"). Wellington Street in Ottawa has been reinvigorated as a processional way featuring new



memorials, such as the War of 1812 Monument *Triumph Through Adversity* (2014),<sup>30</sup> proposed commemorative sites like the controversial Memorial to the Victims of Communism,<sup>31</sup> and established federal buildings such as the Supreme Court and Parliament buildings. These features are now part of the ceremonial route during Remembrance Day functions and, collectively, they reinforce the connections between martial sacrifice, peace, and democracy.

This chapter examines a variety of commemorative practices, including monumental, processional, artistic, and literary examples that honour and address

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<sup>30</sup> Unveiled to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the War of 1812 and located on the southeast corner of Parliament Hill, *Triumph Through Diversity* occupies “a site with direct views of, and a symbolic connection to, the National War Memorial, the *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier* and The Valiants Memorial, all of which mark major conflicts in Canada’s history” (“War of 1812 Monument”). Three granite boat-shaped pieces are inscribed with the dates of the conflict and serve as the base for seven life-sized figures (each approximately two meters tall), representing the different groups which united to defend the country against American invasion: a member of the British Army (Royal Newfoundland Regiment), firing a musket, a militiaman with a raised arm, a pointing, Indigenous warrior, a Royal Navy sailor pulling a rope, a Voltigeur, whose arm is being bandaged by a woman, and a Métis man firing a canon (“War of 1812 Monument”).

<sup>31</sup> The proposed Memorial to the Victims of Communism has been planned by the National Capital Commission (NCC), Canada’s federal Conservative party, and Tribute to Liberty, a fundraising group with Conservative party ties, since 2008 (Butler, “Monumental controversy”). With two earlier proposed locations closer to the CWM abandoned (in favour of moving another monument proposed by the Conservative government, the National Holocaust Monument to the War Museum site), the Memorial to the Victims of Communism was to be built opposite the Library and Archives Canada and the Supreme Court on Wellington Street (“Monumental controversy”). The Wellington Street/Supreme Court site had long been earmarked for a new justice building by the NCC; however, the site was given to the new memorial by the approval of the federal cabinet (“Monumental controversy”). According to *Ottawa Citizen* reporter Don Butler, “these machinations were happening out of public view, more than a year before any announcement that the victims of communism memorial had been allotted the Supreme Court Site” (“Monumental controversy”). The winning design was chosen by a seven-member jury of experts, appointed by the federal government and with Conservative and Tribute to Liberty ties, “departing from the past practice of allowing bureaucrats at Canadian Heritage to make jury selections” (“Monumental controversy”). With Tribute to Liberty failing to raise the appropriate funds, the federal government announced \$1.5 million in funding in 2013, doubling that contribution to \$3 million in 2014 (“Monumental controversy”). Many local Ottawa officials as well as federal politicians have voiced concern over the lack of public consultation and the use of public money. Others object to a memorial commemorating events in which Canada has no direct involvement being given a place of such prominence when atrocities perpetrated against Indigenous peoples such as residential schools and the murdered and missing Indigenous women have not been recognized in this national space (“Monumental controversy”). Since the change of government at the federal level, the monument has changed locations; the new federal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced in December 2015 the memorial would be moved from its “prime location” to the Garden of the Provinces in Ottawa, and its large budget and “mammoth size” would also be reduced (Butler, “Revised victims”).

Canadian participation in the First World War and Afghanistan. Commemorations of earlier conflicts, such as the First World War, have been altered to reflect the current circumstances in Canada, which has spent much of the new century at war. The size and the particularity of recent commemorative efforts are in direct contrast to the scope and universality Allward wished to convey at Vimy. However, contemporary commemorative efforts, like Regeneration Hall, continue to respond to the paradoxical tension between universalizing and individualizing that have characterized the Unknown Soldier Memorial since its inception. This chapter will first discuss these arts relating to war commemoration in Canada and the ways in which the visual and plastic arts have reflected contemporary commemorative shifts. The second part of the chapter will explore the tension between universalizing and individualizing in Jane Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers*, which dramatizes the creation of the Vimy Monument in France, and the ways in which the novel's commemorative acts differ from the contemporary visual and plastic arts.

The novel achieved wide popular acclaim, and, as such, helped generate renewed public interest in the Vimy Monument. As Urquhart has stated, "A lot of people, a lot of Canadians went to Vimy – after reading my book" (Ferri 40). The commemorative process presents several challenges for Klara, who takes up carving again after having abandoned the art in the wake of the death of her lover Eamon, and she is forced to disguise herself as a man in order to work at the site. The Vimy Monument allows Klara an opportunity to finally address her losses, commemorate them appropriately, and move forward personally and artistically. In France she falls in love with Giorgio, a mason, veteran, and peacetime friend of Tilman, who works with the siblings in France on the

Vimy Monument. Ultimately, the novel repositions the universal impetus in Allward's original design in order to focus on the commemoration of individual lost loved ones, foreseeing the current experience of military loss in Canada. In doing so, *The Stone Carvers* anticipates a twenty-first century Canadian experience of war: a ceremonial experience of individual loss comparable to what Regeneration Hall reflects. While the CWM presents an officially sanctioned, artistic representation of Canadian war trauma, Urquhart's commemoration uses war as a backdrop for commemoration of romantic and familial losses, whose impact resonates traumatically on the home front.

This chapter also explores how war art has maintained a range of accepted commemorative practices in Canada, and, in contradistinction, how it has challenged the nation's commemorative traditions. Canadian painter Joanne Tod's piece *Oh, Canada – A Lament* (2011), featuring individual portraits of each Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan interspersed with pieces of red and white painted birch panel – representing a disintegrating Canadian flag – is a visual critique of the faulty and problematic nationalism built on militarism that has been so integral to contemporary commemoration in Canada. The individual military portraits Tod used are recognizable to anyone familiar with the recent proliferation of hockey and military commemoration on *Hockey Night In Canada* intermission panels any time a soldier dies; however, her use of the familiar headshots is part of a challenge to the nationalism generated by militarism. The conflation of hockey and the military is not limited to the “Coach's Corner” segment of *Hockey Night in Canada*, but Don Cherry's role in this commemoration is particularly noteworthy. Each time a soldier died, those faces received national attention on *Hockey Night in Canada*, and while the validity and sincerity of Don Cherry's exercise may be

questioned, the combination makes the national passion for hockey a relevant part of the commemoration and remembrance of war loss. Journalist Stephen Marche writes, “Every time a soldier dies, Don Cherry describes him or her during a special segment on *Hockey Night in Canada*. Every time, Cherry can barely get out the words, his voice cracking from the moment the man or woman’s picture goes onscreen. This, too, is part of the ritual, a great conflation of Canadianness – weeping in the middle of a hockey game” (Marche). There are many such examples<sup>32</sup> from the past decade but the comparison of

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<sup>32</sup> The connections between the military and hockey are not new, though the current conflation has become ubiquitous. Tickets for Troops campaigns have taken several forms. In 2008 Toronto Maple Leafs defenseman Luke Schenn founded “Luke’s Troops” a program to host a member of the Canadian Armed Forces during every home game (“Luke’s Troops”). When Schenn was traded to Philadelphia four years later, Toronto forward Joffrey Lupul took over the program, donating two tickets, food, and jerseys at each home game under the banner “Lupe’s Troops” (“Maple Leafs”). More widespread are Canadian Forces appreciation nights. Beginning in the nation’s capital with the Ottawa Senators in 2004, all Canadian NHL teams, with the exception of the Montreal Canadiens, host annual nights in tribute to Canadian soldiers. Despite the weariness of the Canadian public for the extended nature of the Afghanistan War and the departure of the last of Canada’s troops from that theatre in March 2014, these appreciation nights are growing in popularity, not declining. The largest such gathering to date occurred during the 2014-2015 season on 8 November 2014, in Ottawa when more than 3500 members of the Canadian Forces watched the Senators host the Winnipeg Jets (“Senators and presenting partner”). These nights have developed their own conventions: players wear special camouflage jerseys during warmup to be auctioned off later for military charities (“Senators and presenting partner”), “Support Our Troops” merchandise is sold in team gift shops (“Flames”), and military personnel in attendance join the home team at centre ice after the game for a commemorative group photo (“Flames”, “Senators and presenting partner”). These conventions merge soldier with hockey player and hockey player with soldier. The group photo echoes the iconic championship team photos from the Stanley Cup Final and for one night soldiers’ merchandise is sold in the same ways that hockey stars are marketed. Hockey organizations contribute some funding for such events, but corporate sponsors are also promoted; these companies have a military-security bent such as Curtiss-Wright Defense Solutions, CMC Electronics, DEW Engineering & Development, Thales Canada Inc., and Commissionaires – all sponsors of the Canadian Forces Appreciation Night in Ottawa in 2014. While this fusing is more oblique in the sponsorship of these nights, the synthesis of hockey player-soldier is unmistakable in pregame ceremonies and the promotion of the military’s role in conflicts such as Afghanistan is apparent. Toronto’s 2013 event featured players in camouflage jerseys in warmup as Canadian Forces members repelled from the rafters while military vehicles were paraded on the ice, led by former Leaf and NHL all-time penalty leader, Dave “Tiger” Williams, to the tune of traditional arena pump-up song, “Eye of the Tiger” (Young). Where the line is crossed from appreciation to promotion is often blurred, but revving up for a sporting event by celebrating the machinery of war certainly qualifies. However, these events have garnered much public support, as evidenced by the continued support of fans and season ticket holders, who donate the bulk of tickets given to soldiers for these occasions. Other connections between hockey and the military are also seen as charitable in nature. Ottawa Senators owner Eugene Melnyk visited Canadian troops stationed in Kandahar in 2007, donating jerseys, hockey sticks, gloves, goalie equipment, in-line skates, and Tim Hortons gift cards to soldiers (“Eugene Melnyk”). Much of this connection revolves around branding and iconography. When the Atlanta Thrashers relocated to

soldiers and hockey players is not a recent phenomenon. As Michael Buma notes in *Refereeing Identity: The Cultural Work of Canadian Hockey Novels* (2012), “hockey novels also work to naturalize the connection between hockey and national identity by representing the game in association with formative Canadian events,” in which the actions of the First World War are frequently invoked (51). What is new, however, is the relationship to the Afghanistan mission. Hockey was used to garner support from the Canadian people for the commemoration of Canada’s casualties in Afghanistan, and by extension, support for the controversial mission. The public displays of Canadians supporting their troops now often resemble fans attending sporting events. Clad in red and waving flags on the Highway of Heroes,<sup>33</sup> these supporters conjure images of the other great moment of nationalist outpouring in recent memory, the 2010 Vancouver Olympics at which Canada’s double-gold in ice hockey was the culminating event. *Oh,*

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Winnipeg and became the second incarnation of the beloved Jets franchise, True North Sports & Entertainment (the team’s owner) “ditched its old stylized hockey stick logo for a decidedly military look” (Rennie). The new team logo “was inspired by the logo of the Royal Canadian Air Force” (“Winnipeg Jets”). During the design stage the team consulted with National Defence: “The Defence Department has given the Winnipeg Jets their marching orders when it comes to the hockey club’s Air Force-inspired logo. A nine-page contract signed this summer spells out how Canada’s newest NHL team can and cannot use its new, military-themed emblem” (Rennie). A similar tradition has begun at the Memorial Cup (itself a championship trophy first awarded in 1919 as a memorial to the fallen of the First World War), junior hockey’s championship tournament in Canada. A new practice in which the tournament host team wears a Canadian Forces-inspired jersey has quickly become part of the Memorial Cup tournament’s tradition (Kennedy).

<sup>33</sup> The Highway of Heroes refers to a stretch of Highway 401 from Trenton, Ontario, where coffins from Afghanistan landed at CFB Trenton, to the coroner’s office in Toronto. Developed as a tradition in 2002 after the highway was used as a funeral route for the four victims of friendly fire from the Tanark Farms Incident, it has been a destination for public support for the fallen as well as patriotic displays (Fisher 29). Officially renamed as the “Highway of Heroes” in 2007 after a campaign supported by members of the Canadian public as well as municipal, provincial, and federal government officials to change the name, succeeded (Fisher 41-56). The practice has continued even though Canada’s role in Afghanistan has ended. On 6 March 2015, Sergeant. Andrew Doiron was killed in a friendly-fire accident by Kurdish troops in a training exercise in Iraq (“Sgt. Andrew Doiron’s”). As his remains traveled down the highway in a scene familiar to Canadians, the tradition’s popularity was clear to Washington Post reporter, Dan Lamothe: “The tributes were captured in photos and videos shared on social media that underscored how much a part of Canadian culture the practice has become” (Lamothe).

*Canada – A Lament* highlights the tension in Canada during the last decade over the Afghanistan mission and the nature of public support: is such outpouring of patriotic sentiment indicative of Canadians' belief in the merits of the Afghanistan mission or is conflating public displays of patriotism with support for the nation's military actions a misunderstanding of the current cultural climate?

The recent changes to Ottawa's commemorative landscape work to naturalize martial activity, presenting war as an uncontroversial and expected part of the country's history. Regeneration Hall, the Canadian War Museum, the renovated site of the National War Memorial, and the Peacekeeping Monument have been created, re-inscribed, or intentionally omitted from official ceremonies to conflate two key moments in Canada's martial history, the First World War and Afghanistan, through the visual and processional modes. While commemorative activities honouring the First World War and Afghanistan have been strategically conflated in official activities, artists working outside the federal government's influence problematize such conflation. In *The Stone Carvers*, Urquhart undertakes a similar, albeit fictional, renovation of a storied national commemorative site, re-inscribing the Vimy Memorial with personal meaning. Urquhart's novel elevates romantic and familial loss to the level of national mourning, advocating a commemorative undertaking for non-martial losses. Klara's commemorative acts recall intimate moments with her lost lover, and her memorial efforts, carving the face of her lover into the Vimy Memorial, are themselves intimate acts. Her literal creations provide commemorative alternatives to the allegorical commemorative acts officially sanctioned by successive Canadian governments over the past two decades. In *The Stone Carvers*, Urquhart emphasizes the loss of a lover when Klara re-inscribes a national monument –

the Vimy Memorial in France – with a specific, private loss that cannot simply be subsumed into a politically nationalist narrative.

### **Ottawa’s Changing Ceremonial Landscape of Remembrance**

As art historian Reesa Greenberg indicates in “Constructing the Canadian War Museum/Constructing the Landscape of a Canadian Identity,” the CWM plays a significant role in “a new ceremonial landscape at the architectural heart of the nation’s capital” (183). Importantly, this “new ceremonial landscape” alters the national focus. The CWM’s spotlight on remembrance led to the creation of a new space commemorating war loss in the nation’s capital; its construction also reflects the evolving nature of Canadian international military efforts since the end of the Cold War. Most significantly, it marked a shift from peacekeeping to active, military combat in the national imaginary. Pride in Canada’s heavy engagement in peacekeeping, beginning in 1956 with deployment in the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), led Canadians to understand the Canadian Forces and international involvement solely through the specific lens of peacekeeping. Public admiration for and understanding of peacekeeping was codified in various commemorative acts in the early-to-mid 1990s, designed to celebrate



Figure 2.3: Reconciliation, the Peacekeeping Monument, as viewed from the intersection of Murray Street and Sussex Drive, southeast of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz

peacekeeping as a distinctly Canadian symbol. Reconciliation, the Peacekeeping Monument, was unveiled in Ottawa in 1992 and its official description suggests that the monument's purpose is in keeping with public perception of Canada's peacekeeping role in the international community:

Dedicated to Canadian peacekeepers, this special monument honours both the living and the dead. It tells a story that every Canadian can be proud of.

Since 1948, over 110,000 Canadian soldiers have served in peacekeeping operations around the world. In 1988, United Nations Peacekeepers were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. As this monument shows, a large part of that honour is thanks to the contribution of Canadians. ("Reconciliation")



This description implicitly links the 1988 Nobel Peace Prize with the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize won by Lester B. Pearson as Canadian achievements on the international stage – achievements that, as we shall see, counter the idea promoted by the political right of Canada as a “Warrior Nation”.

Those who wished Canada to once again become a war-fighting nation blamed peacekeeping for the problems in the Canadian Forces which began to emerge in the 1990s. In their popular book *Empire to Umpire* (1994), conservative historians Norman Hillmer and Jack Granatstein believed that the side-effects of constant participation in UN peacekeeping missions over several decades culminated in catastrophe as overworked Canadian soldiers on UN missions in Yugoslavia and Somalia were plagued by scandal (322-23).<sup>34</sup> These missions seriously damaged the reputation of the Canadian

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<sup>34</sup> The Somalia Affair was one of the Canadian Forces’ darkest hours. In the summer of 1992, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney committed Canadian peacekeepers to the escalating situation in Somalia, despite the Canadian Forces’ existing peacekeeping commitments in the former Yugoslavia – itself an increasingly desperate situation (McKay and Swift 199). According to Ian McKay and Jamie Swift in *Warrior Nation*, “A degree of imperial hubris was involved in the North American assumption that the unelected policemen of the world from Canada and the United States could simultaneously intervene in both an escalating Balkan conflict and in the equally complicated situation in Somalia” (199). The situation finally erupted in March 1993 when soldiers from the “elite” Canadian Airborne Regiment (CAR) killed Abdi Hamdare and Ahmad Aruush, for alleged security breaches; however, “Hamdare and Aruush were shot from behind as they fled; Aruush was finished off at close range” having been baited by Canadian Forces personnel who left food and water out “to attract intruders” (199-200). Further atrocities were committed on March 16, when Shidane Abukar Arone, aged sixteen, was caught by Canadian peacekeepers, who found Arone “hiding in a portable toilet and then proceeded to torture the boy to death. While the ordeal was going on some eighty soldiers, according to one estimate, could hear his screams” (200). The murders were initially covered up, but the truth eventually came out because of military doctor Major Barry Armstrong’s “refusal to go along with the military’s attempted cover-up, and to the persistence of a handful of journalists” (200). By 1995, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien had disbanded the Canadian Airborne Regiment and established a Commission of Inquiry to examine the Somalia Affair, a Commission which was “stonewalled by Department of National Defence delays in the face of orders to produce all documentation related to the scandal” (201). The scandal was devastating for the Canadian Forces but established a persistent narrative for Canada’s military in the 1990s: “The main victims of the Somalia affair were, of course, the Somalis who suffered at the hands of the Canadian military. But according to one line of thought it was the military itself that was victimized by the 1993 events in the Horn of Africa” (202). Jack Granatstein, defender of the Canadian Forces, is one such historian who supports this narrative that the Canadian Forces were the “true victims” of the Somalia Affair. In his 2004 book *Who Killed the Canadian Military?* Granatstein blames a few “gung-ho” racist members of the Canadian Airborne for the murders (157), and condemns the “sputtering and splenetic judge” appointed to run the

Forces and according to Granatstein and Hillmer their failure should be blamed in part on over-deployment and operational fatigue (322-24). Yet, the Peacekeeping Monument, unveiled amidst the problems of the 1990s, illustrates a conventional Canadian understanding of peacekeeping:<sup>35</sup> “The monument depicts three peacekeepers — two men and one woman. They stand on two sharp, knifelike edges of stone, cutting through the rubble and debris of war and converging at a high point, which symbolizes the resolution of conflict” (“Reconciliation”). Significantly, this “rubble and debris of war” suggest that an end to armed conflict has already occurred, situating the statues of the peacekeepers where they remain in the national consciousness: as the buffer zone between two former enemies, mediating a lasting peace. The soldiers are static: one soldier stands ready with a pair of binoculars, another crouches and uses her radio,

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Commission. However, he saves most of his criticism for then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and not the country’s military leaders: “But, ultimately, the country’s political leadership must take responsibility for the ruination of the Canadian Forces in the 1990s. It was Prime Minister Mulroney who agreed to commitment after commitment while failing to ensure that the forces had the necessary manpower, the funds, the equipment, and the training to do the jobs they were being asked to undertake. Indeed, Mulroney sent Canadians to the former Yugoslavia and Somalia at precisely the time he was cutting the forces’ strength and reducing the number of battalion-sized units” (159). Granatstein employed a similar defense in the second edition of his book *Canada’s Army* (2002) updated in 2011 to include Canada’s role in Afghanistan. In his new preface, he acknowledges that “*Canada’s Army* is an extended argument for military professionalism” (xi). He explains how that professionalism was under attack in Somalia: “Subsisting on bottled water and U.S. MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) – manpower restrictions meant that no cooks were deployed with the CAR, condemning the men to eat from ration packs – living in dust, and pestered by flies and scorpions, the Airborne Regiment did its work effectively” (405). Granatstein draws a parallel between the Airborne Regiment’s soldiers, forced to eat rations in theatre, and the “hungry Somalis” baited by CAR soldiers. If the three murdered Somalis were victims, so too were those Canadian soldiers serving under such conditions, according to Granatstein, and the results all too familiar: “Those troubles ultimately resulted in the disbandment of the CAR, the near-destruction of the army, the almost total discrediting of the profession of arms in Canada, and the worst blows the Canadian Forces had ever sustained in peacetime” (405).

<sup>35</sup> This traditional depiction of peacekeeping was perpetuated even after the humiliating details of the Somalia Affair became public, three years later when the Royal Canadian Mint used the image of the Peacekeeping Monument on a commemorative loonie in 1995 in celebration of Canada’s role in UN missions (“Canada’s Loonie”).

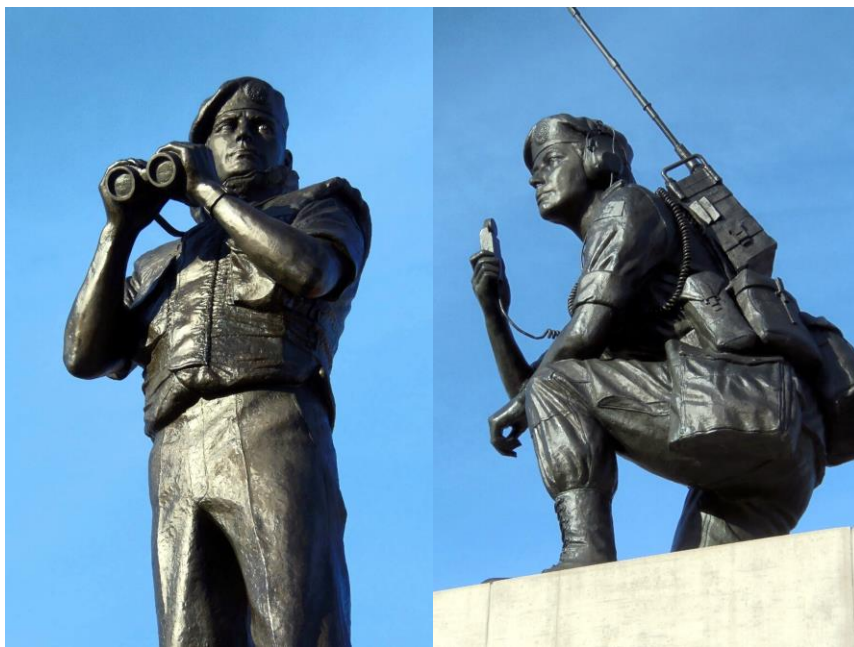


Figure 1.4 (Top left): Detail of figure with binoculars, Reconciliation, the Peacekeeping Monument, Ottawa. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz

Figure 1.5 (Top right): Detail of crouched figure using radio, Reconciliation, the Peacekeeping Monument, Ottawa. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz

and the third stands, rifle slung over his shoulder, not ready to fire, but is watching and approachable. Together, these figures stand in contrast to other military statues in the capital: they are passive when set against the soldiers marching through the arch of the National War Memorial, and they lack the allegorical power of Allward's figures of sacrifice and continued military engagement in Regeneration Hall. These statues represent the more publicly tolerated Chapter VI UN missions,<sup>36</sup> which were designed to help mediate and establish peace between two parties, and denied the deployed peacekeepers the mandate to use force. The figures of the Peacekeeping Monument depict a peacekeeping in line with the national imaginary and the myth of Canadian civility: observing not engaging; acting as buffers, not combatants.

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<sup>36</sup> Chapter VI UN missions do not allow UN peacekeepers to use force, Chapter VII missions allow for the use of force.

The CWM is among several projects designed to revamp the martial landscape of the nation's capital over the last two decades. One of the consequences of moving the CWM to a new location is a symbolic distancing from a peacekeeping identity. The old CWM was located on Sussex Street beside the Royal Canadian Mint and its location facilitated a processional movement from the National War Memorial, north along Sussex Street, past the Peacekeeping Monument, to the CWM, for events such as Remembrance Day and significant military anniversaries. One of the repercussions of the new location of the CWM at LeBreton Flats is that Ottawa's commemorative space has been altered. The Peacekeeping Monument is no longer situated between the CWM and the National War Memorial. Consequently, the monument is no longer an important marker in the nation's annual remembrance of military sacrifice.

Much of this development over the past two decades has focused on the National War Memorial site. The National War Memorial, the country's national cenotaph, was built between 1926 and 1932 by Vernon March of Kent, England, who won an international competition for his design "The Response" ("National"). March was assisted in his work molding and casting the bronze figures by his six brothers and his sister, who completed his work after the designer died in 1930 ("National"). The figures were displayed in London, England, and eventually placed in storage until 1937 because the Ottawa memorial site was not yet ready when the casting was completed; construction on the granite arch and site landscape only began in 1938 ("National"). As a result, the memorial was not dedicated for more than two decades after the First World War concluded, in May 1939 by King George VI, "sadly and ironically only a few months before the outbreak of the Second World War" (Cook, *Shock Troops* 625).



Figure 1.6 (Top left): The National War Memorial (The Response), with Tomb of the Unknown and ceremonial sentry in the foreground, Ottawa. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz  
 Figure 1.7 (Top right): Detail of “Great Response” figures carrying machine guns, National War Memorial, Ottawa. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz

Situated on a pedestrian island between the forks of Elgin Street and Wellington Street, the National War Memorial faces towards Elgin Street, the National Arts Centre and Confederation Park with the Parliament buildings, the Rideau Canal, the Chateau Laurier, and the Gatineau Hills as its backdrop. Comprised of a granite archway and twenty-four bronze figures, the monument is both symbolic and contains historical details (“The National War Memorial”). The granite arch is topped by allegorical figures representing Peace and Freedom while the twenty-two bronze figures advancing through the arch are “symbolic of the ‘Great Response’ of the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who answered the call to serve.... The figures are not shown in fighting attitudes, but rather express movement and the enthusiasm and eagerness of the people” (“The National War Memorial”). However, the uniforms and equipment represented speak to the specifics of war: they hold Lewis Machine Guns and Vickers Guns, while

one figure wears the kilt of the Scottish regiments and another the cap tally of the HMCS *Stadacona* (“The National War Memorial”). Ultimately, the allegorical meaning of the monument is grounded in the historical specificity of the First World War.

The National War Memorial site has been significantly altered in the past twenty years. The site was overhauled from 1997 to 1999 to provide better foot access to the paved, pedestrian island where the monument sits as a precondition for the repatriation of the Unknown Soldier the following year in 2000 (Greenberg 187). The installation of the Valiants Memorial in 2006 expanded the footprint of the National War Memorial site. The Valiants Memorial was created by Marlene Hilton Moore and John McEwan and is located on the northeast corner of the pedestrian island containing the National War Memorial and is also bordered by several pedestrian crossings (“Valiants”). The Valiants Memorial includes two staircases that lead to pedestrian access for the Rideau Canal



Figure 1.8: Sir Arthur Currie, Valiants Memorial; view from the east intersection of Wellington Street and Elgin Street, Ottawa. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz

pathway, and to a bronze wall inscription reading “No day will ever erase you from the memory of time” in English, French and the original Latin from Virgil’s *The Aeneid* (“Valiants”). The memorial itself is a collection of five statues and nine busts situated around the triangular railing and stairway access to the Rideau Canal pedestrian walkway (“Valiants”).

The Valiants Memorial trumpets the history of martial heroism in Canada. This contrasts with earlier depictions of heroism in the national capital region such as the Peacekeeping Monument, but also the Terry Fox statue (1983)<sup>37</sup> and the Harper Memorial (Sir Galahad) (1905).<sup>38</sup> Both the Fox monument and the Harper Memorial celebrate a certain type of civic, masculine, everyday heroism – outside of the martial sphere frequently recognized today – and were placed in positions of prominence in front of Parliament Hill. The Valiants Memorial celebrates heroes from Canadian martial history and divides them into five time periods: the French Regime (1534-1763), the American Revolution (1775-1783), the War of 1812 (1812-1815), the First World War (1914-1918), and the Second World War (1939-1945) (Curry).<sup>39</sup> Reflecting the current specificity of Afghanistan losses, these busts and statues are life size,<sup>40</sup> and the scale and

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<sup>37</sup> The Terry Fox statue was unveiled in 1983 to commemorate the Canadian athlete and cancer survivor who captivated the world with his “Marathon of Hope” to raise money for cancer research (“Street SmArt” 2012). The statue is located on Wellington Street in Ottawa across from the main gate entrance to Parliament Hill and depicts Fox while running.

<sup>38</sup> The Harper Memorial honours a young civil servant named Henry Albert Harper, “who died trying to save a young woman who had fallen through the thin ice of the Ottawa River while skating” (“Street SmArt” 3). Depicted as Sir Galahad, a chivalrous knight, the monument commemorates Harper’s bravery, and was chosen by his friend and future prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King (3). The monument is located on Wellington Street in Ottawa, in front of the main gate to Parliament Hill, opposite the Terry Fox monument.

<sup>39</sup> The fourteen individuals commemorated with statues as part of the Valiants Memorial are as follows: Louis Comte de Frontenac, governor of New France who repelled a British siege of Quebec City in 1690; Pierre LeMoyne d’Iberville who fought the British in Hudson’s Bay in the late seventeenth-century; Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea), the Mohawk chief who fought with the British during the Revolutionary War and settled in present-day Brantford with his followers after the war; John Butler, whose militia regiment,





Figure 1.9 (Top left): Terry Fox statue, Wellington Street, Ottawa. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz  
 Figure 1.10 (Top right): Harper Memorial (Sir Galahad), Wellington Street, Ottawa. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz

and specificity of the Valiants Memorial adds “human faces and stories to Canada’s War Memorial,” according to *Globe and Mail* journalist Bill Curry (Curry). Thus, the Valiants Memorial provides a type of individualization deemed lacking in the National War Memorial. The human scale of the Valiants Memorial allows the viewer to come-face-to-face with not only individuals and their acts of heroism, but also specific loss, as several

Butler’s Rangers, fought the Americans during the Revolutionary War and counted former slaves among its members; Sir Isaac Brock, British general during the War of 1812 who died fighting the American invasion; Charles-Michel d’Irumberry de Salaberry, who prevented an American invasion at Chateaugay in 1813; Laura Secord, who carried word of an American attack to Lieutenant James FitzGibbon in 1813; Georgina Pope, an army nurse who served in both the Boer War and the First World War; Sir Arthur Currie, the first commander of the Canadian Corps during the First World War and celebrated general; Corporal Joseph Kaeble, posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross in 1918; Lieutenant Hampton Gray, a pilot with the Royal Navy and the last Canadian to be awarded (posthumously) the Victoria Cross; Captain John Wallace Thomas, a Newfoundlander and merchant mariner who saved his vessel and troops from an air attack in 1940; Major Paul Triquet, winner of the Victoria Cross during the Italian Campaign, 1943; and Pilot Officer Andy Mynarski, posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for trying to save comrades from a burning plane over France (Curry).

<sup>40</sup> Or near life-size as in the case of the central figure of the memorial Sir Arthur Currie (Curry).



of the individuals honoured in the memorial died serving their country. This monument stands in contrast to the Peacekeeping Monument as the Valiants Memorial “pays tribute to the people who have served this country in times of war and the contribution they have made in building our nation” (“Valiants Memorial”). The Valiants Memorial suggests contemporary Canada is a nation built through war and martial prowess, not one developed through compromise and peacekeeping. It implies that Canada’s military has built the nation and, by extension, that Canadians participated in such a nation-building project recently in Afghanistan. At the unveiling ceremony, then Governor General Michaëlle Jean linked the honouring of valour from previous conflicts with Canadian participation in the escalating conflict in Afghanistan: “Today, our Canadian Forces are again involved in a war.... For the first time in many years, Canadians have been forced to come to terms with the harsh realities of armed conflict” (Curry). The site’s improvements also force viewers to come to terms with the reality of a move away from internationalism, characterized by a peacekeeping commitment, and a return to a more obvious nationalism. The Peacekeeping Monument places Canadian achievement in an international context; the monuments at the National War Memorial portray martial achievement in distinctly national terms.

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was added to the site in 2000. The tomb went unguarded until 2006, when a photo was captured of a man urinating on the tomb during Canada Day festivities; consequently, the Rideau Hall Ceremonial Guard had its duties expanded in 2007 to include the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier from spring to Remembrance Day (Robertson). In August 2014 the National Sentry Program assumed the duties of the Ceremonial Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as a way of

commemorating the centennial of the First World War; the program includes soldiers from across the country and all branches of the Canadian Forces (Robertson). Following the fatal shooting of Corporal Nathan Cirillo on 22 October 2014 as he guarded the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, armed Ottawa police officers were added to the site to guard the soldiers performing ceremonial duties; though armed, the sentries' weapons are not loaded (Yogaretnam). The final additions to the site came on Remembrance Day 2014<sup>41</sup> when the National War Memorial was rededicated by Governor General David Johnston and the monument was renovated to include the years of the South African War (Boer War) and the war in Afghanistan, in addition to a new inscription "In Service to Canada – Au service du Canada" on the front of the monument, underneath the dates for the First World War ("Remembrance Day draws"). What at one time had been controversial<sup>42</sup> – the addition of the Afghanistan mission dates to the war memorial – seemed natural and garnered little dissent in 2014. It is logical to add this latest war to the memorial but it illustrates how commonplace martial thinking has become that what so many had hesitated to call a war when Canadian casualties started to increase in 2006 now takes its place with earlier conflicts in the nation's commemorative landscape.

These modifications have significantly altered the appearance of Canada's capital. As Greenberg states, "Together, these memorials – including the new War Museum – construct a landscape of war trauma in the centre of the nation's capital" (189). Visitors

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<sup>41</sup> The National War Memorial site was closed for renovations again in 2016 to restore and repair damage to the monument and neighbouring square but no additional commemorative material was added to the site (Crawford, "National War Memorial renovations").

<sup>42</sup> Some veterans and military organizations opposed the inclusion of additional dates on the monument. Some worried the additions would exclude veterans who served in peacekeeping missions (Murphy). Others objected because the scale of conflicts such as Afghanistan was dramatically different from earlier wars, as Jack Granatstein notes, "I think with some members, it's a sense that the world wars were such a different character than everything else we've done it kind of debases the currency a bit to include the other conflicts" (Murphy).

to the capital for Canada's national Remembrance Day ceremony now progress along a route to the National War Memorial for the official ceremony. Upon the conclusion of the ceremony, spectators move west to Wellington Street and past the Parliament Buildings and the Supreme Court of Canada, concluding with further activities at the Canadian War Museum at LeBreton Flats (189). Symbolically, citizens are led from the commemoration of military sacrifice and loss, to the evocative image of the Peace Tower, which contains a Memorial Chamber,<sup>43</sup> and symbols of Canadian democracy and justice, and conclude again with a reminder of the sacrifices necessary to achieve peace and democracy (189-90). According to Greenberg, for those participating in the ceremony, both those present in Ottawa and watching on television at home, this route enacts "a public, televised rite that embodies the national narrative of wars fought for peace" (190); however, Greenberg's insistence that The Reconciliation, the Peacekeeping Monument, is part of this martial procession is contradicted by the CWM's relocation to the west side of Parliament Hill from its previous site on Sussex Drive. While located on Sussex Drive, the CWM was a component of a museum landscape that emphasized multiple cultural aspects of the nation and included the National Art Gallery of Canada, the Royal Canadian Mint, and was opposite the Canadian Museum of Civilization,<sup>44</sup> a national museum located a short distance away, across the Ottawa River in Gatineau. To get from the War Memorial to the old CWM on Sussex Drive on Remembrance Day, observers

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<sup>43</sup> Created after much of the Centre Block was destroyed by fire in 1916, the Peace Tower was designed as a statement of Canada's commitment to peace and as a memorial to those Canadians who died during the First World War. The tower contains a Memorial Chamber, which houses a central stone altar, displaying Books of Remembrance, listing the 118,000 Canadians who have died during military service ("Explore the Peace Tower").

<sup>44</sup> The Harper government announced in fall 2012 that the Canadian Museum of Civilization would be renamed the Canadian Museum of History (Leblanc). The museum's anthropological focus shifted to address Canadian social and political history (Leblanc).

had to pass the Peacekeeping Monument, acknowledging its traditional symbolism as part of official commemorative activities and expanding the definition of who and what Canada commemorates at the national level. Relocating the CWM to its current site at LeBreton Flats not only creates a significant martial space within the national capital, but also results in the elision of the Peacekeeping Monument from ceremonial procession routes and commemorative services. The effect of selecting the LeBreton Flats site is that the Peacekeeping Monument, with its emphasis on observation and mediation, exists outside of the proscribed routes of official commemoration and is dropped from an official narrative about Canada's international role in securing peace. That such a shift occurred within such a short period after the unveiling of the Peacekeeping Monument itself illustrates how rapidly Canada has moved from an officially sanctioned image of the blue beret<sup>45</sup> to an official rebranding centered on its martial traditions and exemplified by the nation's role in Afghanistan, from 2001 until 2014.

### **The Remaking of the Canadian War Museum and Regeneration Hall**

The new Canadian War Museum demonstrates, both architecturally and symbolically, a changed approach to commemoration. It also reflects the recent shift toward more traditional memorializing methods to commemorate Canada's combat role during the war in Afghanistan.<sup>46</sup> The building and grounds of the CWM reflect the current impetus to create sites of war experience on Canadian soil, what Greenberg

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<sup>45</sup> The "blue beret" is a reference to light-blue hats and helmets worn by military personnel on UN peacekeeping deployments and became a symbol of the lightly armed UN peacekeeper, situated "between two warring parties that have agreed to a ceasefire – or, hence, 'interpositional' peacekeeping" (McKay and Swift 152).

<sup>46</sup> In contrast to peacekeeping missions of previous decades.

describes as “landscapes of trauma” (185). The repatriation of a specific national symbol, the Unknown Soldier, is symbolically paralleled at the Canadian War Museum, which has figuratively repatriated many Canadian military markers, incorporating these iconic representations into the architecture and landscape of the site.

Architecturally, the museum reflects the battlefields of Europe: its bunker-like construction and faux bullet-hole studded walls suggest a museum “found in a war zone” (Moriyama 7). The building’s green roof is part of a strategy of ecological conservation and also features a wheelchair accessible rooftop pathway called La Traverse (47, 60). This pathway is the re-creation of a trench-like experience for visitors and augments the symbolic repatriation of war experience at the site. This includes the museum grounds, which contain a landscaped commemorative representation of the battlefield at Beaumont Hamel (53), a traumatic site of national importance for Newfoundland from the First World War, every bit as foundational for the province as Vimy is for the nation.<sup>47</sup> The Hall of Remembrance, located in the main foyer of the CWM, contains the Unknown Soldier’s original headstone (82). Brought from France during the Unknown Soldier’s repatriation, the headstone is highlighted in a shaft of sunlight at “the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month” (82). These acts of symbolic repatriation were not

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<sup>47</sup> Beaumont Hamel, part of the larger Somme Offensive, was the site of an attack by the 1<sup>st</sup> Newfoundland Regiment that took place on July 1, 1916. The attack was unsuccessful, devastating, and resulted in the complete destruction of the regiment (Keegan 295). According to Robert J. Harding “A highly selective, inspirational cultural memory of the attack rapidly emerged, emphasizing bravery, determination, imperial loyalty, Christian devotion, and immortal achievement. However, each medium added its own distinguishing marks to the myth. Immediate reactions mythologized Beaumont Hamel in order to combat widespread grief. Rather than lamenting an advance that had gone horribly wrong, military and state officials, and the press transformed the failed assault into a heroic and inspiring event. Memorial Day ceremonies suggested that World War I had been a formative national undertaking, most appropriately symbolized by Beaumont Hamel. Through annual ritualizing, consolatory rhetoric was quickly transformed into the language of civic inspiration. A volume of historical literature also appeared in this period which, rather than acting as an alternative, served to reinforce the myth” (Harding).

only essential for a country that was in danger, in some eyes, of forgetting its military past, but also necessary for a country whose military achievements have occurred mostly outside its own border. As Noah Richler suggests, in Canada, “it has almost always been necessary to travel to the fight because it was never going to cross the water and come to home” (16). Describing the architectural design team’s approach to the themes of remembrance and regeneration, Moriyama suggested the CWM would link military sacrifice with hope for the future: “Our building would house the memories of devastation and sacrifice while expressing the power of survival and rebirth, acting as a visceral link between the ‘truths’ of yesterday and the possibilities of tomorrow” (45). The philosophical approach toward the design of the Canadian War Museum reflects the merger of official iconographies of Canadian military engagement during the Afghanistan mission: a combination of twentieth-century Canadian wartime success during the World Wars and Korea and the image of the “Pearsonian” blue beret – symbolic of the still-popular achievement of Canadian peacekeeping (Windsor et al. 12). The careful symbolic repatriation of important icons and battlefields from the First World War at the CWM reflect an increased emphasis over the past decade on the return journey, strategically placing symbolic national war experience and loss on Canadian soil while reinforcing that actual combat occurs outside Canada’s borders.

This merger of peacekeeping missions with combat missions is made central in Regeneration Hall, which contains Walter Allward’s plaster maquettes for the original Vimy Monument in France. It is a space that commemorates and parallels military action and wartime sacrifice with the achievement of peace and democracy: from the mezzanine level the exterior siding Morse code message of “Lest we forget” and “N’oublions

jamais” are visible when sun comes through the rectangular openings in the slanting steel north wall (Moriyama 109). The full-length triangular window opposite the mezzanine frames the Peace Tower,<sup>48</sup> its original construction inspired by the events of the First World War (109). In Regeneration Hall, the return journey is also emphasized: the



Figure 1.11: Exterior of the Canadian War Museum, with Morse code messages visible on siding, Ottawa.  
Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz

descent from the mezzanine is reminiscent of the concluding ramp ceremony at CFB Trenton, which every Canadian casualty in Afghanistan took. As the visitor to Regeneration Hall moves down the stairs below street level, the downward movement reminds the museum-goer of the burial process. In this way, Regeneration Hall is a symbolic supplement to the KAF ramp ceremonies which began the journey home for

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<sup>48</sup> The Peace Tower was completed in 1927 as part of the newly constructed Centre Block buildings on Parliament Hill (Cook, *Shock Troops* 624). The Peace Tower contains “Canada’s Books of Remembrance – seven ornately designed memorials, every page of which is hand-illustrated and illuminated” (618). The books contain the names of more than 65,000 Canadians killed during or because of their wounds from the First World War until April 30, 1922 (the Department of Veterans Affairs cut-off day for inclusion) (618). Despite the cut-off date occurring more than 90 years ago, new names continue to be added as more Canadians who died from their war wounds before that date are found (618).

each individual soldier lost in Afghanistan. However, as visitors descend the staircase from the mezzanine level, their view alters. The glimpse of the Peace Tower disappears, a shift in the viewer's perspective that transforms the tower into an architectural reminder

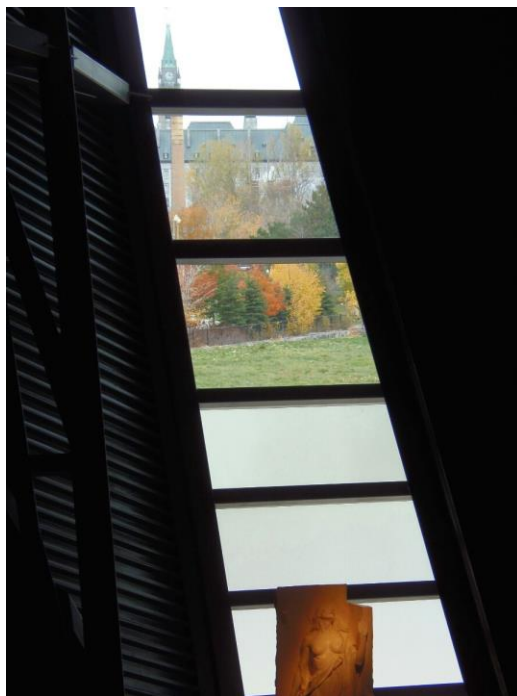


Figure 1.12: Walter Allward, “Hope” plaster maquette, framed by view of the Peace Tower, Regeneration Hall, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz

of the frailty of peace itself (109). It is replaced by the original plaster maquette of Walter Allward's “Hope”. To reach this model from the ground floor, a visitor must walk past allegorical representations of “The Spirit of Sacrifice,” “Breaking of the Sword,” and “Sympathy of the Canadians for the Helpless”. According to literary scholar Gordon Bölling, the inclusion of these statues in the Vimy Monument in France stresses the futility of war, not only because of Allward's emphasis on the symbolic breaking of the sword, but also because of his emphasis on mourning (310). However, in Regeneration Hall the chief figures of mourning from the original monument (“Mother Canada” and the “Mourning Parents”) are absent. This absence negates the consolatory nature of the



original monument and leaves an unmediated commemoration of heroic sacrifice. In Regeneration Hall, “The Spirit of Sacrifice” receives greater emphasis than at Vimy: the two figures that comprise the finished piece are displayed separately. Presented without the figures of mourning that bring closure to war, “The Spirit of Sacrifice” as it is



Figure 1.13: Ground level view of Regeneration Hall, showing the two figures (“The Torchbearer” far right, and “The Sacrifice” second from right) of the “Spirit of Sacrifice” separated, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa. Image credit: Andrew Lubowitz.

displayed in Regeneration Hall highlights not only the act of immolation but also the perpetual passing and bearing of the torch, from the First World War and subsequent conflicts to recent participation in Afghanistan. As visitors move toward the figures of “Sympathy of the Canadians for the Helpless” and the figure of “Hope” that is framed once more by the Peace Tower, a linear, visual progression stresses continued active military engagement as the method for achieving peace.

While Regeneration Hall works on the micro level to conflate commemoration of Canada's military past with official narratives of Canadian participation in the war in Afghanistan, the CWM works on a macro level as part of a reinterpreted national capital landscape. Regeneration Hall is part of a larger context of contemporary commemoration of the First World War that works to confirm the necessity of military action to achieve peace and democracy in a new and uncertain century. According to Greenberg, a new "post-[Pierre] Trudeau national identity," which "links the military with social justice" has taken shape over the past two decades (189). Regeneration Hall reflects this shift: the space is an inversion of the monumental architecture of the Vimy Memorial in France. The Vimy Monument has become the culmination of Canada's origin mythology and this culmination is reflected in the size of the monument. Regeneration Hall is designed so that visitors descend, toward the plaster models and into the earth, symbolically allowing viewers to take the final journey of soldiers who have been lost in war. On the ground floor of Regeneration Hall, visitors are virtually at eye level with the models, confronting not the monumental horrors of war and the magnitude of the loss of life represented by Allward's monument, but instead the concept of individual sacrifice and its relation to hope for a better future. As part of the original memorial, the monumental size of the statues necessitates the viewer's perception of these figures as universal or allegorical representations of the cost of war; however, in Regeneration Hall, because of their human scale, visitors are forced to confront a more individualized representation of loss. This inversion process becomes a startling reflection of the individual nature of wartime loss in Afghanistan.

The specificity of recent experience is reflected in Canadian painter Joanne Tod's portrait series *Oh, Canada – A Lament* (2007-2011). While *Regeneration Hall* and *The Stone Carvers* commemorate the First World War, Tod's work addresses Canadian commemoration of Afghanistan directly. Tod and Urquhart complicate the official narrative and interrogate the role of the artist in official commemorative practices. Tod's portrait series commemorates those lost in Afghanistan but also illustrates the artist's ardent pacifism, and comments on the divisive nature of the Afghanistan war (Anderson, "The Fallen"). Tod's work depicts all of the Canadian soldiers who have died while



Figure 1.14: Joanne Tod, *Oh Canada – A Lament* (2007-2011), Harbourfront Centre, Toronto. Image used with permission of the artist and Harbourfront Centre.

serving in Afghanistan and contains an emphasis on the individuality of war loss similar to what is seen in *Regeneration Hall*. In another inversion of the monumental, each portrait is painted with oils on a six-by-five-inch birch panel and mounted on a freestanding wall ("The Fallen"). Tod has also included painted panels "to resemble a fragmented Canadian flag" (Tod, "Artist"). Some flag panels contain the points of the red

maple leaf on its white background. Others still are simply red or white. The flag panels range in size and shape but are square or rectangular. The portrait panels considerably outnumber the flag panels. The arrangement of the panels is not fixed and consequently the layout of the piece is changeable. Tod's project comes as the result of the artist's conflicted emotions toward Canadian war losses in Afghanistan and problems with the war itself. Like much contemporary commemoration, her interest in Afghanistan is connected to Canada's role in an earlier conflict. Tod's uncle, Private James Tod, was killed in Italy in 1944 during the Second World War and became known to her in recent years when she inherited photographs and letters from his time in the army ("Artist"). Tod says that it was this opportunity that generated her interest in Canada's operations in Afghanistan and the nation's casualties ("Artist"). As a "staunch pacifist," she was unhappy with Canada's role in the conflict, and so chose to create a commemorative painting as a way to honour the fallen (Anderson, "The Fallen"). The faces in Tod's exhibit will be familiar to many Canadian viewers: the official portraits which Tod's representation reproduces in alternative media have been in newspapers, magazines, and news programs, and capture the individuality of those who have died. Tod's portrait series was shown at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Mount Hope, Ontario, and Harbourfront Centre in Toronto (Whyte). Her work critiques the human cost of war and demonstrates that while official government narratives suggest that participation in the commemoration of Canada's war losses (at Remembrance Day ceremonies, for instance) is tantamount to supporting the nation's war efforts, over the two past decades supporting the troops has had a much more ambiguous meaning. Her piece highlights the conflicted role of the artist in remembrance and commemorative efforts.

Tod's work makes the individual cost of war explicit, and, substantially, the individual cost of the idea of the "nation" as well. It reminds its viewers that conflating "the fallen" with any nationalist symbol is not only dangerous in terms of its human toll, but also a fragile concept. *Oh, Canada – A Lament* was displayed in a different arrangement at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum than it was at Harbourfront Centre. Tod suggests that this flexibility mirrors the adaptability of war to different contexts: "The modular nature of the artwork allows it to be installed in different configurations, making it adaptable to almost any space. This is a significant aspect of the work, which, in addition to being practical, subtly acknowledges the ubiquity of war: it will conform to any location" (Tod, "Artist"). War will "conform to any location," just as it will conform to the contemporary moment. While the uniqueness of each gallery space naturally impacts the arrangement of the dozens of birch panels, the flexibility of the piece alters how the painted red and white panels compose the Canadian flag amongst the portraits. Tellingly, the flag disintegrates further with the addition of each completed portrait. With each additional Canadian loss in Afghanistan, her task increased, and the red and white flag panels became more and more outnumbered and engulfed by the portraits.

Yet the volume of portraits does not lead to the viewer being overwhelmed by the enormous loss of war, as in many First World War memorials. In Tod's work each individual portrait can be the central focus of the piece, and just one portrait disrupts the unity of the coloured flag panels. The effect is a maple leaf blown apart by war: a disintegrating national identity. Tod states that "The installation's variable dimensions reflect the uncertainty of the Afghan mission, with respect to its duration and final

number of casualties” (“Artist”). Notably, the work suggests that not only does Canada’s national imaginary alter during times of military conflict but that the final impact cannot be known until long after the conflict ends. The “lament” of Tod’s title, then, is not just for the Canadian lives lost in Afghanistan, but also a loss of national ideals. The fractured nature of Tod’s Canadian flag suggests that Canadian participation in military conflict and other national symbols are ultimately incompatible.

Tod is not the only Canadian artist who was inspired to paint portraits of Canada’s casualties in Afghanistan. In fact, a catalogue of portraits commemorating all soldiers who have died in Afghanistan has become a conventional way to respond to these losses. Dave Sopha, a professional artist and military supporter from Cambridge, Ontario, has also painted a portrait of every Canadian soldier to die in Afghanistan. His work, *Portraits of Honour* (2008-2011), is a gigantic 3-metre by 12 metre mural, featuring a portrait of every Canadian fallen soldier from (Hauch). It also inspires a relationship between viewer and artwork that is different from the one inspired by Tod’s *Lament*; here, the viewer may feel themselves to be engulfed by a wall of portraits. However, the piece is considerably more conservative in tone. The individual portraits hover over a grey slab; the slab is decorated with a Canadian flag and the words “Portraits of Honour/Portraits Honorifiques” inscribed, suggesting the base of a traditional military monument or cenotaph (“About the Portraits”).<sup>49</sup> The portraits undulate around a dove, centered at the top of the painting (“About the Portraits”). The dove holds two poppies in its beak, rather than the traditional olive branches. Most tellingly, the portraits float on a

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<sup>49</sup> Permission to include an image of the *Portraits of Honour* mural could not be obtained; a detailed image of the work can be viewed on the *Portraits of Honour* website: [www.portraitsofhonour.ca/index.php/About/Index](http://www.portraitsofhonour.ca/index.php/About/Index).

bed of 110,000 poppies, one for each Canadian soldier who has died in combat since the start of the First World War (“Canada’s Afghanistan dead”), visually representing a continuity between these losses. Significantly, *Portraits of Honour* has received considerably more media attention than *Oh, Canada – A Lament*: in 2011, with the financial support of dozens of businesses and government agencies, such as Veterans Affairs Canada, the Bank of Montreal, and KIN Canada, the mural went on tour, visiting over 100 Canadian communities in eight different provinces and has been observed by government officials and dignitaries<sup>50</sup> (“The Tour Schedule History”).<sup>51</sup>

Tod’s work exists outside the official war art program<sup>52</sup> and is an independent undertaking different from that of military boosters like Sopha. While not an overt anti-war statement, her paintings require the viewer to contemplate and reflect on the nature

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<sup>50</sup> Then Minister of National Defense Peter MacKay viewed the mural in February 2013 at the Portraits of Honour Gala in Cambridge, Ontario (“Portraits of Honour - Home”); the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge viewed the mural in Calgary, during their 2011 Canadian Tour (Taber and Paperny).

<sup>51</sup> Graphic artist Stephen C. Gaebel has also undertaken a portrait series of every Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan. The London, Ontario painter stresses the apolitical nature of his work; the series began as a tribute to one casualty in particular, Trooper Mark Wilson, also from London, Ontario (“About the Project”). Gaebel began work on the portraits in 2007 (“About the Project”). The paintings are eighteen inches by twenty-four inches, oil on maple panel and the artist’s original intention was to someday exhibit the works as a group (“About the Project”). However, after displaying a selection of paintings at the Metropolitan United Church in London, Ontario for Remembrance Day 2008 the intent of the project shifted (“A brilliant, shining moment...”). Gaebel was overwhelmed by the response, as members of the public and the Canadian Forces filed past the portraits, removing poppies and placing poppies on the paintings (“A brilliant, shining moment...”). At the event, Gaebel met Trooper Wilson’s family and after seeing their emotional response to his painting of their son and brother, decided to give the portrait to Trooper Wilson’s family which has since become his official policy (“A brilliant, shining moment...”). Each painting contains a detailed portrait of the soldier, a Canadian flag, the soldier’s name and regiment, as well as the phrase “We will remember/Nous nous souviendrons” (“The Portrait Gallery”). In addition to these professional works, high school students at the Langley Fine Arts School in British Columbia painted portraits of each Canadian killed in Afghanistan in 2009, receiving national attention on the National Defence website (“Portrait project”).

<sup>52</sup> CF Artists Program (CFAP) was re-born on 6 June 2001, allowing Canadian artists to depict Canadian soldiers serving around the world (“CF Artists”). Since its inception, the CFAP has focused primarily on Canada’s participation in the Afghanistan War; however, it is a permanent, on-going program (“CF Artists”). Previously, Canada had official war art programs during the World Wars and from 1968 to 1995 had the Canadian Armed Forces Civilian Artists program (CAFCA) (“CFAP Historical Background”).



Figure 1.15: Alex Colville, *Bodies in grave, Belsen*, 1946, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa. Image used with purchase and permission from the Canadian War Museum.

Figure 1.16: Aba Bayefsky, *Belsen Concentration Camp – The Pit #2*, 1945, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa. Image used with purchase and permission from Canadian War Museum.

of war and its impact on the social fabric of the nation. Officially-sanctioned war artists have often produced challenging artwork (such as Alex Colville's *Bodies in grave, Belsen*, 1946 or Aba Bayefsky's *Belsen Concentration Camp – The Pit #2*, 1945) but the official mandate has always been to document the activities of the Canadian Forces, not to challenge the validity of its missions. Neither Urquhart nor Tod document the military in their work, focusing instead on how the martial impacts the domestic, from the personal to the national level. In *The Stone Carvers*, Urquhart creates an intimate memorial more in keeping with Tod's piece.

### **Beyond the Monumental: *The Stone Carvers* and Twenty-First Century**

#### **Commemoration**

Urquhart's fictional depiction of Walter Allward, the creative force behind the actual National Vimy Memorial, is of an artist consumed by the monumental and the universal. As Urquhart writes, Allward was "unable to stop commemorating the might of the empire"; he dreams of creating a "Great Memorial" (*Stone Carvers* 266). Urquhart



pairs her depiction of Allward with that of Father Gstir, the visionary who built a great stone church in the Canadian backwoods, towards the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>53</sup> Upon his arrival in what is now southwestern Ontario, Gstir takes a topographical survey of the valley and surrounding hills that will eventually become Shoneval (14). While he sees its current limitations, he also sees the potential of the area (14-15). The church is to be a grand stone structure and its location and design bear many similarities to the actual Vimy Monument. Gstir imagines his large cathedral occupying a position in the landscape of the southwestern Ontario town that anticipates the Vimy Monument's position in Arras:

He turned and looked up toward the height from which he had first seen the valley, the same hill where two decades later sun would shine through coloured windows of an established convent.

“A church up there,” the priest said, pointing, “made of logs at first and then, in time, a stone cathedral.” He continued to gaze at the hill. “Or at least a large stone church,” he added, “with a magnificent bell.” (18)

Gstir's monumental artistic vision is similar to the fictional Allward's. The church, occupying the same perspective in the landscape and built over decades, situates the novel's monumental construction in Canada, not France. It also serves as a monument to settler colonialism because it marks a specific type of settler progress and replicates the monumental and religious construction found in Europe: it celebrates Christian

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<sup>53</sup> Urquhart's church was inspired by the construction of a monumental Gothic church in Formosa, Ontario. The Church of the Immaculate Conception (1875-1883) was built on a “commanding site overlooking Formosa” and was constructed over an existing log building (Brown). Work was completed in 1883 when the wood structure was taken down and the stone work completed (Brown). Like Urquhart's fictional church, the interior of the Church of the Immaculate Conception features “Intricate Gothic-style altars carved by Nicholas Dürer, a local craftsman and parishioner” (Brown).

settlement. Just as the Vimy Monument is a memorial to the fallen, Gstir's church is also a monument, and a permanent memorial, to Christian settlement that maintains the western cultural literacy required to understand the allegorical figures in Vimy Monument.

The monument that Klara and Tilman both carve is not of the same scale as the actual Vimy Monument in France, but the church in Shoneval does possess a similar monumental size, creating a domestic monumental space. While the construction of Urquhart's Vimy has limited temporal scope – the protagonists only work in France for a short time – the construction of Gstir's church takes years and reflects the building process of the historical Vimy. To interest his reluctant parishioners in the construction of an elaborate and large stone structure on a hill, Father Gstir begins his ministry with a Corpus Christi procession, in hopes that the artistry and pageantry of the parade will sway settlers to participate and bind the community together, allowing them to realize his spiritual vision for the valley. He plans for ““Colour, pageantry, perhaps singing,” and aspires to “visit every corner of the valley, flush them [settlers] out of the forest” (19). Here, Urquhart illustrates the significance of participation in processional rituals for establishing meaning in the community. The purpose of Gstir's procession is for the community to support the construction of the church. However, his emphasis on the artistic pageantry of the procession highlights artistic creation rather than religious commitment to the church. Gstir's grand vision for the valley reveals the value of domestic concerns other than the spiritual. When he is told by Joseph Becker that there are springs all over the valley, Gstir responds with the phrase “Holy water,” before adding: “Perfect for a brewery” (18). The participants carry small-scale models of future

town buildings; the church model carved by Joseph Becker is there, but so too are models of a brewery, farms, castles, a medieval wash house, an opera house, a tavern, and a brothel (106). While the procession anticipates how settler colonialism will permanently alter the valley, Urquhart does not acknowledge this type of development as problematic or occurring on Indigenous lands. *The Stone Carvers* presents Ontario as a *terra nullius*<sup>54</sup> and Gstir's gaze and subsequent actions objectify, penetrate, and exploit the landscape. What Urquhart is suggesting with Gstir's procession is that domestic modes of community-building can also be powerful nation-building tools. Ultimately, the novel reveals the importance of ritual in community building, during colonial settlement and in the unsettled aftermath of war.

According to Gordon, the fictional Allward's eventual response to the war anticipates the "obligatory official response to horror" ("The Artist" 67). Gordon's argument that the novelized Allward's "desire to memorialize the war is a desire for a grand gesture, for something that cannot be ignored," positions the sculptor ambivalently, as one who both comments on and exploits the horror of war (67). The fictional Allward dreams of a monumentalism that disrupts the surrounding landscape. Urquhart writes, "It would be so monumental that, forty miles away, from across the Douai Plain, people would be moved by it, large enough that strong winds would be put off course by it, and perfect enough that it would seem to have been built by a vanishing race of brilliant giants" (*Stone Carvers* 268-69). Urquhart's Allward is an artist still enamoured with "commemorating the might of empire" (266). He wonders about the particulars of those

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<sup>54</sup> A term used to describe Indigenous land in countries such as Canada as empty and vacant, and thus suitable for white possession (Mackey 76).

young men who have died in battle: “Who were these boys with their clear eyes and their long bones, their unscarred skin and their educated muscle? How was it possible that they were destined to be soldiers? In what rooms had they stood? In what shafts of sunlight?” (267). However, his interest in the individual is the preoccupation of a man trying to understand his subject – a type of universal soldier. His concern is formal and lies not with the boys themselves but with their “bones,” “muscle,” and the “light” which play off of these features. In other words, the fictional Allward does not imagine the “boys” as individuals, but as sculptural material. He pauses over the features they have in common as part of artistic study. In fact, Urquhart presents an Allward so concerned with removing human specificity in his monument, seeking “flawlessness,” that all traces of life are removed from the stone he works with (269):

he had decided that the stone he chose must carry within it no previous history of organic life, that no fossil could have been trapped in it, no record of the earth’s hot centre or the long periods of cold retreat that had crept across its surfaces in the form of ice ages and floods. An undisturbed constituent, innocent since its own birth, of any transient event, so that the touch of the chisel cutting out the names would be its first caress. (269)

Urquhart’s Allward wishes to deny traces of the actual human tragedy from his monument so that his allegorical message may be clearly articulated.

As seen in his characterization of sculpture’s “first caress” of its material, the fictional Allward also eroticizes the artistic process in ways that are reflected in Klara’s own carving. In the dream that serves as inspiration for the monument, the fictional Allward sees the “carnal hunger” of the earth eating the fallen; the stirring of bones and

blood re-animates the dead, who demand to be commemorated (267). It is significant that the real-life Allward resisted the inclusion of the names of the fallen on his memorial because the specificity of naming the dead undermined the allegorical imagery of the monument (Duffy, “Complexity” 190). Even his momentary interest for the individual model when he asks Klara why she carved Eamon’s face on the monument (Urquhart, *Stone Carvers* 337-339) is overwhelmed by the artist’s understanding of the mythology of the battle and his need to allegorize loss.

The fictional Allward’s inspiration for the monument comes to him in a dream<sup>55</sup> and complicates the artist’s role in commemorative acts. As Urquhart writes:

He saw the huge twin pillars commemorating those who spoke French and those who spoke English, the allegorical figures with downcast or uplifting faces, and in the valley beneath the work of art, the flesh and bones and blood of the dead stirring in the mud. And then the dead themselves emerged like terrible naked flowers, pleading for a memorial to the disappeared, the vanished ones...those who were unrecognizable and unsung. (266-267)

This conventional depiction of both the war dead – through the organic simile of flowers growing from the mud – and the allegorical nature of the dreamed monument present a traditional mode of commemoration, one that universalizes loss and erases personal suffering, at the same time establishing a unified Canadian nationality, a merger of French and English Canadians and an erasure of their different histories as well as the

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<sup>55</sup> The real-life Allward also claimed the design for the Vimy Memorial came to him in a dream (Hucker, “Battle and Burial” 98).

omission of other histories in Canada. It also reminds the reader of William Longstaff's painting, *The Ghosts of Vimy Ridge* (1929-30).<sup>56</sup> Painted while the Vimy Monument was still under construction, it features the memorial landscape at night, the monument on the ridge, and the ghostly figures of soldiers rising to storm the hill in a depiction of the historic battle (Monaghan, "The Ghosts"). The painting is now displayed where it has been for most of its history, in the Railway Committee Room of the House of Commons; however, from the opening of the new Canadian War Museum until 2010, the painting was displayed on the lower level of Regeneration Hall. Longstaff is now remembered as an artist whose most successful works incorporated official, government-sanctioned commemorative efforts into his battlefield landscapes.<sup>57</sup> Its five-year exhibition in Regeneration Hall helps illustrate the connection between the two works and provides the imaginative context for the fictional Allward's inspirational dream.

Urquhart's integration of this painting with the sculptor's vision highlights the fictional nature of the monument created in the novel and also problematizes the role of the artist in commemoration. The novel asks readers to question what specifically is commemorated with the fictional monument. This problematization extends to the book as a whole. Urquhart has stated she wished to acknowledge and commemorate the then-forgotten Allward in writing *The Stone Carvers*, but then adds, "Perhaps I was trying to make a monument myself" (Ferri 19). Urquhart's foregrounding of the sculptor Allward

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<sup>56</sup> Permission to include an image of *The Ghosts of Vimy Ridge* could not be obtained; the painting is part of the House of Commons Heritage Collection and can be viewed on the Parliament of Canada website: [www.parl.gc.ca/about/house/collections/collection\\_profiles/CP\\_Vimy\\_Ridge-e.htm](http://www.parl.gc.ca/about/house/collections/collection_profiles/CP_Vimy_Ridge-e.htm).

<sup>57</sup> *The Ghosts of Vimy Ridge* is one of many similar and popular paintings created by Longstaff "that feature ghostly apparitions marching or walking near First World War memorials in Europe" according to David Monaghan, curator of the House of Commons art holdings ("The Ghosts"). Another example of a Longstaff spectral commemoration is *Menin Gate at Midnight (The Ghosts of Menin Gate)* (1927).

and of the visionary Gstyr suggests the novel itself functions partly as a commemoration of artistic response to war as *The Stone Carvers* is more concerned with artistic commemorative process (Gordon, *Catching the Torch* 86). This is in contrast with earlier Canadian war novels, such as Findley's *The Wars*, which prioritized interrogating the historical record and the practice of historiography (86). In writing such a novel, Urquhart creates a new Vimy Monument within its pages. The fictional building of the church is a realization of Father Gstyr's dream for the community of Shoneval, but it is also the ultimate artistic achievement of Klara's grandfather Joseph Becker. Similarly, the completion of the Vimy Monument was a celebrated moment for Canadian veterans, but was then, and remains now, the defining work of Allward's career, just as Klara's carving of Eamon's face was the most important work of her artistic career. The novel then, with its individualized characterizations, acts as a celebration of personalizing in opposition to artist figures like the fictional Allward who are "guilty of erasing horror by transforming the particular into the allegorical" (Urquhart, *Stone Carvers* 111). The fictional Allward privileges "ahistoricity" (111). His censure of individual acts of creativity on the design of the monument illustrate this as such acts would inevitably disrupt the creation of the monument as art, even if, as in the case of Klara's carving, they bring a greater sense of individual commemoration to the memorial.

The fictional Allward's conflict between realism and allegorical art reflects an ambiguity that disrupts Urquhart's work as well. Her eroticized depiction of the carving process subsumes the historical context of the novel, commemorating Klara's erotic love and traumatic loss in Shoneval instead of the sacrifices of Eamon and others during the war. Urquhart creates a domestic memorial to Eamon in Klara's workshop, which is not

only suggestive of the spontaneous or private memorials constructed in Canada following the First World War, but is also an erotic precursor to her carving at the Vimy Monument.

### ***The Stone Carvers and Intimate Commemoration***

In *The Stone Carvers* the commemorative act is an eroticized act. Klara's twin skills of carving and tailoring afford her the opportunity to participate in memorial acts and it is a combination of these two talents that creates a make-shift memorial to Eamon in her workshop. Before going to war, Eamon commissions Klara to sew him a red waistcoat. It is a piece Eamon bashfully designates "for my funeral," and his words are prophetic of his decision to go to war wearing the garment (Urquhart, *Stone Carvers* 81, 137). When he asks Klara to make the garment for him, Eamon is unsure about the request because their relationship is just beginning. Again, Eamon's words are prophetic of his death in the miserable trenches of France: "I'll die in the winter ditch like a dog" (80). When Eamon leaves the country to go to war, Klara keeps his memory alive in part because of his request for the red waistcoat. As with her carving at the Vimy Monument, when Klara draws out the pattern for Eamon's waistcoat, her focus on his specific measurements is intimate, both physical and sexual. It is an important precursor to the couple's eventual lovemaking, whereas the Vimy sculpture restores the memory of their time together:

She crouched over the paper on the floor and considered hidden pockets for the inside of the garment. What would he protect there? She drew the darts with great concentration, frowning as she calculated their width and



how they should taper, and then she drew in the pieces of the pattern until the paper was filled with curved lines like a map. Eventually she lay on her stomach, her shoulders echoed by her drawing of his larger ones, her arms on the drawing of his sleeves, and fell asleep. (85)

Drawing the pattern for Eamon's vest is a sensual, creative process for Klara. The process heightens her senses: sound and touch are magnified (85). Her exhaustion after completing the pattern simulates a similar exhaustion that will occur with Eamon after their lovemaking. This connection is reinforced when Eamon visits for the final fitting of the vest, which fits perfectly. Eamon carefully folds the garment and places it on a chair as the pair make love for the first time: "Then they were holding each other, locked together, staggering against the chair, which overturned so that the splendid coat lay discarded, a prone torso beside them where they fell on the floor" (130). Here the waistcoat is discarded and forgotten as the erotic overtakes the commemorative in the novel.

The waistcoat becomes a type of memorial because it commemorates the relationship between Klara and Eamon which ends when Eamon goes off to war. Yet it proves an insufficient memorial once he dies. The heightened sensuality of creating the waistcoat causes Klara to push hard on the pencil as she sketches out Eamon's shape (85). She is startled to find that this first furtive sexual connection with Eamon has left a permanent, physical trace. Urquhart writes, "When she awoke in midafternoon, and when she rolled up the large piece of brown paper, she was amazed to see that she had pushed the pencil so forcefully into the paper that the pattern she had drawn remained incised on the pine floor" (85-86). Reminiscent of her grandfather's work, the vest imprint is a type

of sunken relief sculpture; however, it also recalls celebrated Canadian artist Betty Goodwin's series of vest prints from the early 1970s.<sup>58</sup> Goodwin believed the "Vest"<sup>59</sup> was "imbued with a sense of loss and the uncertainty of existence" (Tovell 51). Goodwin also "realized that there was a deep connection between her 'Vest' print and her. That her father, whom she lost in childhood, had earned his living as a maker of vests" (30).<sup>60</sup> For Klara, the imprint in the floorboards of her shop contains not only the memory of Eamon but also the experience of their love. She tries to remove all traces of him and does not speak his name for two years, but when news of his death during the First World War arrives, she painfully and unsuccessfully searches for all she has thrown away: "In the house, she ran up the stairs to the sunroom, where she searched furiously for any frail bits of Eamon that she might not have discarded: measurements, that one photograph – all that she had thrown away" (Urquhart, *Stone Carvers* 161). What is left of Eamon is the waistcoat imprint, and this must serve as a monument to him:

And then she remembered, crossed the room, and stood for some time staring at the engraved shape of the pattern she had drawn – all that was left of him now – and she recalled what her grandfather had told her about

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<sup>58</sup>Goodwin's works, such as *Vest One* (1969), are full-sized lithographs of actual garments passed through an etching press (Johnson). Possessing their own history, Goodwin's lithographs are both symbols and memories of actual human bodies (Johnson).

<sup>59</sup> Permission to include images of Goodwin's vest prints could not be obtained. *Vest One* is part of the National Gallery of Canada's collections and can be viewed on the gallery's site:

[www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=73949](http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=73949). *Vest Two* is also part of the National Gallery's collection and can be viewed on the gallery's website: [www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=74427](http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=74427).

<sup>60</sup> Despite shying away from the Vest as subject matter once she realized her personal connection to it, Goodwin understood the haunting after-effects of the garment, and would return to the clothes used in her prints to make *Vest One*: "However, as she wanted to capture the essence and corporeal entity of the vest, Goodwin stiffened the garments" utilized in the creation of *Vest One* and *Vest Two* (1971), which suggests "that Goodwin was coming to understand that a vest is the afterlife of its former occupant, and has a spectral afterlife of its own" (Tovell 30).

the likeness of medieval knights in full armour being drawn with a chisel on their marble burial slabs. He would have only the traces of a waistcoat as a memorial. She folded to the floor, her hand near the spot where his heart might have been. (161)

This scene is an echo of her initial efforts to draw the pattern for the vest, and transforms the floor imprint into a kind of cenotaph for Eamon just as Urquhart's novel re-envisioned both the Vimy Memorial and military commemoration in anticipation of the contemporary experience of war loss in Canada.

Klara's work in France releases her to experience healing and human connection; however, it is not the Vimy Monument that continues to resonate in the novel once she has returned from overseas, but the memorial and commemorative constructions which have occurred on Canadian soil. Klara's loss is not Eamon's eventual death, but his initial departure for war. Her grief at his departure silences Klara. Similarly, it is her brother's departure years earlier, not his presumed death, which was the trauma of her childhood. Klara returns to the memorial activities undertaken in Canada when she comes home from France. She opens her memorial spaces to Giorgio, showing him the decades-old markings on the tailor shop floor. As Klara states, "For a while," she said, "it was the only memorial I had." Giorgio responds that it is "an inscription without words" (382). Klara's agreement with Giorgio's pronouncement that her memorial to Eamon contains that same inscriptive power explains why on arriving back in Canada she still returns to the relief of the waistcoat pattern even after her carving at Vimy. Eamon's inscribed waistcoat pattern is a commemoration on the most personal and individual of levels: indented in the wooden floor is not just the physical memory of an actual man, but also

the erotic presence of both their relationship and the sensuality of Klara's creative process. Typically absent from martial commemorative production, the erotic contains within it the potential for regeneration.

While the CWM has symbolically repatriated significant Canadian battlefields to its site, in *The Stone Carvers*, First World War battlefields provide an erotic landscape for Urquhart's protagonists. Klara and Giorgio's first intimate encounter takes place after the pair walk through excavated trenches to Grange Tunnel at Vimy, part of the labyrinth of underground tunnels that were essential during the famous battle years before (354):<sup>61</sup>

They made love quickly, Klara gasping, this new solid weight on her ribs and inner thighs, her senses being shaken awake. And then later, more carefully, until she believed her body, the candlelight, and the walls of the tunnels were all turning to water, and that she might drown in herself, in him. And all around them, stretching as far as the market town of Arras, the dank tunnels, like graves, out of which thousands of young men had rushed into the brimstone air. (355)

While ostensibly a moment of healing love and connection in the text, this scene also problematizes a reading of the novel as solely concerned with commemoration. While Klara does imagine the labyrinth of tunnels as graves for thousands of soldiers, Urquhart eroticizes the final resting spot of many who were killed during the Battle of Vimy Ridge.<sup>62</sup> Urquhart's ghostly image of the "thousands of young men" who rush from the

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<sup>61</sup> The tunnels under and near No Man's Land contained latrines, command posts, ammunition dumps, medical stations, and were critical for maintaining communications with trenches. They were a vital part of the Vimy offensive (Cook, *Shock Troops* 88-89).

<sup>62</sup> Apparently Klara and Giorgio are not alone in their erotic displays on the grounds of the Vimy Memorial. In recent years it has become something of a "hotspot for sexual exhibitionists in France"

grave-like tunnels reminds readers not only of the Longstaff painting, but also the fictional Allward's exploitation of that image. The remains at Vimy Ridge inspire the fictional Allward in ways that both eroticize the youth of soldiers – he dreams of their skin, muscle, and imagines them spotlighted by sunlight, like a perfect show piece – and eroticize their early deaths, final resting places, and war, eaten by the earth and stirring the soil with their blood and bones (267). Significantly, by eroticizing the landscape, Urquhart alters the commemorative function of her fictional monument. Klara's commemorative acts also have erotic overtones; however, Klara's erotic memorials are mediated by love and profound loss, balancing the fictional Allward's more exploitive inspirations.

The monument's carved names resonate in part because they refer to actual lives lost. Duffy suggests that, "Where allegory can be evocative and suggestive, a list is by nature decisive and delimited. Lists cry that successive bystanders fear to surrender the memorialized to oblivion; the allegorical figures exist within the same symbolic discourse that the concept of 'oblivion' does, and claim to have vanquished it" ("Complexity" 196). However, it is the inclusion of the names of the fallen which Allward so resisted that "has extended his monument's cultural relevance, even as it threatened to shorten its material existence" (196). According to Jacqueline Hucker, chief historian for the Vimy Memorial restoration project, Allward's innovative construction

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("Paris couple"). In 2008, one Paris couple was found guilty of committing public sex acts on the memorial and ordered to pay fines to both the French and Canadian governments and received a suspended jail sentence ("Paris couple").

left the monument open to deterioration<sup>63</sup> and it was the fading of the 11,285 names inscribed on the memorial's base that raised public awareness of the need to restore Vimy and other Canadian battlefield monuments ("After the Agony" 288).<sup>64</sup> This deterioration is also present in Urquhart's novel. Published several years before the monument's rededication ceremony, the novel anticipates the push to preserve the nation's memorial architecture and landscapes. The familiar refrain about Canadians' ignorance of their nation's military history is echoed by Urquhart at the end of the novel when she describes the unveiling ceremony for the Vimy Memorial in 1936:

The larger, the more impressive the monument, the more miraculous its construction, the more it seems to predict its own fall from grace. Exposed and shining on elevated ground, insisting on prodigious feats of memory from all who come to gaze at it, it appears to be as vulnerable as a flower, and its season seems to be as brief. And who among us does not imagine the stone crushed, the altars taken away to museums, the receding past vandalized. The day arrives when there is no one left to climb the tower, pull the rope, ring the bell of the magnificent, improbable church. Names carved in stone become soft and unrecognizable under the assault of acid rain. No one knows any more what the allegorical figures represent.

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<sup>63</sup> As Hucker indicates, "Ironically, in his [Allward's] desire to create a work that would last forever, he had chosen a new but flawed method of construction, cast concrete covered with stone" ("After the Agony" 288). Susceptible to shifting over time, the monument was also water damaged, staining the pristine white stone, which as it deteriorated continued to obscure the carved names (288).

<sup>64</sup> The Canadian Government created the Canadian Battlefield Memorials Restoration Project in 2001 to restore the monument and make improvements at the memorial park once the deterioration of the site received public attention (288). The restoration began in 2004 and required the dismantling and rebuilding of many of the monuments walls (288). Additional stone was shipped from the Croatian quarry Allward used to match it to the original and the names of the fallen were carefully re-inscribed (288). The rededication of the monument took place on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the battle in 2007.

No one cares. (*Stone Carvers* 378)

In this passage, Urquhart connects Gstir's church with the commemorative monument at Vimy, linking the national importance of the settler undertaking with the military achievement of the nation's most famous battle. A comment on the impermanence of commemoration and collective memory, these assertions must now be tempered with the knowledge that the monument has been fully restored and the commemorative act renewed. The "vandalism" Urquhart imagines is one in which the monument's meaning is lost, and is most visible in the text when Klara and Giorgio make love in the battlefield tunnels that are part of the site – a mode of "vandalism" that works in the spirit of love and life in contrast to the commemoration of death.

Urquhart's representation of the carving of the Vimy Monument shifts the reader's focus from the real Allward's allegorical monument to the individual loss Urquhart's Klara is desperate to represent. Klara is insistent on the individual nature of loss suffered during the Great War because her experience of war loss was individual. The carving of thousands of names of the dead is insufficient to her because her community was sheltered from such losses. Klara's experience of the losses of the First World War was not of an unfathomable number of deaths, but rather of a solitary lover. Her experience of loss anticipates the collective experience of wartime death in Canada in the years since the novel was published. Klara's work on the Vimy Monument is not for the country but is a personal reaction to an overwhelming personal loss. Urquhart suggests the scale of the Vimy Memorial does not fit the personal loss that Klara grapples with; however, the focus of the novel, on Klara's personal experience of historical loss, allows for a different form of memorialization. Despite the sheer size of Allward's

monumental architecture, Urquhart's fictionalized Vimy Monument is a smaller, more personal representation than the real-life monument and resembles the experience visitors to the CWM's Regeneration Hall have when confronting the human scale of Walter Allward's plaster maquettes. Consequently, *The Stone Carvers'* focus on personal experience of historical loss marks it as a more contemporary kind of memorialization from monumental works such as the Vimy Monument.

Working in small, elevated studios, Klara's experience of the monument is a direct confrontation with the figure of "The Torchbearer" and her years of grief. Her carving is such a personal, intimate act that to successfully carve Eamon's face Klara must change spots and assume physical positions in relation to the carving she had first assumed with Eamon during their intimate moments:

It was necessary for her to lean over the upturned face so that she was looking down at him as she had so often done as a girl, in haylofts, in orchards, in the sunroom. These scenes came back to her as she worked, and occasionally she felt as if she were falling into the ghosts of an embrace, as if either he or she were haunting the stone. (333)

It is a portrait only personal grief can render, complete with the tendons in his neck, curls in his hair, and shape of his lips. The passage depicts not so much carver and stone, but a reunion between lovers. The speed with which Klara carves the "The Torchbearer" and her intimate interactions with the stone suggest that the figure is not the size of Allward's monument; rather, it is a statue on a more human scale, like the maquettes on display in Regeneration Hall. The figure of "The Torchbearer" captivates Klara, and in a stunning



act of individuality, she literally re-crafts Allward's vision of the monument and carves her individual loss and commemoration into the larger narrative.

Klara's carving of Eamon's face into the figure of "The Torchbearer" is an erasure of the "unknown" from the fictional Allward's allegorical figure and consequently, the monument. Through Klara's carving, Urquhart is repurposing the historical moment of the Vimy Monument's construction for contemporary readers. Klara's attention to carving Eamon's face, to creating a portrait of him that both commemorates him and comforts her, allows the novel to anticipate the contemporary response of many Canadian artists painting portraits to both commemorate and assuage the loss of those Canadian soldiers who have died in Afghanistan. What Klara does for one casualty of the First World War, artists such as Tod have achieved for military casualties in Afghanistan. Consequently, not only is Urquhart's novel an alternative to monumental memorial construction, but she creates a new monument within the text which anticipates and speaks to Canada's experience of military conflict in the twenty-first century generally. While Urquhart's Vimy has much in common with the real-life Allward's original monument, her work, and the re-created Vimy monument in Regeneration Hall reflect the contemporary moment more than the past.

Klara learned more than just carving from her grandfather. Her need to respond artistically to overwhelming personal loss was an urge which consumed Joseph Becker as well. Shortly after learning Eamon has been killed, Klara announces to her father and grandfather that she is giving up carving. Joseph warns her she will someday return to carving. He says, "You won't be able to prevent yourself; that's just the way it is. The world always somehow takes us back to the chisel. Something happens and we have to

respond” (167). Joseph knows of what he speaks: his work for Father Gstir’s church was in part carving for God but in later years also became a tribute to his departed grandson, Tilman. When Tilman runs away, Joseph is deeply saddened; believing his grandson to be a future master carver, the elder Becker turns his work into tributes to the lost boy. He continues to carve religious pieces for the Immaculate Conception church, but each work makes reference to his grandson in some way:

The Virgin of Mercy stood with her arms slightly raised, her open cloak sheltering a small crowd of devotees, among them Klara’s brother as he was last seen, a child of twelve. Whenever he could her grandfather included a likeness of Tilman in his carving, hoping perhaps that the God for whom he carved would interpret this as a petition or a prayer. (94)

It is more than a petition or prayer for Joseph; carving keeps Tilman present, despite interrupting the symbolic nature of religious carving.

Tilman has a similarly limited perspective of Allward’s monument. As a veteran of the First World War, he cannot share the contemporary mythology surrounding the Battle of Vimy Ridge. When asked by another carver if Vimy was a great Canadian victory, Tilman replies:

I don’t think a single one of us who was there knew whether or not there was a victory. We barely understood where we were when it was all over. And let’s not overlook the fact that thirty-five hundred guys died, and three times as many were injured. I didn’t even hear about the grandness of the victory until the war finished, and then I thought the fellow telling me had things all wrong. (306)

Tilman initially goes back to Vimy so that Klara can participate in the carving, but he is also able to mourn when he carves a personal space out of the monumental memorial. Instead of working on the “largest sepulchral monument of all” (284), Tilman works on a much smaller aspect of the monument: an empty tomb meant to represent an unknown Canadian soldier. As he carves pleats in the flag that drapes the tomb, and the ornamental shield that lies upon it, Tilman is able to come to terms with his wartime loss. He removes his wooden leg, and places it against the tomb: an offering of acceptance of his deep wound (328). After carving the tomb, he is finally able to open himself to love and human connection. Tilman’s love affair with Monsieur Recouvrir, a local chef, becomes sexual only after he shows Recouvrir his work on the tomb and how to remove his wooden leg (324-330). His offering of his wooden leg also provides Tilman with a burial of sorts. The tomb he carves is for his earlier, peripatetic self, allowing him to commemorate his lost years. Tilman had been the ultimate living Unknown Soldier: because of his migrant lifestyle, he was anonymous and presumed dead. His whereabouts unknown, he was like an anonymous battlefield casualty, simply “missing” in life. This status disturbs him when he returns to Shoneval, when he learns even Klara does not include him among the ranks of those who served from their hometown (242). Shoneval lacks a cenotaph in part because Tilman’s contributions are unknown to Klara who longs to commemorate loss. Like Klara, the reader knows of Eamon’s service and loss, not Tilman’s, and only learns of Tilman’s participation in the war after his return to Canada. Ultimately his work on the Vimy Monument, and in particular, the Tomb of the Unknown, allows Tilman to shed his status as missing.

Urquhart re-inscribes the meaning of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial through the commemorative acts of Klara and Tilman. She continues the repurposing of the monument by having Allward undergo a philosophical change in his understanding of the commemorative act as he watches Klara carve. As Allward's commemoration is altered, he accepts a different kind of *regenerative* commemoration. Allward

looked at the body of the torchbearer and then again at the face, the alterations Klara had made. He had wanted this stone youth to remain allegorical, universal, wanted him to represent everyone's lost friend, everyone's lost child. He had wanted the stone figure to be the 66,000 dead young men who had marched through his dreams when he conceived the memorial. Even in its unfinished state this face had developed a personal expression, a point of view. This had never been his intention. But he had to admit the work that had been done here in the early hours of the morning, was careful, skilled. (337)

The fictional Allward realizes that not only has Klara carved individuality into the sculpture by carving Eamon's face into "The Torchbearer," she has also performed an act of individual, personal mourning. Urquhart's "Torchbearer," as it is represented in *The Stone Carvers*, is a work of art that generates personal reflection in the fictional Allward while commemorating horrendous loss. In the novel, Allward reflects that "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 this earth. This woman had brought a personal retrospection to his monument, and had by doing so allowed life to enter it" (340). Just as the Vimy Monument is used in Regeneration Hall

in a way that provides a narrative that compliments contemporary Canadian military action, the monument in Urquhart's novel illustrates a shift from allegorized, universal experiences of loss to a specific and individual one that resonates with the public recognition of Canadian losses in Afghanistan.

This shift is further illustrated when Klara carves Eamon's name into the walls at the base of the monument. These walls contain the names of the more than 11,000 Canadians who died in France during the First World War and have no known graves. The carving of these names in the novel reminds the reader of the actual monument in France and of the specific human cost of war. It is the carving of an individual name, rather than the viewing of the wall of names as a whole, which spurs Klara's healing process. The act connects her physically to Eamon, a connection that she has tried to suppress for almost twenty years. She feels that "this would be the last time she touched Eamon, that when they finished carving his name all the confusion and regret of his absence would unravel, just as surely as if she had embraced him with forgiving arms" (376). Allward, who watches as Klara begins to carve Eamon's name, reflects that "The weight of the sorrow he had carried for fifteen years was leaving him. The emotion was moving through the arms of these people who worked for him – no, these friends who worked for him – and he knew that passion was entering the monument itself, the huge urn he had designed to hold grief" (377). Like Klara, the fictional Allward also undergoes a transformational healing. The years it took to complete the monument and the expectations of grieving Canadian families weighed on him. Through active individual remembrance and commemoration, the injured protagonists of Urquhart's novel move toward a regenerative future; however, her text acknowledges the limitations of the real

monument. Published the same year the Vimy Memorial's restoration project was announced in 2001, Urquhart's conclusion acknowledges the impermanence of both memories and memorials but also provides a vision of restoration.

Official commemorative projects such as the building of a new CWM and the installation of new military monuments in the nation's capital have situated the nation's war loss in Canada and not on far off battlefields. These achievements, such as Regeneration Hall and the Canadian War Museum, are designed to suggest a narrative of Canadian wars fought for the establishment of peace. However, they also anticipate and reflect a decade of Canadian involvement in Afghanistan and a shift from a universal experience of war loss in Canada to the current experience of individual loss at the national level. Urquhart's work illustrates the ambiguity of contemporary commemoration. Like Regeneration Hall and the CWM, Urquhart situates both the losses of war and its subsequent commemoration on the home front.

## Chapter Two:

### **Pedagogy, Mythology, and Commemoration in Jack Hodgins's *Broken Ground* and Paul Gross's *Passchendaele***

#### **Introduction**

Commenting on the sustaining tensions at the heart of noble sacrifice of the figure of the Unknown Soldier, literary scholar Laura Wittman remarks that “existential anonymity caused there to be great anxiety about *who* had sacrificed,” because “the Unknown Soldier had at once to be a passive victim of the forces of war and at the same time the agent of a sacrifice he freely chose” (96). This deliberate sacrifice was key to restoring social order and cohesion after the destruction caused by the war. Wittman describes how these developments were linked symbolically, in the inaugural ceremonies for the Unknown Soldier Memorial: these Unknown Soldier dedication services “also reflected awareness of a more anthropological view of sacrifice, which saw it as the foundation of the social cohesion Church, state, and many others wished to reaffirm. In this light, the First World War was an extreme breakout of the wild forces of violence that threaten society, and to put a genuine end to it required a martyr that everyone could admire” (97). The Unknown Soldier’s symbolic noble sacrifice proves a fruitful symbol for *Broken Ground* (1998), Jack Hodgins’s novel about forging community in post-war settler society on Vancouver Island. Hodgins is able to examine this trope of sacrifice from the critical perspective of the 1990s, when proposals for a new Canadian War Museum had revived discourses of wartime sacrifice, but also with an awareness of how traditions of representing settler colonialism are implicated in these discourses. This

chapter scrutinizes how Hodgins's novel represents the limitations of the concept of noble sacrifice associated with Unknown Soldier mythology and examines how the concept of noble sacrifice informs depictions of both the First World war and settler colonialism. In particular, Hodgins thematizes the question of teaching and its role in perpetuating the links between these activities.<sup>65</sup>

The continued mythology of the Unknown Soldier as a figure of noble sacrifice is apparent not only in Hodgins's novel, but also in a variety of recent artistic representations of the war and its aftermath, such as Paul Gross's film *Passchendaele* (2008). In both *Broken Ground* and *Passchendaele*, the martyr imagery highlights the Unknown Soldier's association with Christ's sacrifice. Both works nationalize the image of Christian martyrdom by representing the figure of the "Crucified Canadian". In an unverified but compelling story, circulated in the Canadian press and at the front lines as early as 1915 (Fussell 143), a Canadian soldier was reported to have been pinned to a "barn door, bayonets through hands and feet" (Cook, *At the Sharp End* 163). The Crucified Canadian was a problematic<sup>66</sup> myth throughout the First World War because of its damaging effects and the myth persisted during the interwar period. While the

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<sup>65</sup> Settler colonialism is a type of colonialism: "historiographies have traditionally acknowledged the distinction between colonies of settlement and colonies of exploitation" (Veracini 6). As such, settler colonialism is less about strategic resources and more about securing the land itself for settlement by a permanent settler population. According to anthropologist and ethnographer Patrick Wolfe, "settler colonialism is an inclusive, land-centred project that coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies, from the metropolitan centre to the frontier encampment, with a view to eliminating Indigenous societies. Its operations are not dependent on the presence or absence of formal state institutions or functionaries" (393). Consequently, settler colonialism displaces Indigenous populations; however, often "settlers think of themselves as indigenous" (Veracini 18).

<sup>66</sup> The myth was problematic because of its damaging effects. It fueled Allied propaganda during the war. It was a popular story told in American newspapers and was used to generate support for joining the war effort (Fussell 143). The story of the Crucified Canadian was widely accepted among Canadian troops and "reinforced the importance of crusading against such an inhumane enemy" (Cook, *At the Sharp End* 163). In a war in which modern horrors, such as gas attacks, were used, the myth was used to justify showing the enemy no mercy (163). In both instances, it was used as a propaganda tool to advocate violence against Central Power forces.



Crucified Canadian is a useful and strategic piece of storytelling to further the war effort, my reading of the myth will take into account its contributions to the violence of war and the demonization of the enemy. In addition, the Crucified Canadian is also an image of noble and anonymous self-sacrifice in which the sacrificial figure is crucially identified as white, Christian, and Canadian. In this way, the image, like the repatriated Unknown Soldier in Ottawa, is a nationally-specific version of the Unknown Soldier. The Crucified Canadian replicates the paradoxical tension between individualized and universalized commemoration represented by the Unknown Soldier. He could be any Canadian soldier who had given his life, and consequently had more universal resonances. However, the Crucified Canadian is also specifically white and Christian and depicts a soldier who sacrifices not as a British citizen, but as a Canadian. Consequently, the Crucified Canadian reflects a nation-building narrative that gestures toward Canada's independence from Britain at the international level through distinctive national victories and wartime losses, such as the Battle of Vimy Ridge, in the First World War.

The use of this legend in *Broken Ground* differs significantly in tone and meaning from its use in *Passchendaele*. While *Broken Ground* underscores the danger of espousing the martial myth of sacrifice, *Passchendaele* unapologetically embraces it. Hodgins highlights the potential harm of mythology – especially in the ways it is perpetuated through teaching – which contrasts with Gross's uncritical renewal of the myth and its pedagogical deployment, both in the film and its paratexts. The foundation story that an independent Canada emerged out of its participation in the First World War is connected to national origin myths focused on settlement through the overarching notions of imperial progress and colonial independence. Both myths rely on an

imperialist model which required Canadian participation in the First World War and took the form of settler colonialism in Canada. As such, the Crucified Canadian is symbolic of Canada's sacrifice and independence, both on the battlefield and on the home front. By comparing *Broken Ground* and *Passchendaele*, this chapter will evaluate the implications of the Unknown Soldier as a model of noble sacrifice through the figure of the Crucified Canadian – a type of Unknown Soldier – as it relates to the efforts to popularize this type of figure in Gross's film and to critique the type of celebrated settler narrative in Canada that is present in Hodgins's novel. The focus of *Passchendaele*, in which Gross starred, and which he wrote, directed, and produced, is on Gross's character Michael Dunne, a wounded veteran who assumes his mother's maiden name in order to return to the front lines to protect the young, naïve brother of the woman he loves. The film depicts the story of the Crucified Canadian, and its climax features Dunne carrying a makeshift cross through No Man's Land at the battle of Passchendaele, to save the young brother; Dunne subsequently dies from the wounds sustained during his trek. This sacrifice recalls the myth of the Crucified Canadian but in markedly different ways from Hodgins's book. *Broken Ground* recoils at the futility and waste of life in its retelling of the legend of the Crucified Canadian, and seeks its origins in the dissemination of imperialist ideology more broadly; in contrast, *Passchendaele* returns to the myth and celebrates it as a moment of noble sacrifice.

In *Broken Ground*, noble sacrifice is not solely about heroism and war; it is also equated with settler martyrdom in the face of the difficulties of establishing and maintaining an agrarian life on Vancouver Island. *Broken Ground* conflates these two popular foundational myths for Canada – that of developing a true sense of Canada as an

independent nation during the First World War and that of Canada as a nation forged by the labour of immigrants, enacting a type of settler colonialism. In the novel, settler colonialism is embodied by the soldiers who claimed land according to the Soldier Settlement Act (1917),<sup>67</sup> a postwar program that expropriated acreage from a variety of land holders, including Indigenous communities, to give it to returning veterans. In Hodgins's text, the veterans use this land grant to form the community of Portuguese Creek,<sup>68</sup> where the book is set. The result is an erasure of the record of Indigenous habitation in the region that becomes Portuguese Creek, thereby displacing Indigenous land claims and Indigenous nationhood.

The novel's protagonist, Matt Pearson, an English teacher before the war, veteran of the conflict, and a new settler to Portuguese Creek, maintains a pattern of erasure of

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<sup>67</sup> The Soldier Settlement Act (SSA) was a federal government initiative designed to resettle soldiers after they had returned from the First World War. Established in 1917, it provided financial assistance and land grants to soldiers who wished to farm after the war (Winegard 153). Technically open to Indigenous veterans, the program in fact excluded them: the Department of Indian Affairs was in charge of allocating SSA resources to Indigenous veterans, and as a result, few Indigenous veterans were helped by the program (153). Indigenous veterans were also "wary of applying for land grants off reserve, having substantiated fears of losing their Indian status and the attached rights guaranteed by treaty and government obligations" (154). Much of the land used by the SSA was appropriated. Needing land to fulfill promises made to veterans, acreage was taken from a variety of holders, including 86,000 acres of reserve land in Alberta and British Columbia (155). Historian Timothy C. Winegard writes: "An Order in Council (PC 929), ratified on 23 April 1919, granted the Department of Indian Affairs (under the regulations of the SSA, 1919) authority to expropriate reserve land 'not under cultivation or otherwise properly used' without the consent of the Indians or their councils (155).

<sup>68</sup> *Broken Ground* belongs to what Hodgins's refers to as the "Portuguese Creek" novels, which includes *The Macken Charm* (1995) and *Distance* (2003), all of which are set in Waterville, a fictional version of Merville ("Finding Merville"). The author has stated in an interview that he "grew up in a Returned Soldiers Settlement, hearing stories of the forest fire of 1922 that swept through the community," and he suggests that the geography of Merville, where he spent his formative years, shares geographical similarities to the fictional Portuguese Creek: "Merville was never even a small town -- just a general store, a community hall and a scattering of farms. There is a Portugese [sic] Creek whose nameless tributaries wander through everyone's property. I borrowed something of the geography of the place, and the architecture of the original houses, and of course historical events like the forest fire, but I imagined my own cast of characters and allowed them to respond to these events in their own way" (Twig). Like the fictional Portuguese Creek, Merville was established by veterans of the First World War and named in honour of Merville-au-bois, a French village near the fighting that took place at the Somme ("Finding Merville").

Indigenous culture and presence.<sup>69</sup> He believes that the settlement land was some sort of *terra nullius*, and is preoccupied by the lack of settler history in the area.<sup>70</sup> Literary scholar Terry Goldie established the term “indigenization” to describe the process by which white settlers in countries such as Canada have legitimated their presence by othering Indigenous people in fiction and narrating and naturalizing their disappearance (13). Goldie’s term is a useful one for understanding Pearson’s preoccupation and behaviour in connection to the settlers’ relationship to the land and Indigenous peoples. However, Pearson’s perspective on Indigenous presence is not *Broken Ground*’s perspective; this is made clear when he says pointedly to the novel’s lone Indigenous character, Mary Reimer, that ““at least we didn’t steal this place from anyone, Mary. If we’d taken it from someone we’d be thinking now that we’d been punished for it”” (Hodgins 249). She replies with a curt assertion of presence: ““You think you didn’t take it from nobody?”” (249). In this way, *Broken Ground* does address Indigenous erasure in settler mythology through its polyvocal<sup>71</sup> structure, creating competing and dissenting

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<sup>69</sup> Post-colonial theorist Alan Lawson illuminates how conventional Pearson’s actions are when he writes, for “the settler, too, the land had to be empty. Empty land can be settled, but occupied land can only be invaded. So the land must be emptied so that it can be filled” (155). For Returned Soldiers who doubt the merit of the four-year war they participated in, it was doubly important this land grant not be seen as an invasion. The land Portuguese Creek is situated on is constructed as empty in *Broken Ground*. While Mary Reimer is deployed to footnote Pearson’s understanding of the area’s history, Hodgins never addresses that Indigenous title was not extinguished in the area and the novel frequently depicts Indigenous occupation of the land as transient and marginal.

<sup>70</sup> Pearson longs to see the evidence of Western cultural achievement in Portuguese Creek, like the cathedrals he saw in Europe during the war, as a testament to the permanence of the settlement. He thinks of “the excitement of coming upon a ruined state, say or a collapsed temple in the forest, some proof that others had lived here before us. It was a mystery even to myself, the comfort I imagined getting from even the slightest hint of history in this unlikely place” (Hodgins 102-103).

<sup>71</sup> Polyvocal narratives employ a “multiplicity of voices through multiple narrators” (Sarfranz et al. 162). It is characterized by “multiplicity of social speech types and multiplicity of individual voices” (184). As such, it has been a mode used in postcolonial historiography to expand historical knowledge and decentre European systems of knowledge (160). *Broken Ground* can also be described as a polyvocal novel because the book employs a variety of texts, such as journal entries, epistolary sections, fictional films, and references to actual films, as part of its narrative structure.

perspectives from those articulated by the novel's protagonist. This polyvocal structure allows for the brief inclusion of Mary Reimer, who runs the sawmill with her husband and children and who represents Indigenous presence in the novel. However, while Reimer's perspective problematizes Indigenous erasure, more often the polyvocal structure of *Broken Ground* introduces further Indigenous erasure into the text.<sup>72</sup> These additional perspectives problematize some of the concerns regarding Indigenous erasure in the novel; however, they ultimately confirm the supremacy of settler colonialism through an evolving pedagogy<sup>73</sup> informed by commemorative actions depicted in the text.

*Broken Ground* addresses the aftermath of the First World War through representations of memory, various forms of storytelling, and commemorative gestures. It develops a discussion of the relationship between literary pedagogy and war by focusing on the anxieties of protagonist Matt Pearson. Pearson worries that his didactic approach to nineteenth-century British literature inspired his students enthusiastically to volunteer to fight in the First World War: their actions reflect the freely given sacrifice of the Crucified Canadian as it emerges from imperialist literature. Pearson's post-war questioning of his own implication in the imperial project – as a teacher, a settler, and a soldier – and his evolving post-war classroom pedagogy allows me critically to examine

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<sup>72</sup> Christina Ahlberg imagines the area's original Indigenous occupation of the area in problematic ways. She imagines "a row of longhouses, with totem poles in front and cedar boats on the shore. Dogs fighting. Fish drying on sticks. Half-naked figures moving around inside with the smoke" (Hodgins 70). Representing Indigenous inhabitants as "half-naked" sensationalizes Indigenous peoples as primitive and helps validate settler presence. Imagining previous Indigenous habitation is also part of the settlers' desire for the area to have additional history thus granting their settlement greater legitimacy. Significantly, this search for added history relies on creating narratives about Indigenous people, aligning with Goldie's description of how the indigenization validation process works to benefit settler colonists, rather than examining a historical record of Indigenous inhabitation that would negate the legitimacy of the Returned Soldiers claim to the land.

<sup>73</sup> Pedagogy here refers to the process of teaching and the systems of instruction used to educate. Through curriculum such as a syllabus and other methods of learning, colonial pedagogy constructs forms of knowledge designed to disseminate the ideology of empire, and thus produce imperial subjects.

the figure of the Crucified Canadian. This analysis illustrates a more general point about how commemorative culture influences pedagogy and legitimizes a set of mythological structures and the values they reproduce. It also foregrounds how and by whom First World War mythology is taught in Canada. However, there is a tension in the novel between Hodgins's questioning of the First World War as a foundational myth and his representation of the impact of the devastating historical fire that destroys most of the settlement of Portuguese Creek in 1922. While Hodgins critiques the appropriateness of the war as a foundational myth of national independence, the importance of the fire to the novel's plot undermines a particular progressive agrarian myth without significantly disrupting settler colonialism. The survivors are settler heroes, rebuilding the community out of its traumatic beginnings, ostensibly *ex nihilo*. The novel fails to illustrate how Canada's automatic participation in the First World War<sup>74</sup> was a component of the problematic imperial project of which settler colonialism is another. To critique the appropriateness of Canada's role in the First World War as an origin myth without recognizing its implicit connection to settler colonialism fails to identify how settler colonialism still operates in Canada. In addition, this critique does not acknowledge the continued detrimental impact of settler colonialism on Indigenous communities in contemporary Canada. *Broken Ground* is a historical novel that consciously fictionalizes historical places, like the settlement, and historical events, such as the fire and Soldier Settlement Act, while obscuring other historic realities.

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<sup>74</sup> When war began in Europe in the summer of 1914, Canadian Prime Minister Robert Borden could not make a declaration regarding his nation's participation because as "a dominion within the British Empire, Canada had no control over its own foreign policy. When Britain was at war, Canada was at war," though the scale of that commitment was to be determined by Canada (Cook, *At the Sharp End* 22).

By comparison, the Gross film, which also mobilizes the resources of historical storytelling, is even more conservative in its deliberate pedagogical project. The film was created in part as an educational tool for high schools, and an educational guide about the movie and historic battle was released at the same time as the film. Initially hosted on *The Memory Project's* website – an online archive of various multimedia first person accounts of Canadians' war experience, beginning with the First World War – the guide's inclusion on the site links the film's educational focus with the conventional war mythology reinforced by the website. Neither source challenges a perception of Canadian identity based in military action. On the surface, *Passchendaele* and its related material present a model of progressive multi-vocal pedagogy, but in reality, the film and its associated projects cement existing discourses of the First World War. Before exploring how pedagogy is achieved in *Broken Ground* and *Passchendaele* it is necessary to convey a general sense of the novel and to examine the Christian overtones that further connect the nation-specific figure of the Crucified Canadian with that of the Unknown Soldier. These Christian overtones alter understanding of wartime sacrifice, which is essential for the subsequent discussion of the problems of each work's thematic concern with noble sacrifice associated with Crucified Canadian mythology and how it is utilized in depictions of settler colonialism in *Broken Ground*.

### **Background to *Broken Ground*, the Crucified Canadian, and the Unknown Soldier**

The plot and structure of *Broken Ground* demonstrate how Hodgins navigates the concerns of commemoration and mythology. The novel depicts a budding community of settlers, many of whom are veterans of the First World War. The narrative examines the

difficulties faced by Returned Soldiers as they establish a farming settlement on Vancouver Island. In the novel, the tracts of land awarded by the government as a project to re-settle soldiers returning from the First World War are unsuitable for agricultural cultivation and situated in remote locations. While Portuguese Creek bears the remnants of an old logging camp, the historical record indicates that land given to Returned Soldiers was in some cases expropriated from Indigenous reserves by the federal government, a circumstance suggested only obliquely in Hodgins's novel. Expected to participate in a project of agrarian progress,<sup>75</sup> despite the unsuitability of the land they were granted, these veterans must first clear the land of Douglas fir stumps. This removal process forces the veterans to use skills acquired during the war; they detonate explosives to blast away the remains of old growth forest, for example, in scenes that provide a vivid reminder on the settler frontier of the violence soldiers experienced on the Western Front.

Hodgins's book is divided into three sections. In the 1970s, the community's second generation, having reached adulthood, begins to engage in commemorative practices. These commemorative practices do not focus on their predecessors' military service but rather on the fire of 1922 and how it became a formative event in the community's history. Young Desmond, who functions as a type of archivist, interviews survivors of the fire, including protagonists Matt Pearson and Charlie MacIntosh, and then writes their recollected stories into imaginative first-person accounts. These

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<sup>75</sup> For Wolfe, agriculture is a necessary component of indigenization. He notes that agriculture, unlike extractive industries, is "inherently sedentary and, therefore, permanent," supports other industries, and "enables a population to be expanded by continuing immigration at the expense of native lands and livelihoods" (395). It is no coincidence, then, that the Returned Soldiers in the novel initially undertake an agrarian project on Vancouver Island with limited hope of success because of their inexperience and the densely forested land, as agrarian living was linked with both permanence and progress, as a method for "improving" the land.



accounts become the basis for the first section of *Broken Ground*, “Voices from Portuguese Creek 1922”. Charlie MacIntosh, whose reflections appear in this section, is just a boy when the settlement forms after the First World War. His father, Mac, is killed while blasting tree stumps (16) early in the settlement’s history and Pearson functions as a type of surrogate father to Charlie. Mac’s death is the settlement’s first, and without a church or previously established ceremonies, the community must examine their commemorative traditions (both their individual ethnic traditions and the military ceremonies the men prefer) to find a suitable way to remember Mac (40-42). Mac’s death helps establish the settlers’ work as a type of noble sacrifice, akin to the sacrifice the Unknown Soldier represents: the settlers “were risking Mac’s fate every day of our lives” (18), as Matt Pearson puts it. The Pearson family figures centrally in the novel; particularly important is husband and father Matt Pearson, a veteran of the war. While the accounts of a handful of characters are recounted in the book’s first section, Pearson’s reflections are especially significant; they are most frequently featured and his passages are quite lengthy.<sup>76</sup> Pearson, a school-teacher and lover of literature before the war, has given up on farming and intends to abandon his family and leave the settlement. His brother-in-law, Donald MacCormack, who lives with the Pearson family, was seriously

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<sup>76</sup> With the exception of Christina Ahlberg, these accounts are all from the settlement’s Anglo settlers; there are no retellings from the Martins, who are French-Canadian, the Korsakovs, who are Russian, or Aaltos, who are Finnish. Of the eleven accounts, seven characters have one or two passages told from their perspective and these passages read more like edited excerpts because they are short, insufficient paragraphs. Matt Pearson has the most accounts, (nine), and these passages are protracted; some are even chapter length. Matt Pearson’s version features on 85 of the 188 pages of the section – or almost half. Charlie has five lengthy passages, using 34 pages of the sections. The only character other than Matt Pearson to have more accounts than Charlie is Christina Ahlberg, who has six accounts. Christina’s passages use 44 pages and largely provide the secondary narrative of the love story between Nora Macken, Wyatt Taylor, and Johanna Seyerstad. Her inclusion is important, not just in terms of the length of her account, but because the Macken-Taylor-Seyerstad romance is largely ignored by Charlie and Matt Pearson but is the focus of Jeff Macken’s film. It is necessary to provide this narrative in the first section of the novel because readers need to understand it when the film is introduced.

wounded during the war, and always wears a mask to cover his facial injury. In this first section, the reader is also introduced to the novel's secondary plot, which features a love triangle involving Nora Macken, Wyatt Taylor, and Joanna Seyerstad. The first section of the book culminates with the fire and its immediate consequences.

For many in Portuguese Creek, this traumatic event will eventually become a source of communal memory and trauma not unlike the way the First World War is conventionally remembered in Canada. However, for Matt Pearson the fire initially claims his sense of community. Pearson, so distraught by the events of the fire, which resulted in the death of his only daughter Elizabeth, conceived while he was serving in France, returns to France in its aftermath. The second section of the novel is titled "The Fields of France 1918-1919" and comprises Pearson's letters home to his wife, which he writes as he attempts to finalize the paperwork to bring his daughter Elizabeth home to Canada in 1919. This section also includes excerpts from his notebooks written in 1923 when he returns to France after the fire, and these pages are filled with grief over his daughter's death. In France, Pearson is forced to confront his guilt over not being able to protect those who trusted him, during both the war and the fire when he resumes his role as a teacher upon returning to Portuguese Creek. In addition, he comes to terms with his earlier love of literature, which he had subsequently disavowed when he recognized its role in creating the conditions for the war. He acknowledges his role as a teacher who through literature indoctrinated boys in the narratives of empire, prompting them to volunteer, and must therefore re-evaluate his teaching methodology in his post-war classroom. Reflecting on his teaching and war experiences, Pearson states, "God knows I've lain awake at night trying to go through every poem or novel I forced them

[students] to read, looking for that moment when I might have been responsible for causing boys like Donald MacCormack and Hugh Corbett to sign up willingly for the slaughter” (100). Pearson’s self-evaluation is a crucial part of the novel’s examination of teaching and its role in establishing commemorative practices.

The novel’s final section, “A Helmet for the Bees 1996,” is presented as the written memoirs of Charlie, one of the settlement’s custodians of history. It is set in 1996, roughly contemporary with the release of *Broken Ground*. It is also a record of the community’s continuing commemorative practices. Jeff Macken, another descendent of the settlers, makes a film about the fire and original settlement. Now an old man, Charlie is concerned with versions of history and questions of narrative fidelity, which are largely generated by omissions in the film’s account of the settlement’s history and fire. Charlie realizes the potential difficulties Macken faced when completing his film; Charlie notes, “There would always be another voice to hear from, or another version, or something new just remembered, or an older memory reconsidered” (256). Charlie’s memoirs focus on narrative erasures of characters such as Matt Pearson, who figured centrally in his memories, but have limited roles in the fictional Macken film. In other words, Charlie worries about individual exclusions, not issues of systemic erasure. Macken continues a pattern of expunction when he does not highlight the erasure of Indigenous peoples in the creation and narrative history of the settlement. For him, the Reimers are merely a discarded potential filming location: “Of course he couldn’t use Reimers’ place. The boys had dismantled the sawmill and filled in the underground house years ago, when they converted the whole property to a seniors’ retirement park. All the trees had been cleared away, in order to attract people from the prairies” (258). While this passage gestures to

the earlier displacement of Indigenous people to accommodate the Returned Soldiers in the novel, Hodgins never clearly highlights that Indigenous erasure is problematic in *Broken Ground*. Thus, his novel perpetuates a national narrative that is mostly silent on the sacrifice of Indigenous peoples for the creation of agrarian communities that would become “Canada”.

Donald MacCormack is eradicated from the film entirely. He is a minor character throughout much of the novel, but his role is completely erased in the Macken film. He thus, I would argue, becomes a living Unknown; denied his voice after his injury, he is further expunged from the history of the war and the town in the film. MacCormack is represented as an Unknown in the Hodgins’s novel because, for the reader, he is a living figure of sacrifice. During the screening of the Macken film, MacCormack takes off his mask, revealing the extent of his war injuries to the community for the first time. Still, many in the audience are bewildered, unsure how to respond: “It could not be avoided, though many turned away. Some were later ashamed of being ill” (333). In the Macken film-within-the-novel, MacCormack’s presence is eliminated, but in Charlie’s story about the fictional film in his memoir, MacCormack erupts to the surface, though he remains an enigma. As such, MacCormack becomes a revisionist version of the Crucified Canadian/Unknown Soldier myth, exemplifying the essential paradoxical tension at the core of the figure.

To understand how Donald functions as a type of Unknown, it is necessary to first explain how representations of the Crucified Canadian relate to the Unknown Soldier. In addition, a greater awareness of the Christian understanding of the First World War and the religious significance of the Unknown Soldier and Crucified Canadian are needed.

Christian interpretations of the First World War were apparent during the conflict itself, and soldiers were often viewed by leading members of Canada's Christian clergy and by the soldiers themselves as knights or crusaders fighting for Christ (Vance, *Death* 35-39). Christian prompts were commonplace on the Western Front and crucifixion imagery was ubiquitous during the war. According to literary and cultural historian Paul Fussell, "The image of the crucifixion was always accessible at the front because of the numerous real physical calvaries visible at French and Belgian crossroads, many of them named Crucifix Corner" (143). Army discipline also provided conflicted visual reminders of Christ's crucifixion. Corporal punishments such as Field Punishment number 1, which disciplined soldiers by tying them to trees, posts, or cart wheels for hours at a time, served as a visual reminder of a figure on a cross; Canadian soldiers simply referred to the punishment as "crucifixion" (Cook, *Shock Troops* 249). These images underscored soldiers' experience at the front and helped reinforce a Christian mythology about the nature of sacrifice in war.

It is not surprising that in this visual landscape, a myth of battlefield crucifixion perpetrated by the enemy also emerged. The myth was a popular one that developed specific relevance for Canadians. Historian Tim Cook explains: "The most influential atrocity story at the time was the supposed crucifixion of a Canadian soldier to a barn door, bayonets through hands and feet. The story became a powerful legend, and while many Canadians claimed to have seen the crucified Canadian, all told different versions of what had happened" (*At the Sharp End* 163).<sup>77</sup> Despite these discrepancies, the

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<sup>77</sup> While the myth endured throughout the war and well after the fact, there is no evidence to suggest such an event took place. Investigators examined the claim, but could not find corroborating evidence and many witnesses changed their stories under examination (Cook, *At the Sharp End* 163). Few Canadian survivors

Crucified Canadian was an important propaganda tool during the war: “The Christ-like image of the executed Canadian reinforced the importance of crusading against such an inhumane enemy. The story struck a chord, being widely believed in the Canadian forces and passed on to reinforcements” (163). Fussell similarly notes that the myth of the Crucified Canadian was of particular interest “because of its original context in the insistent visual realities of the front” and because it reflected Christ’s crucifixion (143). Fussell points out that crucifixion was a symbol embraced by the Great War poets: “The sacrificial theme, in which each soldier becomes a type of the crucified Christ, is at the heart of countless Great War poems,” such as Siegfried Sassoon’s “The Redeemer,”<sup>78</sup> and Wilfred Owen’s letter to Osbert Sitwell (145-146).<sup>79</sup> The Crucified Canadian proved to be a potent religious symbol for those at the front: “the rumor of the Crucified Canadian seems to assume an origin and a locus, as well as a meaning. He is ‘the pattern of all suffering.’ His suffering could be conceived to represent the sacrifice of all, at the same time that it was turned by propaganda into an instrument of hate. No wonder that, serving both purposes, it was a popular legend” (146). The accepted trope of the Christ-like sacrifice of soldiers, including nation-specific myths such as the Crucified Canadian, was

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of the Second Battle of Ypres considered the nature of the battle when spreading this rumour; the “Canadian lines constricted during the battle (thus leaving all witnesses presumably behind German lines)” (163). The imagery of a bayoneted and crucified Canadian soldier resonated with soldiers, and was “employed as justification by some to show no mercy to the Hun in future battles” (163).

<sup>78</sup> The speaker of Sassoon’s “The Redeemer” directs soldiers laying planks in a trench, and marvels at the similarities between one of the soldiers and Christ: “He faced me, reeling in his weariness, / Shouldering his load of planks, so hard to bear. / I say that He was Christ...” (Sassoon qtd. in Fussell, 145).

<sup>79</sup> Fussell describes Owen’s letter as among the best prose of the war; Owen’s writes for “14 hours yesterday I was at work – teaching Christ to lift his cross by numbers, and how to adjust his crown; and not to imagine his thirst until after the last halt. I attended his Supper to see that there were no complaints; and inspected his feet that they should be worthy of nails. I see to it that he is dumb, and stand at attention before his accusers. With a piece of silver I buy him every day, and with maps I make him familiar with the topography of Golgotha” (Owen qtd. in Fussell 146).

an effective method for understanding the tremendous losses of the war while the conflict was still ongoing, and it was a myth that reverberated in peacetime as well.

The symbolic Christ-like sacrifice of the dead was codified immediately following the war in the commemorative form of the Unknown Soldier. Although a universal symbol representing the loss of all soldiers, the Unknown Soldier emphasizes the physicality of soldiers that attributes “anonymity to a single body...one that emphasized physical suffering” (Wittman 9). This physical suffering recalls those who saw soldiers as making a Christ-like sacrifice. Likewise, Vance notes, “The degree to which the two figures became interchangeable is striking. The Unknown Warrior had been an ordinary man, yet by offering his life for civilization, he had transcended his own humanity. Deified by death in battle, he could look forward to the same reward for his sacrifice that Jesus had earned 2,000 years earlier: the assurance of resurrection and everlasting life” (*Death* 43-44). The common soldier was seen to have made a sacrifice akin to Christ’s by dying in battle, and the Unknown Soldier was the ultimate elevation and commemoration of this belief. Part of the fascination with Vimy Ridge, the most famous Canadian victory of the war, was that it brought “together the religious and the nationalist” (Vance, “Battle Verse” 265). According to Vance, Canadian poets were drawn to the battle during the interwar period because the Canadian offensive took place on Easter Monday: “Easter Monday 1917 brought together two events of tremendous import: the celebration of the resurrection of Christ and the birth of a nation” (265-266). Consequently, it was ingrained in many Canadians to understand battlefield death as Christ-like sacrifice. The origins of the relationship between the Crucified Canadian and the Unknown Soldier had its genesis in the religious imagery of the Western Front, the

mythology of the Crucified Canadian, religious overtones of Canada's most famous battle, and the unprecedented nature of loss during the First World War.

### **The Crucified Canadian in *Broken Ground* and *Passchendaele***

Works such as *Broken Ground* and *Passchendaele* have added a pedagogical dimension to the tradition of the Crucified Canadian. The way Hodgins and Gross address this myth throws into relief the differences in these artists' approaches to the imbrication of teaching and mythology. *Passchendaele* makes the connection between heroic sacrifice and Christian imagery of the Crucified Canadian over the course of the movie. The film's shocking opening, in which Dunne (played by Gross) bayonets an enemy soldier half his age in the forehead while the younger soldier is trying to surrender, suggests an unapologetic approach to the horror of war and Canada's role in such conflicts. Dunne's violent act depicts a Canadian soldier committing an atrocity out of revenge for recently fallen comrades and for injuries from which he is suffering, but does not reflect the overall perspective of the film. It is an unconventional portrayal of a Canadian soldier, one Canadian audiences are unused to seeing and one that would seem to counter the more passive – one might even say “passionate” – myth of the Crucified Canadian. This violence is normally reserved for unsympathetic portrayals of the enemy in which a Canadian victim/German enemy dichotomy is established. Dunne's behaviour when he returns to Canada to convalesce however, and act as a recruiter for the army while stationed in Calgary, reverses this impression. As a recruiter, he defies pressure to shame those not serving as cowards and refuses to glorify his own role in war.



Suffering from shellshock as a result of his experiences at the front, Dunne dreams about a Canadian soldier nailed to a cross by German soldiers. His dreams echo the crucifix he saw tilted and hanging from the church during his last action of the war before being injured, but they also resonate with the famous myth. Fussell describes the “well-known rumor” of the Crucified Canadian as follows: “The usual version relates that the Germans captured a Canadian soldier and in full view of his mates exhibited him in the open spread-eagled on a cross, his hands and feet pierced by bayonets. He is said to have died slowly. Maple Copse, near Sanctuary Wood in the Ypres sector, was the favorite setting” (143). Despite its retelling among Canadian troops and his recurring nightmare featuring a crucifixion, when Dunne is asked to comment on the Crucified Canadian directly, first at a recruitment fair and subsequently in a Calgary bar by his friend Royster, he insists both times that it never happened. He responds that men in trenches during war see what they want to see and tells Royster “it’s a good story, never happened” (*Passchendaele* 0:30:10-13). Like Fussell and Cook, Dunne believes the Crucified Canadian makes for good narrative, but does not necessarily represent an actual incident or individual. It is a significant denial in part because it takes place on home soil, in Calgary, a community still committed to patriotic fervor, divorced from the violent realities of the front. Dunne is romantically involved with Sarah Mann, whose father died fighting for the Germans during the First World War and who is subjected to violent discrimination because of her German ancestry. Dunne refuses to take part in any reductive vilification of the enemy based in the myth nor does he use it as a recruiting tool, thwarting its nationalist appeal. This gives the first part of *Passchendaele* the tenor

of being critical of the nationalism driving the war effort yet the film proceeds to affirm this iconic image by movie's end.

The film's battle scenes close with the naïve David Mann, the younger brother of Sarah, trapped behind enemy lines at Passchendaele. When David is subsequently strung up on two broken ladders after charging at the German lines during the battle (also known as the Third Battle of Ypres), he recreates the apocryphal scene of the Crucified Canadian from the earlier Second Battle of Ypres. Dunne chases after him, determined to fulfill his promise to look after the young soldier, and is shot for his efforts. The German commander realizes what Dunne is attempting to do and orders his men to cease fire. Then, in full Christian allusion, the German commander orders his men to help Dunne take down the cross and lay the burden on Dunne's back. The wounded Dunne must bear the cross, and David, across No Man's Land; he stumbles and falls, but gets to his feet, and, as he nears the Canadian lines, his battalion comes to provide him with relief, taking the load. The scene functions as Dunne's atonement for murdering the young German soldier at the start of the film and restores the viewer's faith in the morality of Canadian soldiers. The battle is won, but at great cost, and Dunne dies in hospital in Sarah's arms. Gross's Christian symbolism is overt and clumsy and relies on an allegorical Christian reading of the war that was popular during the conflict and the interwar period, as Vance has indicated. Vance writes that Canadian soldiers who fell in battle during the First World War "were saviours whose suffering and sacrifice were one and the same with Christ's" (*Death* 40). Canadians saw the war as redemptive and commemorative efforts reflect this; ascension and resurrection imagery were frequently utilized in war memorials (44). The figures of the National War Memorial in Ottawa, for example, move from west

to east; as Vance states, “The symbolism was clear: those Canadians who sacrificed their lives, who had, in soldiers’ slang, ‘gone west,’ would find everlasting life” (45). Gross’s use of the Crucified Canadian myth here undermines the earlier challenging of the myth, expounded from the position of a single character. The result is that the overall “authorized” perspective in *Passchendaele* reaffirms and uncritically perpetuates the myth. Gross “teaches” the myth by showing and then correcting an “erroneous” belief. Ultimately, the myth Gross perpetuates is similar to the very kind of pedagogical practice teacher Matt Pearson rejects in his post-war classroom in *Broken Ground*.

A less conventional version of the myth is found in *Broken Ground*. Unlike the unnamed crucified soldier of myth, the story of Hugh Corbett, a young soldier who is executed for desertion, is individualized in Pearson’s recollections. Corbett was childhood friends with Donald MacCormack and the pair signed up to serve overseas together (Hodgins 93). He was a former student and a member of the same platoon as Matt Pearson, and as such, Pearson felt responsible for the younger man, a similarity he shares with Gross’s Dunne. Corbett, contends Gordon, “is meant to operate as a crucial historical touch-stone in *Broken Ground*, through which Hodgins can raise the spectre of a particular military policy that troubles a desire by contemporary Canadians to make claims about the moral merit of the war in their remembrances” (*Catching the Torch* 71). Pearson recalls that Corbett was intelligent, athletic, and sensitive; growing up in a rural community, he would have become a farmhand or a store clerk had it not been for the war (Hodgins 94). He notes Corbett’s close relationship with Pearson’s brother-in-law Donald MacCormack, suggests that they would be “one of those bachelor pairs you see growing old together in the same house” if they had both survived the conflict (93).

Pearson remarks on the toll the war had taken on Corbett, who joins Pearson's platoon, gaunt and exhausted, devastated by MacCormack's injury (94). When Corbett is found guilty of desertion he is paraded behind a farmhouse to a post that has been placed in preparation for his execution. Pearson remembers Corbett's final pleas, that Corbett called out for his friend Donald, and that he sobbed incomprehensibly: "they had already started pouring drink down his throat, he was in no condition to think clearly, I wasn't even sure he knew what I was talking about" (99). Pearson also retells his own subsequent apology to Corbett's parents after the war, in which "He came to offer comfort" according to the private's father (312). This is not the Crucified Canadian of legend, dying heroically in battle at the hands of a foreign enemy. Instead, *Broken Ground's* retelling of the Crucified Canadian is an account about who and what is sacrificed in order to sustain a national mythology based in military achievement.

Hodgins's Crucified Canadian undermines the myth's lasting power as a version of the Unknown Soldier; its specificity prompts an examination of Canada's own role in war instead of shifting the focus to a vilified enemy. As Wittman explains, conventionally "The Unknown Soldier was at once a representation of the body of the nation and of the human body" (3). For Canadians believing in the righteousness of their cause and the redemptive qualities of heroic sacrifice, the Crucified Canadian became a specifically Canadian example of the Unknown Soldier. The myth has pedagogical value because of its adaptability. Long associated with the cruelty of the enemy in Canadian mythology, Hodgins turns the mythology of the Crucified Canadian inward to critically examine Canada's role in the horrors of war as well as to highlight how unity of purpose led to wrongdoing. During the First World War, 216 Canadians received death sentences

and twenty-five of those rulings were carried out by firing squad; of those enacted rulings, twenty-two of these men were killed for desertion (Cook, *Shock Troops* 251).

While a small portion of the some 60,000 Canadians killed during the conflict, the killing of twenty-two Canadian soldiers for desertion undermines the propaganda circulated in Allied countries during the war and within the ranks of Canada's military that Germany represented a level of barbarity not replicated in the Allied cause (Cook, *At the Sharp End* 163).<sup>80</sup> Hodgins's use of the figure of the Crucified Canadian dismantles the artificial separation between Canadian troops and the enemies those troops fought on the battlefields of Europe. Significantly, Hodgins places blame for the acts of violence experienced by troops like Corbett, not on a foreign enemy but on Canada's military leaders. Hodgins does not overtly make the parallel between the Canadian military, automatically participating in the First World War because of its relation to British imperialism and acting within British military traditions, enacting violence on its own members with the colonial violence Canada has enacted against Indigenous people. However, by emphasizing the martial similarities between the violence experienced by the settlers in Portuguese Creek during peacetime with the brutality they experience during war, Hodgins's narrative does suggest parallels between the violence at the settler colonial frontier and the violent inequalities of the Western Front. The First World War is conventionally understood as a unifying force in Canada, a Canadian war of

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<sup>80</sup> Twenty-five Canadians were executed in total; in addition to the twenty-two men killed for desertion, one was executed for cowardice and two for murder. The two executed for murder might have been killed in Canada had their crime occurred there, as capital punishment was still legal at the time (Cook, *Shock Troops* 251).

independence akin to the American effort during the Revolutionary War.<sup>81</sup> What Hodgins's novel suggests, from its title and its questioning of myths like the Crucified Canadian, is that the war enacted forms of filial violence rarely acknowledged in Canada that divided rather than unified the nation.

Hodgins integrates this critique into *Broken Ground* by illustrating how Corbett's medical assessment and execution undermined his fellow soldiers' faith in their superiors and the army itself. Corbett experiences memory loss and complains of headaches to his own doctors but is told there is "Nothing wrong with him"; his individual symptoms are not taken seriously because the psychological trauma of war, known as "shell shock"<sup>82</sup> during the First World War, has a certain unknowability (Hodgins 98).<sup>83</sup> His fellow soldiers expect a just punishment, more in line with his brief period away and one that acknowledges his otherwise exemplary service. His fellow soldiers "'laid bets. We expected acquittal. At worst, we expected a fine, or a long detention, or even field

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<sup>81</sup> As Tim Cook writes, "The Great War was Canada's war of independence. The Canadian forces battlefield success pushed the nation toward full autonomy and international recognition. Canada signed the Treaty of Versailles, which formally ended the war, and that signature, separate from Great Britain's, revealed that something had changed in the relationship between the two countries" (*Shock Troops* 627).

<sup>82</sup> Gradually over the course of the war, medical personnel began to recognize the symptoms of "mental breakdown caused by the unending strain of combat" (Cook, *At the Sharp End* 202). Termed "shell shock" at the time, cases of mental breakdown were diagnosed from the earliest days of the war despite the lack of understanding of the illness within the army (202-203). Given the ever-present need for soldiers at the front, the army forbid doctors from labelling mental breakdowns as such, instead requiring the use of the term "Not Yet Diagnosed" (203). This pressure convinced military officials that some soldiers were fabricating their symptoms: "With soldiers pushed to the edge of both endurance and sanity, many would do anything to escape from the horrors of the front. Medical officers had the distasteful task of ferreting out the truly psychologically damaged from the clever fakers. Malingering indeed happened, but the reality of shell shock could not be denied, and by war's end an estimated 9,000 cases had been recorded in the Canadian forces alone" (204). Shell shock is now known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and Deployment Assistance Groups (DAGs) began to assess troops' mental well-being before deployment or re-deployment after several scandal-plagued missions in the 1990s (Windsor et al. 80). In 1999, the Department of National Defense opened five Operational Trauma and Stress Support Centres in Canada, with satellite services on many military bases to treat PTSD (82).

<sup>83</sup> Corbett's symptoms were just a few of the wide ranging effects of battle fatigue commonly referred to as shell shock during the First World War; "soldiers were succumbing to fear, paranoia, bouts of uncontrollable crying, paralysis of limbs, mutism, nightmares, and other typical hysterical reactions" (Cook, *At the Sharp End* 202-203).

punishment #1 for a couple of weeks. After all, he'd taken part in a number of battles, he'd never gone missing before, there'd been the incident with Fox<sup>84</sup> just hours before, and he'd been absent for only eight or nine hours" (98). Their naïve expectations are of officers who can and will protect them and a chain of command that is sympathetic and treats soldiers individually. When the soldiers are marched out on parade to listen to the verdict, that illusion is undone, as Pearson recalls, "Nobody won any bets. He was to be shot the next morning, by some of our own, for desertion. They didn't explain themselves, they didn't have to, but it was rumoured later that they viewed the lad's history of survival with suspicion. He would be shot by us for not being shot by the Germans" (99). The platoon expects a symbolic crucifixion but is made to witness an actual execution.

The army's arbitrary and punitive command structure is resonant with the novel's rendering of the federal government's inconsistent post-war settlement policies. Just as the factual details of Corbett's service and medical condition are ignored when determining his punishment, so too are the conditions of the Portuguese Creek land deliberately disregarded. It did not matter that the land granted to the Returned Soldiers in *Broken Ground* was not suitable for farming; agrarian improvement was still expected. It was of little consequence that clearing the land to make way for farms was an incredibly dangerous process and cost the lives of some Returned Soldiers, such as Charlie McIntosh's father. Indigenous title was treated as an obstacle to resettlement, a process that would allow Returned Soldiers to "live as white people should," according to

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<sup>84</sup> Fox, a fellow soldier, is killed right in front of Corbett, hours before Corbett's desertion. Fox's head is blown off in an explosion, resulting in his blood and bits of his skin and skull splattering all over Corbett (Hodgins 95-96).

the Minister of Agriculture in the novel (34). Pearson's experience with the army's command structure during the war, especially during Corbett's trial and execution, prepared him for his post-war experience with the haphazard and unfeeling decision-making of the federal government: he complains bitterly that "This was the sort of reward they gave you for spending three or four years of your life being shot at for the King. This was your recompense and thanks. We were farmers who'd never farmed land like this before, or cleared land like this before, or for that matter even *seen* land like this before the War" (18). Pearson's disgust at the federal government's treatment of veterans obscures and neglects the injustice of expropriating that same land from Indigenous people. *Broken Ground* illustrates key flaws in conventional national myths by examining the Crucified Canadian through the experience of settler farmers.

The image of the Crucified Canadian continues to haunt Matt Pearson after the fire. When he returns to France after the fire, he looks after Elizabeth's elderly great-grandparents and stays with Emile, a farmer who helps clear the devastated land of corpses and unexploded ordnance, paralleling the clearing of the dangerous farmland Pearson had participated in on Vancouver Island. During his time away, he sees many soldiers' relatives who make the trip to France searching for material traces of loved ones. Pearson also helps families who come to France in search of answers about lost loved ones and eventually believes he has found the remains of a cross, marking a grave, in an old barn. Hodgins writes that the cross "was about thirty inches long, perhaps more, and almost the width of his hand. A shorter crosspiece must have fallen off and been trampled elsewhere into the dirt. He had seen enough of these to know what he was looking at, though any markings had been worn away" (313). This discovery sparks his



memory. He suggests to the Australian parents that the grave they are looking for is inside the barn and the couple leaves clutching the piece of board that Pearson uncovered, a type of holy relic, but the makeshift grave resonates with Pearson personally as well. While he tries to disregard the realization with an offhand comment that he “didn’t want to know” the significance of the moment, he fails to let it go (314). Pearson reflects that “From this distance and in this light it might have been poor Hughie’s abattoir, as I had imagined it inside. I wondered with a cold shock if it had been Hugh Corbett’s building that the abandoned sawmill at home reminded me of, and not the ruined village church as I’d supposed” (314). The “ruined village church” is a reference to Elizabeth, as it is where he would clandestinely meet with her mother during the war. He realizes that this spot links Corbett’s execution and the death of Elizabeth for him and he must come to terms with his failure to protect them both. Consequently, he raises doubts about the honour of martial sacrifice, and undermines the larger, nationalist myths that were generated by the First World War and, as I explore in the following section, perpetuated in Canadian classrooms.

### **The Crucified Canadian and Pedagogical Resources**

*Passchendaele* was deliberately conceived in an attempt to harness the teaching goals of a pedagogical document to the popular appeal of an historical film drama. When Gross’s movie was released in 2008 it received a great deal of support as a learning document to help teachers instruct their students about the Canadian experience of the First World War. Gross received the Pierre Berton Award, given to an individual who has “brought Canadian history to a wider audience” (“Passionate”). Gross received the award

in 2009 for his work as an actor, writer, and director – most notably for the previous year’s *Passchendaele*. As the judges explained, the film’s instructional aims were of utmost significance in awarding him the prize: “importantly, the film forms part of a larger campaign to teach about war and military history in Canadian schools” (“Passionate”). *Broken Ground*, on the other hand, is more critical in its examination of such teaching. The novel thematizes the role of teaching in shaping public perceptions of the First World War in ways that critically comment on the role of pedagogy in war commemoration. Pearson’s teaching initially relies on rote learning – the cultivation of memory by way of simple repetition – a strategy that sustains the authority of the instructor and fosters an uncritical attitude to past knowledge. This strategy is characteristic of British imperialist systems of education at the time of the First World War. Pearson, however, develops an instruction style that is polyvocal in nature when he resumes teaching after the fire. The teaching models presented in *Broken Ground* reflect a shift away from the didactic understanding of literature in Pearson’s pre-war classroom; instead, the novel’s polyvocal structure simultaneously highlights and relativizes different narrative perspectives and a variety of (fictional) source materials to create a fuller understanding of the origins of Portuguese Creek and the impact of the fire on the community. Pearson’s personal teaching methodology evolves throughout *Broken Ground* and ultimately echoes the multi-focal nature of the novel’s structure while minimizing the importance of his role as teaching authority and requiring the ethical intervention of its pupils: for example, “He considered the fire an important part of the curriculum, but not his alone to relate. In fact, he preferred to say little about it himself, but formed the habit of inviting people from the community in to tell about it, a different

group every year” (328). His lessons about the war become “explorations and discussions of individual responsibilities and ethics. He led them to no definitive answers,” a significant change from his pre-war classroom where his students were instructed by rote learning, filtered through the discourse of empire and presenting a narrow view of the world (329). In addition, the novel itself proposes an alternative way to develop systems of knowledge in its own polyvocal narrative structure. *Broken Ground* exhibits a polyvocality both in the multiplicity of narrative perspectives included in the text and because of the amount of various fictional sources, such as film, paintings, epistolary entries, and interviews, as well as references to factual texts like government legislation and real-life movies, to present such differing perspectives. However, the development of Pearson’s personal teaching methodology is not entirely progressive. Pearson replaces a type of imperialist settler colonialism, highlighted by his teaching of Tennyson’s “Ulysses” among other “instructional” nineteenth-century British poetry, in favour of a polyvocal history of the community that begins with white settlement. Therefore, the process the book celebrates is still based in nationalist mythology, this time a nationalism that places value in a narrative of settler sacrifice instead of one invested in martial accomplishment. Consequently, the myth of the Crucified Canadian is critiqued from within *Broken Ground*’s polyvocal structure, producing different results than its use in *Passchendaele*.

Significantly, the inclusion of the Crucified Canadian myth at the conclusion of *Passchendaele* privileges a nationalist mythology based in military action that contrasts

sharply with a pluralist understanding of Canada.<sup>85</sup> The film draws on an undercurrent of the “warrior nation” culture that has been fostered in Canada since the nation’s military role in Afghanistan began in 2001: as cultural and literary scholar A.L. McCready writes of *Passchendaele*, “white civility finds its earthly avatar in the hard-working masculine body purified of sin and emblematic of national virtue. That this soldiering body is itself sacrificed, broken on the cross(ing), reinforces the pedagogical work of the film and its place in the new Canadian militarism: soldiers represent the climax of Canadian identity and virtue, and their sacrifice is the guarantee of the freedoms we cherish” (100).

*Passchendaele* is thus a product of longstanding historical conventions in Canada that have perpetuated the myth of the Crucified Canadian and combined it with a current militarized perception of national identity that marks a shift away from previous “peacekeeping” understandings. This emphasis correctly identifies Canada’s lengthy history of military action but does not interrogate the violence inherent in such a martial ethos:

As both an artifact and an articulation of the neoliberal militarization of Canada, then, *Passchendaele* is extremely effective. Despite its relative lack of compelling narrative or conceptual sophistication, it succeeds in rehearsing key, deeply rooted themes of Canadian identity, framing them within the heroic actions of soldiers during Canada’s coming of age in the

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<sup>85</sup> Ian McKay and Jamie Swift argue in their book *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety* (2012) that “new warriors,” small-c conservatives with strong military connections and ties to the federal government under Stephen Harper, targeted “the most pernicious myths and symbols of post-1960s Canada: the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, bilingualism, multicultural relativism, gender equality, and peacekeeping. In their place they promote religious fundamentalism, the military, many sports, the special relationship with the United States and Britain, and the British monarchy – all now described as core attributes of Canada” during their rise to and time in power, significantly reshaping the identity of the country (270).

trenches of Europe, and doing so all within the present day cultural market eager for representations of Canadian military identity in order to make sense of Canada's changing place in the world. (McCready 103)

Gross's rehabilitation of the historical and mythic resonances of the Crucified Canadian does more than blur the distinction between fact and fiction. Fiction is often a vital pedagogical tool, but when historical fiction strays from its source material, the purpose of this departure should be carefully interrogated. In the case of *Passchendaele*, the adoption of the Crucified Canadian is consistent with its use as Allied propaganda during the First World War and serves to bolster a contemporary martial identity for Canada. *Passchendaele* uncritically maintains a similar national pedagogical system and practice to the one profoundly rejected by Matt Pearson in his polyvocal, post-war classroom teaching in *Broken Ground* and the one, by extension, offered in Hodgins's novel as a whole.

A more compelling version of the Crucified Canadian myth comes from Hodgins's novel. Matt Pearson's description of the execution of Corbett for desertion during the war recalls the barn door crucifixion of the apocryphal story. Pearson does his best to care for his soldiers at the front, including Corbett. Pearson states, "Clearly he felt safer believing his life was in my hands. A man from home. Did he think he'd tucked himself beneath the shadow of my wing? They all did, the youngest ones. The boys. When things were bad. It was as if I had taken a school class out on an adventure hike and could be counted on to keep them safe from harm" (Hodgins 97). Here the battlefield becomes an extension of the classroom, and Pearson the officer guides his soldiers

through danger in ways similar to how Pearson the teacher navigated his students through nature hikes and other experiential learning.

The connection between the military and school is furthered as Pearson's recollections of Corbett blur the distinctions between classroom and battlefield experiences. Pearson notes that the private's face is marked with blackheads, another reminder of Corbett's relative youth, and he recalls Corbett as a student reciting "Ulysses" in his classroom (97). The recitation model employed here is important, as it resembles the soldier's experience in the army. Both Pearson's pre-war classroom and the army rely on rote learning; through repetition, poetry is memorized, just as military regulations are learned through drills. Corbett's recitation of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "Ulysses" is of particular importance. As literary scholar Matthew Rowlinson has illustrated, "Ulysses" did not receive the attention of other Tennyson works when it was first published in 1842 and is a "text that dates from before it was possible to speak of a British imperialism, and yet seems peculiarly to speak to and about the twilight of that imperialism" (153).<sup>86</sup> He concludes that the place of "Ulysses" as a canonical Tennyson text is derived from its use as an instrument of instruction:<sup>87</sup> "there is evidence to suggest that 'Ulysses' acquired its current prominent place in Tennyson's canon quite belatedly and as a result of the institution of English literature as a pedagogical discipline – a

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<sup>86</sup> In "The Ideological Moment of Tennyson's 'Ulysses'" Rowlinson indicates that in 1830s Britain, when "Ulysses" was first published, the imperialism of the late nineteenth-century had yet to be verbalized (152). The term "British Empire" referred to the British Isles and the word "imperialism" did not appear in English until 1851 (152). In short, when "Ulysses" was published in 1833, "it is hard to find a language in which what we now understand as British imperialism could be discussed as a single phenomenon" (153).

<sup>87</sup> Rowlinson examines the "Ulysses" republication history as a method of examining the public response to the poem. His findings suggest "Ulysses" was key to late-Victorian colonial pedagogy: "it was not ordinarily among those poems of Tennyson selected for anthologies aimed at the general public, while the anthologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who produced the early classroom texts in the field of Victorian poetry seem almost invariably to have reprinted it" (149).

historical event which has as its causes the late-Victorian drive to establish English as a world language” (149). That “Ulysses” is a prominent example of colonial pedagogy is important to Pearson’s personal crisis and to Hodgins’s larger issues with the teaching methods of the era before the First World War. It is also important because of poetry’s connection to English values. Rowlinson writes, “These distinct but related developments are, first, the establishment of English poetry as a subject of formal instruction, and second, the elaboration of a notion of English culture as a system of values – with poetry very near its centre – which could be reproduced in societies outside of England itself” (150).

Canada at the time of the First World War followed comparable pedagogical patterns and poetry had a similar centrality. According to Vance, poetry was “used so widely in schools to teach reading, grammar, composition and history to even the youngest of children, it was the idiom that most Canadians found comfortable and familiar” (“Battle Verse” 266). British literature played an influential role in shaping Canadian thought prior to the First World War and Hodgins both documents and critiques this practice while deploying other methods of instruction as alternatives. However, British literature has long been part of colonialist policy in Canada, with especially dire results for the Indigenous knowledge and peoples that *Broken Ground* neglects to discuss. The result, as Mi’kmaq education scholar Marie Battiste indicates, is a “cognitive imperialism” (26). Battiste asserts that “When Indigenous knowledge is omitted or ignored in the schools, and a Eurocentric foundation is advanced to the exclusion of other knowledges and languages, these are conditions that define an experience of cognitive imperialism. Cognitive imperialism is about white-washing the

mind as a result of forced assimilation” (26). This sort of cognitive restriction leads to assimilation and is similar to the indoctrination efforts that led young men, including young Indigenous men as seen in *Passchendaele* and *Three Day Road*, to volunteer for conflicts such as the First World War. *Passchendaele* features an Indigenous soldier named Highway as part of Dunne’s platoon. Portrayed by Michael Greyeyes, a Plains Cree from the Muskeg Lake First Nation, Highway has a small role in the film and rarely speaks (Greyeyes). McCready states, “Highway’s character development is quite thin (though this is also true of the other characters in the film) and he appears at the end of the film as he did in the beginning, almost like a prop or a bit of scenery, his character and purpose self-evident” (101). According to McCready, Highway’s function in the film is to grant Dunne legitimacy. McCready writes, “Highway’s unproblematic friendship grants Dunne (and, by extension, the nation he represents) a certain legitimacy on the land, as if Highway’s good natured camaraderie implies that all that colonialism business is behind us” (101). A certain self-consciousness about such an effect is apparent in *Broken Ground*, where Pearson comes to realize that literature may be an effective method of nation building and teachers like him function as an effective tool for the dissemination of imperialist ideology.

Pearson fears that he unintentionally indoctrinated his students in the ways of empire. The canonical texts he learned and taught – “I must have swallowed the hogwash I’d assigned in my classroom” – inculcate student and instructor in the ways of empire and make them willing servants of the imperial cause (Hodgins 100). He recalls requiring his students to memorize and recite English poetry, and his students’ enthusiasm for such tasks. Pearson remembers inspiring Hugh Corbett to recite “the whole of George Peele’s



*Polyhymnia*, which was first performed for Queen Elizabeth beneath her gallery window in the tilt-yard there [Windsor Castle]. I'll never forget the lad's face, when the others had read their parts, as he stepped to the fore and without warning raised his voice in song for the sonnet that closes the jousts' performance" (208). Corbett's fervor for such verse is similar to the enthusiasm many young men had to enlist at the outbreak of war in 1914. Pearson's struggles are particularly acute because he was doubly an instrument of empire: instructing students on English values by teaching them poems like "Ulysses"<sup>88</sup> and as an officer leading soldiers as part of an imperial war.

The inclusion of "Ulysses" as classroom material in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries further connects education with the frontlines. Published during Victoria's reign, and dramatizing a moment in the life of a mythological character, the poem nonetheless speaks to the experience of soldier volunteers during the First World War. Ulysses is a traveller who has seen the world: "I am become a name; / For always roaming with a hungry heart / Much have I seen and known, - cities of men / And

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<sup>88</sup> I have discussed "Ulysses" at length in this chapter, but the novel includes many texts as well as references to imperialist works of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. This includes *Tales of Unrest*, by Joseph Conrad, a worn copy of which is given to the Pearson family by Red Cross workers after the fire (Hodgins 229). While recognizing *Tales of Unrest's* ambiguity on issues of imperialism, literary scholar Christopher Lloyd GoGwilt describes the novel's epigraph as enthusiastically supporting Empire: "In 1898, when *Tales of Unrest* was published, Conrad's epigraph might have sounded like a call to embark on the new crusade of colonial and imperial expansion much trumpeted in the popular press of the day" (43). Charlie is unsure what to do with the book and ultimately does not read it (Hodgins 257). Matt Pearson states in one of his letters home to Maude that he cannot imagine teaching "Tintern Abbey" anymore because he has "been responsible for harm enough already" (210). On leave in England for a friend's wedding, Matt Pearson visits Romantic poet John Keats' house, but leaves in sadness: "Turning away from Keats's house, I felt a strange nostalgic sadness for the man – as though he were someone I had known and then abandoned. As of course I had. His poems have been no part of my life for years. Like his house and his lady-love and his unhappy life, his lines of verse belong to a world I can hardly believe I once inhabited" (208). *Broken Ground* references earlier literary works that also extol Britain, its traditions, and its Empire, such as George Peele's *Polyhymnia*. Maude Pearson quotes Chaucer after her husband admits to Wyatt Taylor that he was a teacher before the war. She recites, "Of high ideals and virtue was his speech; / And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach" and mentions Robert Browning, Rudyard Kipling, and Thomas Hardy as writers Matt no longer discusses (54).

manners, climates, councils, governments” (lines 11-14). In its early years, the First World War was seen to provide young men in Canada with an opportunity to travel and experience new adventures in contrast to the spectatorship of those who remained at home. It is not surprising, then, that it was initially met with great enthusiasm and stirred such a high rate of volunteerism in Canada.<sup>89</sup> Tennyson writes that Ulysses “cannot rest from travel” (line 6) and speaking of his battle experience at Troy, calls it a “drunk delight of battle with my peers” highlighting the comradeship of men at sea but also in war (line 16). The concluding lines of “Ulysses” would resonate with a soldier on the front line who faced death daily: “We are not now that strength which in old days / Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are, - / One equal temper of heroic hearts, / Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will / To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield” (lines 66-70). While these lines may have resonated with young men who had been schooled in this colonialist pedagogy, they cannot be reconciled with the soldiering experience of someone like Hugh Corbett. Corbett faces death, twice surviving “different wiped-out platoons,” but is sentenced to be executed potentially because he sought medical attention without permission (Hodgins 94). There is no glory in Corbett’s execution and he breaks down when faced with certain death. While Pearson comforts Corbett at the front, he can no more protect Corbett from being executed than he can erase the past in which he taught Corbett the influential literature of empire.

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<sup>89</sup> In *At the Sharp End*, Tim Cook describes the euphoria at the declaration of war: when “war was announced in Canada on August 4, tens of thousands of Canadians took to the streets in an orgy of military pageantry. A sea of Union Jacks draped the country” (21). In 1914, Canada had a population of less than 8 million and yet 430,000 men and women served overseas, the vast majority volunteers, before the war’s end (3).

The inconsistency between the colonialist education soldiers received and their experiences during the First World War that is evident in *Broken Ground* is suppressed in *Passchendaele*. In an atmosphere where the teaching of history is described in martial metaphors, it is unsurprising that a movie that enthusiastically endorses Canadian military history would win awards for historical education like the Pierre Berton Award. While dramatic films are afforded some artistic licence in their portrayal of historical events, *Passchendaele*'s network of paratexts that reinforces its celebrated role as a pedagogical tool reveal that this sort of knowledge is still valued in many Canadian history classes.

*Passchendaele*'s use of problematic national myth aligns it with the contemporary move towards a martial understanding of Canada and was aided by the film's partnerships. *Passchendaele*'s producers worked in partnership with the Dominion Institute (now Historica Canada) to create a program geared towards high school students called "Passchendaele 'In the Classroom'". The program included access to the *Passchendaele Education Guide*, which was provided to educators free of charge in portable document format (pdf) on The Memory Project website, as well as links to images of primary source documents used in the guide. The guide includes a message from Gross, entitled "From the Director's Chair: Message from Paul Gross." In his message, Gross presents the same narrative the film tells, in much the same way that family members recall the stories their fathers, uncles, and grandfathers shared with them about their war experience in The Memory Project archives. Using martial metaphors to describe the storytelling process, he writes, my "mission began many years ago, listening to stories my grandfather told me about his involvement in the War" (Gross 3). He writes about how the war was a formative event in both the life of his grandfather and the life of

the nation. Gross alerts readers to the threat of losing these national memories as more and more veterans die: “Canada’s victory at Passchendaele is an astounding tale of determination, commitment and triumph. Sadly with each passing year, the memory of our nation’s courage is fading. With Passchendaele the film, the novel, website, and Education Guide, we are determined to rectify this” (Gross 3). Gross reveals that he expects his audience to use the fictional elements of the project (film and novel, also written by Gross) interchangeably with the historical sources. The website for the film is not a typical movie website, but is “a multimedia guide to the Great War, battle-by-battle. You’ll find maps, archival photos, historical context, behind-the-scenes movie footage and letters from the front” (*Passchendaele Education Guide* 3). Both the official website and the educational guide rely on historical sources such as maps, archival images, and correspondence to legitimate the historical authenticity of the film.

The guide contains a section called “Working with Primary Sources” and explains some of the basics of historiography to high school students. Of particular relevance to this chapter is the way the guide articulates the difference between primary and secondary sources (*Passchendaele Education Guide* 8-12). This section provides two historical photos (Passchendaele battlefield and a trench), an image of a teddy bear given to a soldier during the First World War, a death notice, and a letter from the front in the margins of each page, along with a set of discussion questions tailored to each primary source. It also includes marginal quotations from those who served in the battle, transcriptions of death notices, and letters. The purpose of this collection of documents is to teach students about primary sources in the education guide as well as to develop the skills to explore similar primary source documents as part of the multimedia features on

The Memory Project website. Confusingly, the next section, which addresses Gross's film, is presented with the same design layout as the primary sources from earlier in the guide. Stills from the film, including David on the cross in No Man's Land, are presented in the margins in place of the primary source documents. While several discussion questions draw the students' attention to *Passchendaele* as an historical movie, these questions do not highlight moments of significant artistic license, such as the crucifixion scene in the final battle. The overall visual presentation of the guide suggests the possibility of making a seamless transition from the primary sources available in the guide and The Memory Project as a whole, to the film.

Casting decisions for *Passchendaele* also blurred the distinction between fiction and history. Members of the Canadian Forces served as extras in the film (McCready 94). The high-profile role of the historical Lieutenant General Arthur Currie was played by real-life Brigadier General Gregory Gillespie and the decision to cast current members of the Canadian Forces added "another layer of cachet and military authenticity" (94).<sup>90</sup> For Gross, the involvement of Canadian Forces personnel in his film illustrated the connections between the First World War and Afghanistan: "It made it extremely clear that there is a direct line from the men and women in the sands of Afghanistan today that goes all the way back to the Korean War and the two world wars, in that we as a nation are still asking our fellow citizens to go out and die for a cause we have agreed upon," despite stating that he did not have an opinion on Canada's role in Afghanistan (Caddell).

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<sup>90</sup> There is historical precedence for casting active military members as soldiers in film. French filmmaker Abel Gance's 1919 silent picture, *J'accuse*, an early film about the First World War was shot in the final month of the conflict: "This pioneering work of French cinema had featured soldiers on loan from the army who, after the 'shooting' was finished, returned to Verdun where most met their deaths" (Williams, "Film" 186).

Gross's linear connection between the First World War and Afghanistan has political and pedagogical ramifications. Gross's statement "drew an uninterrupted lineage that homogenizes very different moments in the life of the Canadian military, and displaced responsibility for the controversial mission in Afghanistan from particular governments and individual politicians onto 'we as a nation'" (McCready 94). In this way, *Passchendaele* conflates commemoration and knowledge of Canada's historical conflicts with acceptance and support of more recent military missions such as Afghanistan. While the Education Guide instructs students in certain aspects of historical methodology, neither the Guide nor the film itself requires viewers or students to critically examine the imagery and mythology presented in the film. By merging the First World War and Afghanistan in the film's production, promotion, and instructional aims, *Passchendaele* illustrates how contemporary First World War commemorative efforts have been deployed in relation to and with more recent conflicts in mind.

As McCready argues, while *Passchendaele* is an historical film, the pedagogical concerns of its makers were focused on the contemporary moment:

it is of the utmost importance to recognize that *Passchendaele*'s pedagogical project intervenes in public memory with a political agenda. That political agenda is unquestionably shaped by the needs of the present: while *Passchendaele* is 'about' the Great War, its unofficial curriculum is invested in Afghanistan, and in offering narratives that naturalize Canadian identity fashioned through militarism. (106)

The marquee component of the *Passchendaele* education program was the "Great War Letters Contest." The contest blurb states:

It is called the Great War and The War to End All Wars. Canada lost more than 60,000 brave men and women. They all had a story. Their story is our story. The Dominion Institute, Canwest, Alliance Films and the makers of the new movie, *Passchendaele*, invite young Canadians between the ages of 14-18 to imagine what it was like to serve in the First World War and pen a letter as if it were written during the conflict (“Passchendaele ‘In the Classroom’”).

After watching the film and studying the education guide, high school students were encouraged to create their own primary source-style documents in much the same way the film is presented in the educational guide as a historically accurate primary source. Likewise, the film’s inclusion on The Memory Project website suggests that Gross’s film is a similar kind of pseudo-historical exercise. Based on his grandfather’s experience, the film is the director’s own version of oral history, and is treated as if it were just as legitimate as the other accounts shared by children and grandchildren on the site. The letter-writing exercise itself has potential pedagogical value to students, who through it might better empathize with the experiences of soldiers and their families during times of war, and better comprehend the limits and restrictions on communication during war. However, when taken in the larger context it helps to further muddy the waters between what is fact and what is fiction in the *Passchendaele* materials.

As education scholar Linda Radford makes clear, it is not that teachers should avoid sources such as historical literature and films “because they contain elements of fiction,” but rather that these deviations from the established historical record must serve a pedagogical purpose that is clearly articulated to students (506). However, the

difficulties in distinguishing fact from fiction in *Passchendaele* and the Education Guide on The Memory Project website are not presented as such in the accompanying learning guide. Without additional intervention, students are unlikely to perceive the differences between the ways fiction and mythology shape and select from historical materials and in fact sometimes alter their substance. In “Cross-Talk, Postcolonial Pedagogy, and Transnational Literacy,” postcolonial theorist Diana Brydon discusses how a nationalist framework shapes literary pedagogy and how “cultural literacy” can be used to police “entrance into the status quo” of canonical nationalist teaching (61). Historica Canada’s stated goal of “enhancing awareness of Canadian history and citizenship” (“About Historica Canada”) is, according to Brydon, “a Canadian offshoot of this cultural literacy movement and a conscious effort to intervene within a national (and nationalist) pedagogy” (61). Historica Canada’s interventions, in this case through The Memory Project and the “Passchendaele Education Guide,” are designed to maintain a traditional understanding of Canada’s history and military intervention in hopes of cementing support for the nation’s military tradition and reputation at the very time when Canada’s mission in Afghanistan was heavily involved in that theatre of war.

The Memory Project’s online archive and its classroom Speakers Bureau program may seem to use a “polyphonic” approach to the historical record, in seeking to confirm an established version of Canadian history, by using the authoritative voices of those who were there, took part in, and witnessed history. However, both the recorded, digital oral histories and the visiting speakers are limited in how authoritative they can be. As literary scholar David Williams suggests, an audience – or a potential audience, in the case of the digital oral histories – impacts the retelling of history (*Media* 46). Those telling their



stories are mindful of both age and sensitivity of the potential audience, and their narratives are impacted by sentiment. Williams writes of a conventional type that emerges in the database: “Tinged by his awareness of the audience, the old soldier’s reminiscence turns rose-tinted, even nostalgic, about friendship and this represses the real hardships and horrors of war” (46-47). These retellings also demand much of the audience; as Williams suggests, “we need to remember that, as listeners and viewers, we are voluntary witnesses to the event, a voluntary ‘army’ of witnesses who choose, like the original volunteers of 1914-1917, to make ourselves part of a mass movement” (266-267). In this way, those watching, listening, and learning from these archives become a type of soldier for history, conscripting into a military perspective. This movement continues to tie national origins and identity narratives to wartime experience. While many educators and those connected to the project no doubt see this relationship as positive, The Memory Project’s mandate to share stories of Canadian military service has inevitably privileged certain types of voice (those belonging to Canadian citizens, primarily white men, who served Canada’s military mostly during times of war). Consequently, while the Project does present many accounts of military service, it does not illustrate a diverse account of war experience. The wide-ranging and diverse voices of Canadians who lived through periods of war or who immigrated to Canada because of the impact of war, and could speak to disruptive experiences of labor gains and strife, turmoil along ethnic and racial lines, class disputes, and struggles for gender progress, present a nation far from unified and a narrative far more complex than the conventional history demonstrated by The Memory Project.

Hodgins, on the other hand, does reference these experiences of disunity in *Broken Ground*, most notably through Maude Pearson, Portuguese Creek's most vocal suffragette and supporter of organized labour (Hodgins 35-36). When such dissenting voices are considered, the mythologized notion that war, specifically that the First World War, was a foundational moment and a unifying experience for Canada, is complicated. As Cook writes of the Conscription Crisis of 1917, which pitted pro-conscription English-speaking Canadians against anti-conscription French-speaking Canadians, unity stemming from the First World War has often been overstated: "the War effort had unified many parts of English Canada in a crusade to the bitter end, in which any price would be paid and any burden shouldered, it was also bringing out the worst passions of intolerance and divisiveness" (*Shock Troops* 369). The Memory Project's narrow view of war discounts alternative perspectives that illustrate the impact of gender, class, race, and labour on the war effort and minimizes theatres such as the home front; its selective application of war voices allows the website to promote war experience as unifying for Canada and participates in an educational project in which *Passchendaele*'s is also involved. In contrast, *Broken Ground* presents a variety of perspectives,<sup>91</sup> moving the novel toward a more multi-dimensional understanding of the First World War. This understanding remains incomplete in *Broken Ground*, as Indigenous presence is only briefly evoked in relation to settler colonialism, which by its nature tends to efface Indigenous histories that might bear on our understanding of the First World War.

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<sup>91</sup> *Broken Ground* presents readers with a variety of alternate perspectives including Matt Pearson's failure as a teacher, the inarticulate trauma experience by Donald MacCormack, the immigrant experience articulated by many of the settlers, and Charlie's experience as a child in the settlement's early days.

**How “Cinematic Memory,” Literature, and Foundational Myth Inform Pedagogy in *Broken Ground***

In contrast with Gross’s unreflexive filmic treatment of the war narrative, in *Broken Ground*, Charlie worries meta-critically about the likelihood of the Macken film’s version of events becoming the authorized history of the settlement because of the popular nature of the medium. Charlie’s perspective on the Macken film is tempered by his experience of Matt Pearson’s post-war classroom. When Pearson resumes teaching, he divests his role as instructor of its previous authority, preferring instead to rely on alternate opinions and guest speakers in his classroom. After reflecting on Matt Pearson’s post-war teaching style, Charlie wonders

what effect 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 version we’d heard a thousand times from those who’d been there and from those whose parents had been there? Had we been honoured and celebrated and immortalized by celluloid, or had something been stolen from us that we would never get back? (Hodgins 330)

His fears are a result of what Williams would describe as “cinematic memory” (*Media* 8). Williams writes that the “structure of memory [...] is not a constant but a cultural response to changing media environments” (35). Charlie’s worry that the film will become the official version of the history of Portuguese Creek, particularly with regard to the lives of the Returned Soldiers and the settlement’s experience of the fire, is rooted in

the power of the moving visual image. Williams states, “The irreducible truth about visual history is that the properties of the medium – its basic means of mediating memory – ‘ensure alterations in the way we think of the past’” (43). These “alterations” are all the more troubling when a film’s fictional components are obscured, as they are in *Passchendaele*. Although Macken’s film is represented in a literary portrayal of a movie, Charlie recounts the Macken film’s visual imagery, highlighting representations with significant impact on the himself and the audience. The Macken film’s medium still challenges Charlie’s accepted version of history, just as it challenges those who did not experience the fire to inhabit the settlement’s devastation even in the present.

The visual nature of Macken’s version of the history of Portuguese Creek does not negate Charlie’s personal memories of the event. Instead, he remembers his version of events alongside the film, expanding his understanding of the town’s history and illustrating the power of *Broken Ground*’s polyvocality. Charlie writes that the audience of the film in Portuguese Creek

all sat and watched young Macken’s version of the Fire of ’22 unfold in front of us, but at the same time I was running my own version in my head. While Matthew Pearson up on the screen was taking Taylor home to the farm he had already decided to abandon (though he couldn’t have guessed how he would later do it) I was also thinking of Pearson the day he returned from France, having to go down that lane in Major Burgess’s lace-curtained touring car to face Maude. When Taylor and the other men were planning to steal the little church from down the road, I remembered

how Elizabeth had been buried for the second time behind it, just a few weeks after Pearson's return. (Hodgins 326)

This passage highlights the way *Broken Ground* offers multiple perspectives on the history of the settlement. Here Hodgins layers both multiple temporal perspectives and multiple story lines, illustrating the novel's potential for expanding historical knowledge as well as nationalist mythologies. Just as Macken's film does not take away from Charlie's experience, Charlie's perspective does not undermine the validity of Jeff Macken's film. In fact, Charlie's story adds much-needed context and significance to events that are only lightly sketched in the film. In this way, the Macken film presents both the familiar and unfamiliar to Charlie; by doing so it reflects Matt Pearson's reliance on multiple perspectives in his post-war classroom and illustrates a polyvocality missing from *Passchendaele*. The film becomes one of many types of artistic production represented in the novel and like the epistolary entries, fictionalized oral accounts, and settler Lillian Swift's paintings, the film becomes part of the multi-textured fabric of understanding the settlement's history, instead of acting as a sole, authorizing voice.

Charlie's concerns about narrative erasure in the film are well-founded because the movie threatens to further marginalize identities already on the periphery of the community. MacCormack, one of the few remaining veterans of the First World War when the Macken film is released, is emotionally unsettled at several points while watching the film (332). Reaching his breaking point, his

voice rose, indifferent to the chorus of shushing noises from around it. A figure stood up, still talking. Donald MacCormack. The noises he made weren't his usual grunts and groans, he was trying to talk above the voices

on either side that were urging him to be quiet. He was also trying to talk above the sound track blasting down from the walls. He *was* talking – I was close enough to know that – though it was the kind of talk that made no language sense. (332)

MacCormack's immediate visceral response counters what is on screen; his desperate communication over the noise from the theatre's speakers returns him to the violence of both the war and fire and finds a type of voice through his wound, which has rendered him inarticulate. Trauma theorist Cathy Caruth writes of a "voice that is paradoxically released *through the wound*" undoing any closure in regards to trauma (2). Individuals need an "other" to recognize trauma, we "need someone else's narrative to make sense of our pain" (Wittman 201). MacCormack only finds his voice when confronted with a representation of trauma he lived through while having his experience negated.

In visual and auditory terms, the film is overwhelming for MacCormack. While many in the theatre try to quiet MacCormack, Charlie struggles to understand what has disturbed him. Charlie realizes the full extent of erasure in Macken's film when the movie comes once again to the Pearson farm. Charlie states, the audience had

seen the house from the outside a number of times already, and there'd never been a Donald MacCormack sitting on the porch. We'd gone inside to watch actors eating at the table a few times too. We'd gone through the entire fire and not seen a glimpse of Donald MacCormack. It must have occurred to him that we were never going to see Donald MacCormack in this world. No Donald MacCormack lived here. That is my guess. If the man was able to make any sense of what was happening on the screen he

must have thought that someone had erased him from his own life.

(Hodgins 333)

MacCormack has been erased from the history of the settlement and from the group of Returned Soldiers, even though he is a veteran and one of the original settlers. Worse still is the fact that he has been erased from his family because of the harsh realities of his war injuries but also because his trauma cannot be articulated. His impassioned pleas disrupt the film's version of events, the "story continued to unroll before us but I doubt that anyone paid attention. Donald MacCormack would not be silenced by pleas. Attempts to escort him quietly out of there failed" (333). Silenced in the film, he acts as a critically revised version of Crucified Canadian throughout the novel because of his identification with injury. Other settlers fixate on MacCormack's body and physical injuries in a way that recalls the fixation on the physical body of the Unknown Soldier. As Wittman writes, "the Unknown Soldier was associated with mutilation and trauma" (146). The emphasis on the physical body of the Unknown meant the Unknown Soldier "retains in its 'image' some of the horror" of battlefield death from the First World War (146). The Returned Soldiers rarely speak of their war experiences; they do not commemorate the event, as many established communities did to memorialize their dead as well as honour the war experience of all who served. In *Broken Ground*, MacCormack fulfills this role in the community because he has silently preserved their war trauma, one manifestation of the "brokenness" of the novel's title. MacCormack breaks through anonymity and erasure to express trauma, a trauma Charlie cannot accurately describe, into the representation of film and the novel itself.

Ultimately, Donald MacCormack succeeds in ending the screening of the film prematurely when he throws off his mask, which he wears throughout the novel, revealing the extent of his war-injuries to the audience. Charlie reflects,

I don't know what signals were made, but suddenly the picture on the screen disintegrated and died, the sound collapsing with an ugly groan.

The house lights came up. Donald stood at the centre of a group but would neither sit again nor leave with them. He waved one arm around and continued making sounds in the language of some race that had learned to talk without benefit of teeth or lips or maybe even tongues. The hand shot out, jerked back, slapped at its own face, and shot out again with something it then flung over the heads of the others. (Hodgins 333)

His dramatic revelation stops the film, but more importantly, it also revises the ending of Jeff Macken's project. The projectors are shut off before the film reaches its conclusion and the sight of MacCormack's face without his mask causes the viewers to look away and head for the exits. Even just a glimpse at his injury is instantly as memorable as the destructive events of the fire. According to Charlie, "You don't forget a collapsed hole in the middle of a face where a nose ought to be, or a mouth that falls inward shapelessly like the crumbling entrance to an abandoned coal-mine shaft" (334). It is the fictional audience's and readers' first impression of his face. Charlie uses a simile to convey the devastating nature of the injury but resorting to such a device suggests the degree to which MacCormack's trauma is difficult to represent. This simile is also part of the imagery of "broken ground" used throughout the novel; MacCormack's face is described as a hole, similar to a landscape ruptured by industrial development, an agricultural field



after tree removal, or a blasted battlefield. The horror of the war and the fire have been with the community at Portuguese Creek for decades, and yet the injury that is Donald McCormack's reality is hidden from view, unacknowledged and unknown except by the inner-most members of his family. Charlie indicates it "was hard to believe this calamity had been amongst us all these years without our seeing it" (334). In this sense, when MacCormack takes off his mask it disrupts the narrative. The past – MacCormack's forgotten war history and injury – erupts into the present because of his trauma.

The novel's representation of disability and the way disability is marginalized is important for contemporary readers, living in an era when disabled veterans have seen their benefits curtailed in Canada.<sup>92</sup> Despite the visual nature of film, this "seeing" is only represented in words when it is finally narrativized. MacCormack's "calamity" is raised to the level of the early settlement's fire in the mind of the community, and is reinserted into the community's narrative. It also makes the film's premiere a polyvocal event as McCormack's actions become the ending to the film on the occasion of its release. As a result of his actions at the theatre, MacCormack can finally be included as one of the "voices" from Portuguese Creek, a narrative from which he had previously been barred.

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<sup>92</sup> Journalist Murray Brewster reported that one of the first acts of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government was to put into force the Veterans Charter (conceived of and passed by the previous Liberal government under Paul Martin with support from all federal parties) in April 2006, replacing the Pension Act ("Stephen Harper"). Harper continued to advocate and defend the Charter even when it became clear that it did a worse job of providing for disabled veterans. The new system ended lifetime support for disabled veterans in favour of lump-sum payments of up to \$250,000 (Gurney). Almost immediately it was clear that the new system seriously discriminated against new veterans from Canada's mission in Afghanistan: "Injured veterans of recent operations, most notably the war in Afghanistan, are measurably worst [sic] off than they would have been under the old system. Particularly absurd was the notion that a young warrior, just returned from a theatre of war with grievous injuries and likely psychological trauma, could simply be handed a large sum of money, thus discharging the government's responsibility to them always and forever" (Gurney). The policy shift resulted in a class-action lawsuit against the federal government by a group of veterans of the Afghanistan war in 2012 ("Stephen Harper").

The individual commemorative efforts within the story, such as the source material for the three sections that comprise the book or the Macken film, are not enough on their own to create the pluralistic understanding for which a teacher like Matt Pearson advocates in his post-war classroom. However, these smaller commemorative efforts do add additional perspectives to the novel and challenge the notion of a sole authorizing voice. Settler Lillian Swift's paintings inspire a communal telling of fire narratives, a tradition that continues in Pearson's classroom. At a barn dance shortly after the fire, Swift displays her paintings of the settlement fire in an impromptu art show. She notes that Turner<sup>93</sup> has influenced her work, yet when the settlers look at her pieces they do not see Turner nor do they see their experiences of the event reflected back to them: "when people saw the paintings at the barn dance they began to tell one another about the fire as if they hadn't all been there themselves. It turned out that everyone had a different way of seeing" (300). While the settlement does not construct its own cenotaph, the region builds one and some of the settlers participate in the project. The commemorative marker is made up of stones from various individual families' farms, unearthed during the process of clearing the land (88). In this way it also commemorates (and perhaps more importantly for the residents of Portuguese Creek) the dangerous settler experience. Matt Pearson offers to contribute enough stone from his farm "to build a hundred cairns if they let him – anybody in this settlement could do the same" illustrating that for those in Portuguese Creek the process of clearing land is just as, if not more, worthy of commemoration (88). The memorial cairn becomes a sort of liminal monument, functioning both as a method of connection between communities of the region as well

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<sup>93</sup> J. M. W. Turner was a British Romanticist landscape painter who died in 1851.

connecting the losses of the First World War with the struggles faced by the Returned Soldiers after the war.

*Broken Ground* uses the Unknown Soldier, in the form of the Crucified Canadian, to critically examine war mythology and how it relates to national understanding in Canada. The novel differs from more recent uses of the myth, such as in the film *Passchendaele*, and actively resists a national mythology based in Canada's martial history. Instead, it equates the suffering of settler colonists, the Returned Soldiers, with the heroism usually reserved for war dead. While Hodgins undermines the agrarian myth of progress in *Broken Ground* by highlighting the failure of the settlers to create and maintain thriving farms, he does not fully interrogate another myth of national identity, that of the settler immigrant. To achieve these related refusals, *Broken Ground* examines the evolving pedagogical practices of Matt Pearson, from his pre-war classroom to his post-war teaching role. The novel explores how he willingly taught literature that indoctrinated his students in the importance of the British Empire before the war and how his pedagogical approach expands to include a variety of perspectives in his post-war classroom when he returns to teaching after the fire. Pearson's evolution as a teacher is made clearer when the educational aims of *Passchendaele* and its related paratextual materials are examined because they reveal a film project steeped in conventional nationalist mythology about the First World War. Unfortunately, Hodgins fails to scrutinize the aspects of settler colonialism in the text with the same rigour as he brings to war narratives. Set on Vancouver Island, the novel often relegates its lone Indigenous voice, Mary Reimer, to the margins of the text, and erases the variety of Indigenous cultures who use and live on the land of Vancouver Island. Ultimately, *Broken Ground*

reaffirms the detrimental process Goldie calls indigenization. The failure to acknowledge Indigenous history and presence in Canada is explored more fully in *Three Day Road*, the subject of Chapter 3 in this study.

## Chapter Three:

### Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*, *The Unknown Soldier*, and Indigenous Storytelling

#### Introduction

In this chapter I will conduct a reading of Joseph Boyden's<sup>94</sup> 2005 novel *Three Day Road*, attending to the ways it prompts readers to be critical of the figure of the

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<sup>94</sup> *Three Day Road* is a novel about Indigenous soldiers and Indigenous communities and is the only contemporary Canada First World War novel to feature Indigenous protagonists. However, the book has often been discussed as an Indigenous war story because of its author's heritage. In December 2016 an APTN article by Jorge Barrera titled "Author Joseph Boyden's shape-shifting Indigenous identity," questioned the veracity of Boyden's heritage: "Boyden has never publicly revealed exactly from which earth his Indigenous heritage grows. It has been an ever shifting, evolving thing. Over the years, Boyden has variously claimed his family roots extended to the Metis, Mi'kmaq, Ojibway and Nipmuc peoples" ("Author"). The Barrera piece details an APTN investigation with third-party verification into Boyden's ancestry, concluding that it "is difficult to determine where Boyden's father's side links into his claimed Indigenous heritage over roughly the last 170 years," and that "Boyden's claim [sic] of Ojibway ancestry through his mother, Blanche Boyden, are equally difficult to pin-point" ("Author"). Boyden was asked to, but did not provide, comment for the Barrera piece. Some prominent Indigenous voices publicly criticized Boyden while others offered support in the wake of the APTN investigation. Anishinaabe writer and educator Hayden King penned a criticism of Boyden for *The Globe and Mail* in which he stated that Boyden "benefitted from a crafted ambiguity" and that "Mr. Boyden has invoked Anishinaabe, Nipmuc, Métis, Two-Spirit and Bear Clan affiliations (this week he squarely identified as Anishinaabe). These terms are not hollow or symbolic. They situate individuals in a framework that requires obligations and accountability to communities. Misleading claims, void of embodiment, break tenuous indigenous social systems down even further" (King). King concludes by stating, "Taken together, playing Indian should not be ignored or excused but exposed. Whether this column, the APTN investigation, the outrage on social media over the past few days – none of it is about envy, shaming or being #NativerThanYou. There are few Anishinaabeg (or Mi'kmaq or Métis) who haven't struggled with their identity, certainly I have and continue to. The difference is that most approach the search for answers with humility and honesty – to do otherwise leads instead to appropriation, misrepresentation and ultimately causes real harm" (King). Anishinaabe author and politician Wab Kinew wrote a piece for *The Globe and Mail* in which he stated that while Boyden should clarify his ancestry and apologize to those he misled, Boyden's "place among us was built by writing about, giving back to and befriending us. Some, such as myself, continue to claim him. I can not give him a status card or confer on him the right to identify as Anishinaabe. But I can tell you if he keeps coming back, he will have a place in our circle" (Kinew). In January 2017, Ojibwe producer and television host Lisa Meeches announced she plans on adopting Boyden as her spiritual brother in an adoption ceremony overseen by Elder David Courchene Jr. (Robinson). In January 2017 Boyden addressed the questions about his Indigenous heritage in an interview with *The Globe and Mail* and, admitting to making mistakes about his Indigenous identity, agreed that he should not have had a prominent role as a spokesperson on Indigenous issues but denied lying about his heritage (Medley).

In February 2017 Barrera published another article for APTN detailing the similarities between a 1997 Boyden short story called "Bearwalker" featured in his collection *Born With a Tooth* (2001), and a story

Unknown Soldier, a figure integral to the experience of mourning and remembrance of the First World War in Canada. While the Unknown Soldier may seem to be inclusive and universal, its conventional use in fact suppresses the memory of and circumvents mourning for racialized soldiers who served the nation. The Unknown Soldier is not simply a conventional way to mark war loss in Canada; it honours a particular version of white masculinity. As I illustrated in the Introduction to this dissertation, a component of the symbolism of the Unknown Soldier involves the representation of his death as a sacrifice freely given. In this way, the Unknown Soldier may be seen as a figure of heroic sacrifice with Christ-like overtones (Wittman 97). Consequently, Indigenous military contributions, such as those made by Cree soldiers Xavier and Elijah in the novel, are not represented by a commemorative figure like the Unknown Soldier. Indeed, the Unknown Soldier is suggestive of the oppressive violence of white masculinity that is part of the colonial encounter with Indigenous peoples. *Three Day Road*, like other works considered in this dissertation, is a novel of two fronts: the front lines of First World War

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published in 1989 by Ojibwe healer and storyteller Ron Geyschick called “Inside My Heart” in a collection of stories called *Te Bwe Win* (“Similarities”). The piece details the work done to highlight the similarities between the two stories by Chuck Bourgeois, a University of Manitoba Native studies PhD student who first noticed the similarities and Judith Doyle, a filmmaker “who helped Geyschick compile and groom his stories for publishing” (“Similarities”). Barrera’s piece also provides a chart highlighting the similarities between the two works created by Anishinaabe author Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm (Barrera, “Similarities”). Barrera investigated Boyden’s statement that the similarities were “because they are a type of ‘modern parable’ circulating from Ojibway territory along the Minnesota-Ontario border and across Ontario to the province’s James Bay coast in Swampy Cree country” a parable told to him by Xavier Bird [for whom Boyden named the fictional *Three Day Road* character] in Fort Albany; Boyden also states he heard the story in Moosonee (“Similarities”). Barrera discussed Boyden’s claims with Xavier Bird’s brother Louis Bird, a prominent Mushkegowuk Cree storyteller who does not believe his deceased brother told Boyden the story and indicated that the story is unknown in Fort Albany and Moosonee, Mushkegowuk Cree territory (“Similarities”). As a non-Indigenous scholar, it is not my place to judge Boyden’s cultural heritage. While these allegations against Boyden are serious and potentially impact the study of his work and his use of Indigenous oral traditions and culture in his written work, they also come late in the dissertation process and could not be addressed more fully in this chapter.

battlefields and the protagonists' home front on the shores of James Bay, allowing the novel to explore and commemorate the historical spectrum of colonial violence that extends from colonial contact, through various manifestations of imperialism, and ultimately becomes evident on the battlefields of the First World War. The novel parallels the racialization and oppression experienced by Niska, Elijah, and Xavier on the home front with the discrimination Xavier and Elijah experience on the battlefield. *Three Day Road* reveals that the figure of the Unknown Soldier is implicated in Christian iconography that has historical consequences for colonialist violence. Considering this complication, how must the contributions of Indigenous soldiers be recognized and commemorated? The novel presents readers with two possibilities. First, it develops an inclusive approach that updates conventional First World War narratives and highlights the contributions of Indigenous soldiers such as the fictional Xavier and Elijah while referencing real Indigenous soldiers such as Ojibwe sniper Corporal Francis Pegahmagabow. However, the novel also revisits commemorative practices themselves, presenting an alternative form of commemorative storytelling in keeping with Indigenous cultural practices and inclusive of Indigenous military contributions.

*Three Day Road* tells the linked stories of the lives of Niska, an Oji-Cree medicine woman, and her seriously ill nephew, Xavier Bird. A wounded veteran of the First World War who finally arrives home in 1919, Xavier's injuries have been treated with morphine, a substance to which he has become gravely addicted. Over the course of a three-day canoe trip home, Xavier's painful detox occurs as he and his aunt revisit the past and envision the future in a cyclical narrative. Xavier, in considerable pain, is engulfed by memories of wartime trauma as he struggles to come to terms with the

horrors he and his best friend Elijah, who was killed on the Western front, experienced in Europe. Realizing the seriousness of her nephew's illness, Niska draws on the methods of her father, himself an accomplished storyteller, and tells her life story to her ailing nephew in the hope he will be able to withstand his painful withdrawal and recover. Niska's narrative tells the story of her life, beginning with her experiences as a young girl learning her role as windigo-killer from her father. Niska shares her coming of age story; she rejects both a homeguard<sup>95</sup> way of life and her lover the Frenchman, a trapper she first meets in the bush. Finally, Niska narrates her experience as a mature woman who assumes her roles as Xavier's guardian and is the custodian of Anishinaabe and Cree tradition.<sup>96</sup> Niska's narrative is interrupted by Xavier's memories of war. Xavier's remembrance of this trauma charts a roughly linear progression of Canadian participation in the First World War, from the earliest battles to culminating victories. Xavier's and Elijah's survival on the battlefields of Europe is dependent on adapting the superior hunting skills they learned in the muddy bush country of the James Bay region. At the front, they become celebrated marksmen; however, their military experience creates considerable pain, and overwhelms Elijah, who is increasingly addicted to both killing and morphine. Ultimately, Xavier must acknowledge that Elijah has "gone windigo;" that is, Elijah has begun to demonstrate characteristics of the figure from Cree tradition known for its insatiable appetite. Forced to take on the familial role of windigo-killer,

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<sup>95</sup> "Homeguard" was a description applied by HBC traders, as historian Victor P. Lytwyn explains: "The fur traders also identified groups among the Lowland Cree according to their type of relationship with the trading post. Those who lived close to the post, and who provided food and other country produce to sustain the European fur traders, were called the Homeguard" (15). These groups lived primarily along the shores of James and Hudson Bay: "The Homeguard people were primarily coastal Cree. Inlanders usually spent too much time away from the coastal area to be considered Homeguard" (Lytwyn 15).

<sup>96</sup> In the text, Niska is described as Oji-Cree; Oji-Cree are one group within the Anishinaabe. Xavier and Elijah are described as Mushkegowuk Cree.



Xavier shoulders a burden carried by Niska – and his grandfather before her – and kills Elijah in a desperate struggle in the middle of a battlefield.

In *Three Day Road*, Elijah and Xavier’s experiences in the military during the First World War certainly speak to the negation of Indigenous experience in conventional modes of Western martial commemoration. Boyden states in his acknowledgements that *Three Day Road* is an attempt at redress, that he “wishes to honour the Native soldiers who fought in the Great War, and in all wars in which they so overwhelmingly volunteered. Your bravery and skill do not go unnoticed” (“Acknowledgements” 383). In this way, the novel itself serves a commemorative function, acknowledging forgotten Indigenous service. Boyden’s narrative of inclusion places Indigenous participation within the conventional “colony-to-nation”<sup>97</sup> paradigm of the First World War in Canada that the novel’s war action charts. This paradigm requires violence to achieve nationhood and that fundamental conflict parallels the violence perpetrated against Indigenous peoples at the heart of settler colonial understandings of the Canadian nation. The novel is ambivalent toward the “colony-to-nation” paradigm and its conventional narrative of Canadian sovereignty born out of one type of violence and presents a depiction of the

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<sup>97</sup> The “colony-to-nation” paradigm articulates a conventional understanding in Canadian history in which participation in the First World War allowed Canada to achieve true independence from Britain (Vance, *Death* 10). Vance notes numerous historians (e.g. C.P. Stacey, Desmond Morton, Granatstein, and Berton) express this convention while noting Pierre Berton suggests a specific battle, Vimy, acts as a microcosm of the colony-to-nation paradigm Canada experience in his 1986 book *Vimy* (*Death* 10). Berton specifies the Battle of Vimy Ridge’s significance to this paradigm in the “Aftermath” section of *Vimy*: “The loosening of Imperial ties, which began in Canada with immigrant influx into the West, was accelerated by the Great War in general and by the Vimy experience in particular” (298). Berton explains the legacy of such a belief when he writes, “It has become commonplace to say that Canada came of age at Vimy Ridge. For seventy years it has been said so often – in Parliament, at hundreds of dinners and in thousands of Remembrance Day addresses, in newspaper editorials, school texts, magazine articles, and more than a score of books about Vimy and Canada’s role in the Great War – that it is almost an article of faith” (294-295).

insidious colonial violence perpetrated by settler forces in Canada that highlights the omissions in nationalist mythology.

The significance of the novel's depiction of Cree storytelling traditions is twofold. Niska's cyclical narrative is an insistence of continuing Indigenous presence and is an example of what Anishinaabe literary critic and ethnographer Gerald Vizenor terms "survivance". For Vizenor, survivance combines survival and resistance and "creates a sense of native presence over absence" (1). As literary scholar Karl Kroeber explains Vizenor's use of "survivance" moves beyond suggestions of freedom from devastation and tragedy typically associated with the term "survival" and towards a "sense of *succession*, orienting its connotations not toward loss but renewal and continuity into the future rather than memorializing the past" (original emphasis, Kroeber 25). Niska's story functions as an assertion of Indigenous presence and offers a commemorative mode inclusive of Xavier's and Elijah's war participation, even as it looks forward into the future.

This alternative commemorative mode is important because of how the novel's narrative differs from Western memorial culture. Western memorial culture is spatial; monuments occupy space on contested land, much like settlers do. Western memorial culture is also based in the past. Mainstream commemorative traditions in Canada, such as the construction of war memorials, place cultural and temporal limits on the impact of war. This is accomplished by inscribing the names of the fallen, specific battles and conflicts, such as Festubert, Cambrai, or Korea, and precise dates, like 2001 to 2014, onto cenotaphs and memorials. This practice has continued with recent commemorations of Canada's participation in the war in Afghanistan; frequently, this most recent conflict has

been inscribed onto existing memorials, such as the National War Memorial in 2014.<sup>98</sup> This commemorative practice places restrictions on how events are honoured and positions the impact of war as existing in the past, not the present. In contrast, Niska's story is one of survivance; it is a living narrative, asserting not only presence but continuity between the past, present, and future. Niska's story is about the continuance, resilience and endurance of Indigenous cultural practices, beliefs, and knowledge. Through Niska and Xavier's narratives in *Three Day Road* the future is emphasized, rather than a memorialized past. Here lies the second significant aspect of the novel's depiction of Anishinaabe and Cree storytelling traditions; the novel's circular form presents a commemorative practice that differs from traditional Western methods. Consequently, the novel does not simply function as a commemorative work within existing popular forms of martial memorialization in Canada; instead, like Hodgins's *Broken Ground*, *Three Day Road* expands the ways in which war is commemorated in Canada. Crucially, in *Three Day Road* this expanded commemoration addresses the violence of settler colonialism.

Elijah's and Xavier's stories are not developed solely by exploring their military service; their lives as children in Moose Factory are also detailed, revealing the violence of Canada's colonial history, a history that contradicts the mythology of Canada as a peacekeeping country by highlighting the violence perpetrated against Indigenous people on which the nation is founded. Such a reading reveals the colonial violence and

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<sup>98</sup> A similar process has taken place at the local level. During a 2006 restoration of the Kemptonville, Ontario cenotaph the name of Private Blake Williamson, the year of his death (2006) and the theatre in which he was killed (Afghanistan), were "added to the 50 names listed on the twin shafts of the cenotaphs, the first name to be added to the memorial since World War II" ("This year marks"). In 2011 the southwestern Ontario community of Wingham added the name of Corporal Matthew Dinning to its community cenotaph; Dinning had been killed five years earlier in 2006 while serving in Afghanistan ("Name to be added").

exploitation at the centre of conventionally peaceful narratives of Canada. Consequently, I see *Three Day Road* as a novel that undermines the nation-building consensus typically sought by commemoration of war in contemporary Canada, through figures such as the Unknown Soldier, while also criticizing the much mythologized understanding of the Canadian state as “peaceful” in its domestic relations.

### **Narratives of Inclusion, Christianity, and Martial Commemoration**

To understand the significance of *Three Day Road*'s depiction of Anishinaabe and Cree storytelling traditions and the applicability of Vizenor's concept of survivance to the novel, it is important to illustrate the ways in which the novel addresses conventional depictions of First World War history and Western modes of commemoration. The novel highlights Indigenous presence in Canada's military effort during the First World War, participation that is frequently neglected in typical depictions of the conflict. Examining the ways in which the Unknown Soldier works as a marker of white masculinity highlights the racial component to this figure's commemorative work that necessarily exiles Indigenous soldiers from its commemorative function. Boyden does not solely rely on the novel's narrative of inclusion about Indigenous military service to overcome exclusionary commemorative practices. The problematic nature of the Unknown Soldier reveals the often obscured ways in which national identity and military commemoration exclude Indigenous people in Canada and necessitates the additional commemorative approaches the novel presents.

Much of the critical attention the novel has received addresses Boyden's depiction of the two Cree snipers in the trenches of First World War France. This is certainly an

appropriate way to enter the text, and Xavier and Elijah's participation in the Great War has been widely praised as a narrative of inclusion that addresses conventional erasure of Indigenous presence in Canada's military efforts during the First World War. Like Urquhart's *Sanctuary Line*, the novel makes reference to historical figures, as it is partially inspired by the real-life experiences of Ojibwe soldier Francis Pegahmagabow, the most successful sniper of the First World War.<sup>99</sup> "Peggy," as he is called in *Three Day Road*, makes a brief appearance in the novel, and is a character by whom Elijah feels challenged. Elijah's one-sided rivalry with Peggy throws into relief the impressive nature of Elijah and Xavier's military achievements when compared with other Canadian soldiers. Yet Elijah receives little official recognition, just as the real Pegahmagabow was ignored. In an interview titled "Pushing Out the Poison," Boyden wonders if Pegahmagabow would have received the Distinguished Service Order or the Victoria Cross if he had been white (Wyile 226). The novel thus affords Pegahmagabow's accomplishments – and those of other Indigenous soldiers – some measure of posthumous recognition. The experience of Xavier and Elijah in *Three Day Road* mirrors the discrimination Pegahmagabow and other Indigenous soldiers experience: segregated in train cars, they are ignored in official correspondence, and their Cree beliefs are dismissed with contempt by their superior officers (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 161, 150, 256). During his bar room encounter with the pair, the fictional Peggy bluntly tells them, "We do the nasty work for them and if we return home we will be treated like pieces of shit once more" (286-287); his phrasing recognizes that Indigenous participants do not

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<sup>99</sup> See Winegard, *For King and Kanata*, 50-51; Wyile, "Pushing Out the Poison," 225; Cook *At the Sharp End, 1914-1916*, 30, 289.

register as equal citizens in the Canadian nation. Boyden's characterization of the racism faced by Peggy, Elijah, and Xavier, as well as the author's own acknowledgement at the end of book that he wishes to honour Indigenous soldiers who fought in the First World War, especially Pegahmagabow, "one of Canada's most important heroes" ("Acknowledgements" 383), suggest that *Three Day Road* may be read as a retroactive demand for commemoration of Indigenous service. This stated intention, in combination with both Xavier's and Elijah's preoccupation with acknowledgement from their peers, makes it clear *Three Day Road* is at least partly an attempt to expand typical depictions of heroism from the First World War and challenge established martial mythology in Canada, like the Unknown Soldier, which exclude Indigenous soldiers.

Considerations of Indigenous military service continued to be ignored well after the war and were an afterthought at the dedication ceremony for the repatriation of the Unknown Soldier in 2000. The First Nations Veterans Association was represented by member Grand Chief Howard Anderson, who placed a feather, tobacco, and soil on the casket lid of the Unknown Soldier (Bormanis 236). Anderson's participation in the ceremony was a late addition to the program, and as art historian Katrina Bormanis writes, "This eleventh-hour ceremonial overture to aboriginal military contributions and sacrifices was given permanent material expression the following year at the erection of the National Aboriginal Veterans Monument at nearby Confederation Park" (236). Even though the remains reinterred at the National War Memorial could belong to any man who served during the First World War, the ceremony positioned an Indigenous veteran, and by extension, Indigenous participation and service, as a supplementary afterthought to the heroic white masculinity honoured in the figure of the Unknown Soldier. While the

National Aboriginal Veterans Monument was unveiled the following year, it was not placed on the site of the National War Memorial, the focus of national remembrance, despite the several renovations and additions that site has undergone in the past two decades.<sup>100</sup> This spatially segregates the commemorative landscape and maintains the conventional distance between mainstream martial commemoration in Canada and official recognition of Indigenous military contributions.

In many ways, Canada replicated the omissions that fellow commonwealth country Australia committed when that nation repatriated its Unknown Soldier in 1993. Australia's tomb is visually similar to the one found in Westminster Abbey and reflects the "fact that war memorializing in Australia remains the exclusive preserve of male white Australians" (Phipps 167). However, as museology and heritage scholar Gareth Phipps and others argue, to include Indigenous martial contributions in national commemorative efforts in Australia requires acknowledging and confronting the nation's colonial history. As Phipps highlights, "The problematic nature of incorporating the Aboriginal story within the Anzac mythology, especially given the debate surrounding 'frontier' warfare between white settlers and Aborigines, [which] has seen the indigenous story subsumed within the Australian 'digger' narrative" (167).

Canada faces a similar problematic colonial history when it relies on war commemoration to secure national identity. From early post-Confederation military

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<sup>100</sup> While the location of the Aboriginal War Veterans Memorial suggests Indigenous martial commemoration is peripheral to nationally acknowledged war commemoration in Canada, the monuments location in Confederation Park indicates a relationship between war and national identity, Greenberg makes clear: "The placement of war memorials rather than statues to politicians or monuments commemorating events that took place *in Canada* in a public space named Confederation Park seems strange, unless it is interpreted as a consolidating discourse that intertwines Canadian identity with war trauma that occurs *elsewhere*" (original emphasis, 188).

engagements and battles to more recent military encounters between Indigenous peoples and government forces such as the Oka Crisis or Oka Resistance in 1990,<sup>101</sup> Canada has used military force against its Indigenous population. In fact, the white masculinity encapsulated by the Unknown Soldier was instrumental in establishing settler rule in Canada. The result of Indigenous peoples' encounters with white masculinity in Canada was the implementation of heteropatriarchal systems of power, with related strict binary gender roles and enforced heterosexuality for Indigenous peoples (Morgensen 42-43, 53). *Three Day Road's* scenes of sexual violence illustrate this enforced heterosexuality. As gender and cultural scholar Scott L. Morgensen writes,

Nevertheless, at the time of contact with Europeans, Indigenous peoples of the Americas shared in not having instituted something then emerging in Europe: total religious or scientific judgement of all non-binary gender and same-sex sexuality as immoral and unnatural. These are among the differences that set up manhood as a site of conflict within European efforts to assert control over Indigenous peoples. (42)

Consequently, encountering settler masculinity led to "imposed patrilineality" and gender segregated education, resulting in disrupted kinship ties (48-29). Niska's narration attempts to recuperate a matrilineal form of storytelling, though this recuperation is still filtered through Boyden.

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<sup>101</sup> Bob Antone, a Haudenosaunee scholar suggests that Canada "witnessed the rise of the warrior construct as an image of resistance and freedom for Indigenous peoples" during the Oka Crisis/Oka Resistance (27). However, this warrior image was significantly different from that of the Unknown Soldier; the "warrior construct" having arisen in the context of colonialism and was a response to "the culmination of the oppressive force of Canada and Quebec" (27).



In contrast, when New Zealand repatriated its Unknown from the First World War four years after Canada in 2004, an effort was made to acknowledge Indigenous contributions in the name and design of the site, though Maori inclusion was debated and contested.<sup>102</sup> War commemoration has been an integral part of cementing Canadian national identity in the last two decades; increasingly, the importance of addressing Indigenous military contributions has become recognized. Incorporating French and English Canadian heritage as well as the varied perspectives and experiences of Indigenous peoples in a memorial such as the Unknown Soldier, has the potential to disrupt its unifying power, serving as a reminder of longstanding political divisions, and for Indigenous peoples, of state-sanctioned violence. One of the primary reasons for the repatriation of the Unknown Soldier was the consolidation of national unity. Political scientist Robert Bernier and sociologist Jean-Yves Bronze initially pitched the idea of repatriating an Unknown Soldier in 1996 as a response to the narrowly-defeated Quebec Referendum of 1995 (Bormanis 222). In an era of constitutional crisis and talk of separation, the pair argued the “project would create a potent symbol of national unity” (223). While disrupting the specific white masculinity represented by Canada’s Unknown Soldier is vital, critiques of its symbolism are more often incorporated and subsumed into

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<sup>102</sup> In contrast to previous repatriations of Unknown Soldiers in Australia and Canada, New Zealand repatriated an “Unknown Warrior” in 2004 (Phipps 166). The term “warrior” was chosen not just because it better represented the three branches of the military (army, navy, and air force), but also acknowledged Maori traditions and participation (166). When the Unknown Warrior made its journey from France to New Zealand, it was accompanied by the New Zealand Defence Force Maori Culture Group “in accordance with Maori protocol that the dead should never be left alone” (168). The original plans for the tomb were designed by prominent Maori contemporary artist Robert Jahnke, whose design recalled both the *whare tupuna* (Maori ancestral meeting house) and a *waka* (canoe) hull (163). There was vocal opposition to the tomb design, especially from the Professional Historians’ Association of New Zealand/Aotearoa forcing a redesign (163). In 2004 sculptor Kingsley Baird’s design was selected because it “conveyed the Ministry’s design brief while respecting the existing site of the memorial” (163). This was not the only controversy over the inclusion of Maori culture and traditions. The New Zealand Returns Services’ Association (NZRSA) disliked the “warrior” name, feeling it was too closely associated with Maori culture (166).

its symbolic power. The masculinity represented by the Unknown Soldier then, is not just typical of white masculinity, but in the Canadian context, representative of the destructive settler masculinity. Faced with a commemorative tradition steeped in whiteness and violence in Canada, *Three Day Road* presents alternative modes of commemoration.

Elijah and Xavier's military experiences form part of *Three Day Road's* narrative of inclusion. Their time in the military depicts the "colony-to-nation" paradigm that has become a conventional way of understanding the impact of the First World War on Canada as a nation. The pair participate in each of the historic battles that are typically identified as charting a linear historical progression of Canadian participation from inexperienced and subordinate colonial troops in 1914 to experienced, valuable "shock troops" by war's end (Cook, *Shock Troops* 4),<sup>103</sup> a development that is paralleled by the Canadian nation's development from colony to sovereign nation, independent from Britain. Elijah and Xavier enlist in 1915 as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division,<sup>104</sup> joining the eager volunteers of 1914 in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) from which the Canadian Corps forms.<sup>105</sup> When the two friends land in France in the fall of September 1915, they

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<sup>103</sup> "Shock troops" was an honorific frequently applied to the Canadian Corps, especially after participating in the Battle of the Somme in 1916 with distinction (Cook, *Shock Troops* 4). The skill of the Canadian Corps often meant they led assaults during major battles, and "were thrown into battle in the last two years of the war to deliver victory time and time again" (4).

<sup>104</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Division was formed in Canada in late 1914 after the departure of the First Contingent for England (Cook, *At the Sharp End* 304). The Division drew its members from all over the country, but "the West provided a disproportionate number of enlistees" (304). The Division's battalions were connected to major cities like Toronto, London, Montreal, Winnipeg, and Vancouver but also recruited men from surrounding areas (304). The 2<sup>nd</sup> Division's Canadian commanders were replaced once they arrived in England in spring, 1915, by officers with experience at the Western Front (304). When the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division arrived at the Front in mid-September 1915, it joined with the 1<sup>st</sup> Division to form the Canadian Corps (305). By 1916, the numbers of the Canadian Corps had increased to 80,000 men, making the Corps one of the largest Canadian "cities" at the time (305).

<sup>105</sup> The delay in Elijah and Xavier's service reflects racist attitudes and policies toward Indigenous peoples at the time. For over a year, Indigenous men were forbidden from enlisting. Officially, the Department of Militia and Defense worried "the Germans might refuse to extend to them the privileges of civilized warfare" (Talbot 100). Historian Robert J. Talbot indicates Indigenous men were banned from service

meet with hardened CEF veterans and winter in Belgium near St. Eloi.<sup>106</sup> Xavier recalls hearing, “the Canadians just took a beating at a place called Saint-Eloi and now our battalion’s to go in as reinforcement. The rumours continue until they become truth. We will go into the front lines today” (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 15). These veterans indicate that both the “action” and the mythologized narrative have continued somewhere else: “‘The action left Saint-Eloi a while back,’ one of them says, fitting the butt of his cigarette neatly into the place where his front tooth should be. ‘The dance is on the Somme now’” (27). Over the course of a few chapters, Boyden quickly traces the difficult early beginnings of the Canadian Corps and the Corps’ response to the evolving horrors of war: disasters that plagued the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915,<sup>107</sup> the Battle of St. Eloi Craters in spring 1916, the Battle of Mount Sorrel (Sanctuary Wood),<sup>108</sup> and

because of prevailing racist attitudes: “In truth, racism remained the most important factor barring First Nations men from joining the army. Prejudicial attitudes prevailed against all visible minorities: although First Nations were the only visible minority officially forbidden from enlisting, recruitment officers consistently used their discretionary powers to also turn away Black, Japanese, South-Asian, and Chinese Canadians” (Talbot 100). Unsurprisingly, this official and unofficial racism only ended in 1915 because of increased manpower demands: “More importantly, fewer White Canadians were coming forward to replace CEF casualties – the military could no longer afford to refuse visible minorities” (100).

<sup>106</sup> The Battle of St. Eloi took place in April 1916, near the village of St. Eloi (Sint-Elooi), south of Ypres. It was the first major offensive operation in which Canadians took part since the terrible losses incurred during the Battle of Festubert in May 1915. See Tim Cook, *At the Sharp End*, 323-342.

<sup>107</sup> The Second Battle of Ypres took place on 22 April 1915. Already the site of some of the bloodiest action of the war, “The Ypres salient was an enormous open graveyard” (Cook, *At the Sharp End* 109). It is noteworthy because it was the site of the “first lethal chlorine gas attack in the history of warfare” (112). The battle set an alarming precedent, as Cook states, “gas would be used increasingly by all armies in the coming years of the war, reaching a saturation point in the last eighteen months of combat, during which every battlefield on the Western Front was blanketed in chemicals and soldiers were forced to fight through the only continuous gas environment in the history of warfare” (167). For Canadians, the battle marked their first major participation in the war (123). The battle’s horrific casualties also served as inspiration for Canadian Lt. Colonel John McCrae. The medical officer wrote his famous poem “In Flanders Fields” during a break from the fighting (167). See Cook, *At the Sharp End* 109-169.

<sup>108</sup> Sanctuary Wood was part of the larger Battle of Mount Sorrel in June of 1916 (Cook, *At the Sharp End* 367). The two weeks of fighting resulted in nearly 9,000 Canadian casualties and was a critical victory for the Canadians, helping “to restore the men’s confidence after their poor performance at St. Eloi” (375). See Cook, *At the Sharp End* 343-379.

motions toward Canadian participation in the deadly Somme Offensive.<sup>109</sup> *Three Day Road* gestures to the conventional deployment of Canadian First World War mythology as a narrative of national strength attained through the absorption of cultural difference, as Elijah integrates into his role in the Canadian forces, becoming more linguistically and culturally comfortable in the army.

Xavier and Elijah move with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division to Vimy in the winter of 1917 as *Three Day Road* follows the customary nationalist narrative mythology about the Battle of Vimy Ridge. By having Xavier and Elijah participate in this campaign, the novel reinforces the significance this action has for traditional colony-to-nation narratives of the war. Boyden indicates the incalculable scale of losses as an index of Vimy's importance through Xavier and Elijah's reflections on the battle: Xavier states, "This is the place where the French army was nearly wiped out two years ago, and the British last year. Although the Canadians are not supposed to hear of it, word is that the French lost 150,000 men in the fighting here, and the British 60,000. Those numbers are impossible to keep secret. They are impossible for me to understand" (205). Xavier wishes to comprehend the unfathomable and asks Elijah how many soldiers are represented by those numbers. Elijah responds by constructing an analogy with the natural landscape of

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<sup>109</sup> The Somme Offensive was one of the largest and bloodiest engagements of any war with over 1,000,000 casualties (Cook, *At the Sharp End* 521). According to Cook, "The Somme was a touchstone of horror no matter how the butcher's bill was compiled, and its bottom line became the standard against which every other battle was measured" (521-22). It was also an unsuccessful operation: "The Somme yielded no winners. The British had advanced 9.5 kilometres over four months and had lost 432,000 men, with every metre captured to close the gap with the enemy costing dozens of lives. Most of the objectives that were to have been overrun on the first day remained in German hands after months of grinding warfare" (521). This battle remains relevant for Canadians because of the CEF's participation in the capture of Courcelette, a part of the larger engagement (see Cook, *At the Sharp End* 458-464). In addition, the battle is still commemorated in Newfoundland, which participated in the war independently of Canada. The 1<sup>st</sup> Newfoundland Regiment, part of the British forces which made the initial advance on July 1, 1916, suffered such horrendous casualties on the first day of the battle that it ceased to exist (Keegan 295).

their homeland: ““Think of all the trees we passed canoeing to the town. Think of how many trees the fire ate. That many, maybe”” (205-206). In other words, he estimates the loss of human life by conceptualizing it in relation to environmental devastation, an aspect of imperial conquest in North America; he understands the battle front in relation to the wilderness home front. Previous failures at Vimy by Allied forces help build the Canadian reputation for being elite troops in the eyes of both the Allies and the Germans, and to build a reputation as “shock troops” and “storm troopers” that is essential in the traditional narratives of Canadian excellence and increasing maturation in the First World War (Cook, *Shock Troops* 4).

Xavier states, “We are kept in Passchendaele only until the end of November, but in that short time we have done what was needed. It is our third big victory in a year. The Canadians are proving to be the only ones who win their battles” (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 306). The Battle of Vimy Ridge remains a touchstone for Canadian nationalism: “Historians have been only too happy to aid and abet this process by articulating a vision of the war as a nation-building experience of signal importance. Canada’s progress from colony to nation by way of Flanders, an interpretation born in the earliest days of the war, has become the standard method of judging the impact of 1914-18” (Vance, *Death* 10). Since 1917 Vimy has provided a foundational myth and nationalist imagery for those artists, historians, and politicians constructing a symbolic pattern for Canadian military achievement. Vimy was the first time all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, comprised of men from across the country, fought together as one, providing a straightforward metaphor for unity at the national level. In addition, Canadians achieved a victory where their colonial forbearers, the French and English, had failed and could not be seen as

subordinate as a result. The battle also had significant religious overtones; the victory took place on April 9, 1917, Easter Monday, and had the added weight of Christian mythology. Comparisons to Christ's crucifixion and resurrection were present from the earliest critical examinations of the battle (Vance, *Death* 35-72; Vance, "Battle Verse" 265). The Canadian Corps' success at Vimy and the symbolic unity of the victory have been used for a century to illustrate the emergence of true national sovereignty secured through military action. Importantly, this attributes sovereignty, and associated rights and freedoms, as having been secured both without recognition of Indigenous soldiers, and by eliding the racialized colonial violence that made this "united" Canadian fighting force possible, which served the interests of white colonial masculinity.

In commemorating Indigenous military service, the novel makes the reader cognizant of the ways in which popular military commemoration in Canada fails to register the contributions of Indigenous service personnel. The Unknown Soldier Memorial as it was originally developed in combatant countries in the aftermath of the First World War, and as it has been utilized in Canada, speaks to a specific type of whiteness and masculinity.<sup>110</sup> The Unknown Soldier, in effect, is a modern version of the

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<sup>110</sup> Britain's Warrior established the commemorative traditions that influenced the creation of Canada's specific, national Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The continuing reinforcement of the masculinity of this figure is especially noteworthy in twenty-first century Canada. As McCready writes, Canada's recent military engagements, such as Afghanistan, have helped create a more masculine national identity in contrast to earlier eras perceived in terms of a more feminized peacekeeping role and what has been constructed as "military inadequacy" (10). Further, conservative interests have defended this recent shift as necessary in the current geopolitical climate: "redefinition of Canada's preferred military role come most forcefully from the right, which sees peacekeeping as an effeminate relic of a bygone era, both inappropriate for the new world of the War on Terror and, retrospectively, responsible for the laxity in national and international policing that allowed that terror to be waged in the first place" (13). Tina Managhan writes that the "repositioning of the masculine as the source of law relies upon Western founding myths of sovereign liberal democratic states born and remade in the course of war" (106). Canada is no exception for Managhan, as Remembrance Day ceremonies rely "upon a re-remembering wherein a clear, if not essential, line of continuity is drawn between the rights and freedoms that those in advanced industrialised West enjoy today and sacrifices past. The figure of the warrior still features centrally in these

medieval Christian crusader; it is an agent of freely chosen sacrifice, according to literary scholar Laura Wittman (97), and reflects a larger characterization of soldiers from the First World War as taking part in Christ's sacrifice (Vance, *Death* 36). Britain's Unknown had, since its creation, been associated with a lengthy history of crusading Christian soldiers because of his burial in Westminster Abbey, the final resting place of numerous British monarchs; his sacrifice in the name of God was worthy of this position (Inglis 15). This resting place professed the Unknown to be "a fit courier and companion to the kings and bishops around him, a feudal Christian warrior" (16). As a result, the Empire's Unknown Warrior<sup>111</sup> was from its inception connected to longstanding traditions meant not just to elevate Western practices and belief systems, but to construct them in relation to the iconic figure of the imperializing Christian warrior. Thus, the Unknown Soldier does more than fail to recognize Indigenous service: it evokes the iconography of a religious tradition that is at the heart of colonial violence. By representing the experience of Xavier and Elijah at residential school before their enlistment in the army, Boyden highlights this rupture at the heart of the national narrative of inclusion. The novel turns on a key irony: in effect, the pair offer themselves as heroic "sacrifices" on behalf of a belief system that has already committed and

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(re)founding myths – such that rights and freedoms become inextricably bound to a heroic masculinity" (106-107). Thus securing rights and freedoms typically associated with democracy and multiculturalism in Canada become martial achievements of "benevolent white masculinity" (112).

<sup>111</sup> Unlike most First World War combatant nations, England refers to its Unknown Soldier as the "Unknown Warrior". Prime Minister David Lloyd George declared the memorial would be to a "Warrior" to better represent the three service branches (navy, army, air force) (Inglis 15). However, Paul Fussell attributes the elevation to a "British tendency towards heroic grandiosity" (218).

continues to commit genocidal violence on their families, cultures, and lands. This is the unknown violence at the heart of their commemoration.

*Three Day Road* includes a darkly parodic scene in which Elijah climbs a partially fallen statue of the Virgin Mary during the war. The fallen statue of the Virgin Mary on the front lines was a popular image from the First World War. The “colossal gilded” statue of the Virgin Mary which impressed the numerous soldiers who passed it was located on top of the bell tower of the basilica in Albert, France (Fussell 45). Called Notre Dame des Brebières, Mary originally held the baby Jesus to the heavens; however, shelling during the war resulted in the statue being “bent down below the horizontal, giving the effect of a mother about to throw her child – in disgust? In sacrifice? – into the debris-littered street below (45-46). Literary historian Paul Fussell illustrates that the statue’s place in the early writing about the war illustrates a mythologizing tendency: “No one wanted it to remain what it literally was, merely an accident damaged third-rate gilded metal statue now so tenuously fixed to its tower that it might fall at any moment. Myth busily attached portentous meaning to it” (162). Fussell indicates that the statue was considered to be a prophecy that the war would end (162), that the statue falling would result in losing the war for the side responsible (163), and most commonly it told of the devastating effects of war: “The most obvious ‘meaning’ of the phenomenon was clear: it was an emblem of pathos, of the effect of war on the innocent, on women and children especially” (164). This meaning has relevance for *Three Day Road*; however, in the novel the statue is representative of not just the violence of war but also of the religious violence perpetrated in Canada.



Likewise, the scene illustrates that the violence Xavier and Elijah experience occurs both on the battlefield and on the home front and that these two sites of violence are related. Initially interested in the statue as a possible sniping position, Elijah climbs the figure, describing the experience in increasingly sexual language. Boyden writes,

He scuttles up further so he straddles her. Shimmying, he makes his way out along her back, daring himself to see how far he will go. She seems to be anchored to nothing, and Elijah's weight as he rides her back like she is a great horse threatens to knock her down, smash her into a thousand pieces on the ground below.

He's made his way to mid back and makes the decision that he will reach her golden crown. She shakes with the effort of holding him as he slides out further onto her. Elijah is surprised to find he's become hard with the excitement of this. He has his first erection in months, it seems. He lies flatter on his stomach below beckoning them to it, Elijah shaking now as much as she is, her crown almost in reach. He stretches his arms up to the rim and grimaces, pulls himself the last foot to her head and begins to convulse in waves, the virgin below him vibrating along with him.

He lies there a long time, staring down at the world below. Reaching into his pocket he pulls out a cigarette, lights it and inhales. He unstraps the rifle from his back, and peers through the scope at night. (198)

Elijah's sexual excitement reminds the reader of the frequent sexual abuse he suffered at the hands of Magdalene, a nun at St. Anne's residential school (341), and connect the

imperialist belief system which has led to the war to the settler colonialism which created Canada's residential school system. In Urquhart's books commemorative acts, such as memorial carving, are infused with the erotic; however, in this scene from *Three Day Road*, the erotic highlights the violence inherent in white, masculine heroism.

### **Recognition of Historical Colonial Violence**

*Three Day Road* provides certain signposts of colonial violence and this catalogue of settler violence parallels the colony-to-nation paradigm highlighted in the passages of the novel addressing the First World War. However, unlike the colony-to-nation paradigm, which is familiar to many readers who have a knowledge of Canadian history and has frequently been asserted as nationally important, the specific examples of colonial violence that Niska, Xavier, and Elijah articulate have historically not received the same attention and consequently, may not be as familiar to non-Indigenous readers. Many readers familiar with canonical Canadian literary texts may only be aware of racist and antiquated literary tropes of Indigenous peoples as a "dying race".<sup>112</sup> The extensive narration of Niska, Xavier, and Elijah's experience of colonial violence recognizes that just as Indigenous contributions during the First World War were frequently ignored and forgotten, the assaults on Indigenous lives and Indigenous cultures have often been erased in conventional histories of Canada and in the nation's mythology.

Boyden situates this discussion of colonial violence around the windigo, a figure common to both Anishinaabe and Cree traditional beliefs and characterized by its

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<sup>112</sup> By examining Indigenous participation in the mythologized narrative of Canada's birth, Boyden disrupts what Laura Groening refers to as "the most dangerous trope in Canadian literature": the Indian as member of a dead and dying people" (qtd. in Gordon, "Time Structures" 125).

insatiable appetite, and the windigo killer, the steward of Anishinaabe and Cree culture and tradition (Gordon, “Time Structures” 131). As the impact of settler colonialism on Niska’s community increases, *Three Day Road* locates the windigo threat in the dangerous presence of white settlers (Visvis 227). In the novel, Anishinaabe and Cree knowledge, in the form of the shared intergenerational teaching of windigo killing, is instrumental to combat the peril of windigo forces and settler colonialism. As such, the novel’s narrative of inclusion about violence against Indigenous peoples in Canada, is also an argument in favour of Indigenous systems of knowledge in opposition to systems of learning that emphasize white experience and knowledge. *Three Day Road* examines the First World War and white encroachment as external threats and as traumas for the Mushkegowuk Cree; consequently, the windigo’s dark connotations lend themselves to a correlation with trauma (227). Literary scholar Vikki Visvis suggests that “The Windigo in Boyden’s novel points directly to the traumatic events of the First World War” and its impact on Xavier and Elijah; however, the windigo presence also indicates the trauma of settler colonialism (230). In a society where starvation was a common occurrence, the threat of food shortages was reflected in belief in the windigo threat. However, the windigo ordeal Micah’s wife endures differs from Elijah’s windigo experience. Micah’s wife goes windigo because the historic difficulties of living near James Bay during the winter are exacerbated by settler encroachment.<sup>113</sup> Elijah goes windigo as the result of western cultural imperialism and the horrific violence of the Western Front.

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<sup>113</sup> The expansion of northern railway lines resulted in increased contact with white settlers, and consequently, new diseases (Morrison 7). Coupled with natural decreases in the animal population, “a regular occurrence at seven to ten-year intervals,” white encroachment had devastating effects on the Cree and Anishinaabe (7). An HBC trader reported that starvation caused the deaths of several people on Missinaibi Lake in 1898-99 (8). This kind of suffering was not contained within the communities nearest

It is critical to see the injuries suffered by Elijah and Xavier in residential school and the traumas they both experience in war as connected in terms of settler colonialism. Visvis believes these traumatic events should not be considered in “mutual exclusion” (230). In fact, Visvis believes the residential school is a “foundational trauma” (23) for Elijah (in trauma theorist Dominick LaCapra’s sense of the term), as the residential school abuse he suffers becomes the most significant event in formulating his identity – not the war. Because Elijah was in the residential school longer and was sexually abused, his school experience distinguishes him from Xavier, especially during their adult life in the army (230). According to Visvis, the hardships of the colonial period may be understood as a kind of windigo: “In effect, the Native protagonists in this novel are being consumed by the occurrence and effects of the First World War and by the European imperial culture that underscores it. The First World War is a traumatic event plus a colonial agency that, like the Windigo consumes, and, in this context, devours First Nations cultures and beliefs” (234). Visvis is right to indicate both contexts for the trauma experienced by Niska, Elijah, and Xavier; however, Niska and Xavier are not devoured: they rely on cultural knowledge, beliefs, and connection to territorial land and traditional practices such as storytelling to enact survivance.

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the rail line as coastal communities hundreds of kilometres away also suffered massive casualties, as was the case at Moose Factory in the winter and spring of 1900-01, when outbreaks of measles and pneumonia killed more than 60 people of the 600 who traded at the post (Morrison 8). Traditional healers were not experienced in how to handle new diseases and white doctors were scarce (9). Ultimately, these factors contributed to a high mortality rate among Indigenous peoples of the James Bay Region: “By the first decade of the twentieth century, the death rate for Indian people north and west of Lake Superior was between 42 and 53 per thousand population – with a rate of 18.2 per thousand for the Six Nation Iroquois in southern Ontario and 13 to 16 per thousand for the Canadian population as a whole” (9).

Niska first encounters the windigo threat as a child. In a period of scarcity, Micah and his wife and child leave the starving group in winter in search of food, a path that culminates in the woman eating the flesh of her dead husband and feeding it to her baby. Micah's wife blames his death on the windigo, a man-like beast, but much larger in size, and with claws. Niska sees the wife's desperation in these claims, stating that "By the time she told these stories [...] Micah's wife had become unreliable, had become something else" (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 41). The wife and child threaten the stability of the community both by leaving the group in the dead of winter and through their desperate act of cannibalism. Literary scholar Nicole Brandsma notes that the windigo "strongly underscores the threat of extreme individuality and greed present to the community" (124). Resolving the windigo threat means defeating the extreme individuality of those who have gone windigo while relying on a culturally specific understanding tied to the land and Anishinaabe and Cree knowledge, separate from Eurocentric understandings. Because the woman and child have gone windigo from eating human flesh, Niska's father, whose status as hookimaw, or chief, is dependent on his reputation as a windigo-killer, must fulfill his traditional role and kill them, an act he requires Niska to witness. This role is adopted out of necessity to preserve the community, and as Gordon suggests, "The role of the *windigo* killer is thus represented by Boyden as a custodian of tribal values and collectivity" ("Time Structures" 131).<sup>114</sup> It becomes an integral moment of instruction for Niska; as her father indicates: "I allowed you to watch Little One...because one day I will be gone and you might have to do the

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<sup>114</sup> Boyden's problematized identity and disputed use of Cree and Anishinaabe stories described in footnote 94 are relevant here and complicate his depictions of windigo killing.

same” (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 45). For his actions, Niska’s father is taken away by the North-West Mounted Police and dies in prison while awaiting trial. Significantly, the incarceration of her father illustrates the criminalization and prohibition of Indigenous knowledge in an overt and violent way. Her father’s knowledge is restored when she later takes up his role as windigo killer. As Niska retells the story of her family’s tradition of windigo killing, she creates a commemorative narrative that links the past with the present and future.

As Niska matures from child to adult, the windigo appetite is often found in non-Indigenous people or forces. She returns to Moose Factory as an adult to look for the Frenchman, with whom she has had a sexual relationship; however, her return forces her to confront the “homeguard” way of life. Niska acknowledges the distance created between her and the Cree inhabitants of Moose Factory, stating, “immediately it was obvious that an invisible wall, one impossible to breach, lay between me and the homeguard Indians of this white town” (168). She recognizes and reflects on the devastation and alienation that settler colonialism causes in her community:

The Indians here seemed full, full of food, full of drink, full like I saw the white men look full. I become almost envious walking around, feeling the stares burrowing into my back. For so many years it was as if I’d gone hungry. My body was smaller than the others’, having rarely been able to feed it full. But I was struck as I listened to families talking and friends laughing and children running and shouting that what I had starved for was the company of others, others like me. When I realized there were no

longer others like me, my legs shook so hard in the middle of the dirt street with people all around that I thought I would fall down. (168)

In this passage, insatiable appetite is associated with whiteness and proximity to whiteness, illustrating Visvis' assessment that in *Three Day Road* the windigo "is strategically inverted so that its links to violence and abjection are associated with white colonial culture" (225).<sup>115</sup> The text bears this out as Niska is warned about the Frenchman's sexual appetite: "Be careful of that one. They say he has a taste for red meat that he can't satisfy. There are little half-French, half-Indian children running around this place that he refuses to claim" (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 169). The reference to the Frenchman's sexual preference for Cree women, his "taste for red meat," is also an indication that he too is a threat, his voracious appetite has caused him to go windigo. As such, the Frenchman poses a grave danger to Niska and the community. His refusal to claim paternity of his children shows a significant break from the village and is reminiscent of Micah's wife's growing appetite, supplied "with more meat" than she could eat from her dead husband's corpse (42). It is also a denial of responsibility from the Frenchman and symbolic of settler exploitation more broadly.

Visvis also links the inversion of the windigo in *Three Day Road* to the destructive power of the First World War. She illustrates how the novel presents the violence of the First World War as a symbolic windigo. She writes that "the First World War is situated as a site of lunacy and mass destruction.... However, rather than conceptualizing the European war effort as a general phenomenon, the novel figuratively

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<sup>115</sup> Visvis also notes that typically the windigo's threatening appetite has also been used in "Western appropriations as an indication of Native savagery" (225).

depicts it as an implacable and ravenous Windigo that consumes the lives of soldiers and civilians” (230). Passages from the novel such as, “It has sucked the life from Saint-Eloi and left it like this, has moved on in search of more bodies to try and fill its impossible hunger,” illustrate her point that Boyden uses the same language to describe the war as he does in other sections of the novel to describe windigo individuals (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 73). The application of windigo traits to white individuals like the Frenchman or imperialist forces like the First World War connect the destructiveness of the First World War with the violence perpetrated against Indigenous peoples in Canada in the text. Both Niska and Xavier resist such windigo forces because they have been taught (Niska by her parents and Xavier by Niska) about Anishinaabe and Cree practices. When Niska rejects the Frenchman, she affirms her connection to the land, her people’s traditional beliefs, and modes of healing by building a sweat lodge. Niska reflects, “When I heard the Frenchman’s voice in my head, my fear and anger came back to me so that I needed to prove to myself that I still had power. I constructed my shaking tent and went inside to pray. It did not take long for the spirits to come” (175). Her rejection of both the homeguard way of life and the subjugation offered by the Frenchman are gestures of active resistance to settler colonialism.

The criminalization of Indigenous knowledge in *Three Day Road* also occurs in residential schools in the text, another marker of the violence of settler colonialism. Battiste describes the impact of settler education systems on Indigenous students: “Cognitive imperialism, or the white-washing of Indigenous people’s minds both subtly and overtly, has created irreparable language and cultural erosion and loss, and an overall diminishment of the significance among the youth of their elders, their culture, their



knowledge, and their language” (123). Battiste sees Eurocentric education systems as tools of assimilation and not methods of peaceful coexistence. Niska’s community is threatened because its members are denied her father’s leadership and knowledge. He is an early example of the violence Indigenous people have suffered and continue to experience as a result of agents of colonialism, such as the NWMP, who arrest him. The community’s knowledge is further threatened when children are forced to attend residential schools; like police forces, residential schools are another such tool of assimilation with violent repercussions for Indigenous students. As mentioned in Chapter 2 when discussing Battiste’s work, residential schools both criminalized Indigenous knowledge and indoctrinated students in problematic ways. However, for Niska, the residential school is also a site of resistance in the text.

St. Anne’s,<sup>116</sup> the residential school, becomes a place of vicious assimilation in *Three Day Road*. The children are forced to learn a new language and religion, change their names, and cut their hair. Yet for Niska, these images of domination and assault become methods of resistance and survival. While her sister Rabbit accepts a new name (Anne), Niska makes no such conciliation. Niska sees the nuns’ actions for what they are: attempts to break her from her previous way of life. This is best illustrated when Niska understands the importance of hair-cutting in the residential school, saying, “They were going to remove the black hair that reached to my waist as a symbol of [their] authority,

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<sup>116</sup> The real St. Anne’s was a residential school in Fort Albany, Ontario infamous for “appalling treatment including sexual abuse”; Indigenous students were also “shocked by an electric chair” and “forced to eat their own vomit” journalist Jesse Winter writes (“Ottawa”). These abuses were investigated by the Ontario Provincial Police in the 1990s but during the residential school settlement process thousands of police documents pertaining to St. Anne’s were withheld (“Ottawa”). In April 2017, the federal government “started releasing thousands of long-sought internal documents that could explain why it withheld police records of horrific abuse” (“Ottawa”).

of our defeat” (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 93). Niska sits through this process, denying the nun a reaction to the procedure, refusing to scream out during the cutting or show the shock and the sadness her reflection would elicit.<sup>117</sup> Niska does not just deny her oppressors a reaction, she actively defies them. Even while she is being humiliated at the hands of Sister Agnes, she is planning her response. That night, when the nuns are asleep, she enacts her resistance: she goes to the basement and cuts her hair as short as possible using the clippers the nuns used on the boys (93). Refusing her oppressors the pleasure of experiencing such a violent act, Niska subverts the enforcement of traditional Western gender roles, part of the indoctrination Indigenous children received in residential schools, by shaving her head.

*Three Day Road* guides the reader through important aspects of settler colonial violence in Canada, such as incarceration and residential schooling, in much the same way that the novel highlights conventionally significant battles from the First World War as part of the colony-to-nation paradigm. Both narratives serve a similar function in the text – to illustrate the ways in which Indigenous peoples have been erased from Canadian history and national narratives. Examples of physical abuse and violent racism punctuate the sections of the novel that address resource depletion, policing, reserve communities, and residential schools. *Three Day Road* also illustrates (by portraying the criminalization of Indigenous knowledge) the cultural impact of such violence. This section illustrates how Niska survives and resists colonial violence: by maintaining Cree and Anishinaabe knowledge. Cree and Anishinaabe knowledge is integral for Niska to move from simply

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<sup>117</sup> Echoes of this moment occur when Elijah and Xavier are on their way to join the army. After travelling through the forest fire, the pair bathe in the river; Xavier thinks, “we are hunters, not homeguard Indians” and asks Elijah if they will be made to cut their hair in the army, a mirrored mark of assimilation (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 61).

surviving, to enacting survivance and for *Three Day Road* to move from a novel of inclusion to presenting a commemorative mode based in Indigenous knowledge.

### **‘Survivance’: Storytelling and Windigo-Killing**

*Three Day Road* is both a historical novel and a novel about futurity. Its futurity is an aspect of the alternate commemorative modes the text depicts; Niska’s oral storytelling present the reader with a mode that is inclusive of Indigenous military experience. Niska’s story is also an example of what Anishinaabe literary critic and writer Gerald Vizenor terms “survivance”. Niska’s telling illustrates active resistance to the destructiveness of settler colonialism for the Indigenous communities of the James Bay region; storytelling itself is a method of refusing colonial influences. As education scholars Aman Sium and Eric Ritskes write,

Storytellers have never been silent in the face of colonial violence that subverted and neutralized various other forms of resistance; the storytellers and griots have never been idle, working through participatory mediums to maintain and sustain Indigenous ways of being and living. Here, the role of the storyteller is central to the exercise of agency and renewal. In Indigenous traditions around the world, storytellers are sacred knowledge keepers, they are the elders and medicine people, and they shape communities through the spoken and written word. (v)

Anishinaabe and Cree commemorative traditions (that importantly look to the future) are present in the novel as acts of “agency and renewal”. Niska’s defiant acts are symbolic of a larger method of survivance. Vizenor believes that survivance moves the past forward

and suggests that “survival stories are renunciations of dominance, detractions [...] and the legacy of victimry” (1). Literary critic Joe Lockard describes Vizenor’s “survival” as a refusal of erasure: “Colonial violence sought to negate native consciousness in all its continental variety as well as ensuring submission to displacement, exile, and extermination. To define survival is to refuse negation, to refuse identity based on social eradication” (209). Vizenor’s term applies to Niska’s narrative; she continues Indigenous tradition in the face of domination and asserts presence through the act of telling her story.

The story Niska tells Xavier as she paddles home in a canoe is the story of her life, and she articulates the colonial violence of the Moose Factory Cree experience but also illustrates the preservation of Indigenous knowledge rooted in the land and storytelling traditions. Niska’s site of narration is also the scene of the repatriation of the body of a war hero – a symbolically resonant scene also explored in *Sanctuary Line* – but here the body of the returned soldier is alive, barely, and Niska’s act of narrative survival and literal care of her nephew’s body in the face of colonial violence represents the sustenance of both Xavier’s individual life and the life of her culture. Xavier is the Unknown Soldier who refuses to die and the “three day road” he and Niska travel is the repatriation of his body to his home territory; however, the route they travel is a conception of place that refuses the colonialist implications of the national. It thus goes beyond the act of memorialization. Beginning with the difficulties her community faced as white settlement encroached on their lands and proceeding to the horrific consequences of the Indian Act and residential schools, Niska discusses a familiar process of destruction. However, Niska herself offers resistance to the “homeguard” way

of life, and consequently, resistance to the destructiveness of colonization. This intergenerational knowledge transfer is integral to survivance in the face of policies that sought to eradicate Indigenous cultural practices such as residential schools; by passing on her knowledge to Xavier, Niska rebuilds kinship bonds attacked by government policies. By continuing traditional practices and through the act of storytelling itself, Niska enacts a survivance that reverberates throughout the novel, and ultimately continues intergenerationally with Xavier.

Niska's circular telling reveals the hardships of the past, but also glimpses positive images of the future. After Xavier is through the worst of his detoxification, Niska shares an encouraging vision of his future. Niska states,

Almost immediately the heat brings visions. Children. I see children. They are happy and play games by the bank. The bank of the Great Salt Bay. They are two boys, naked, their brown backs to me as they throw little stones into the water. Their hair is long in the old way and is braided with strips of red cloth. But this isn't the past. It is what's still to come. They look to be brothers. Someone else besides me watches them. I sense that he watches to keep them from danger. I am no longer on the ground with them at all but above, looking down at the whole scene. I am not able to see the one who keeps his eye on them, and do not want to see. I know who he is, and who these boys are too. (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 381)

Niska's vision indicates a future in which the agency of Cree and Anishinaabe people sustains traditional practices. The boys in the vision have long hair, restoring a tradition residential schools tried to eradicate and the army refused to tolerate. Here too, kinship

bonds are restored, as Niska envisions Xavier and his future children. Significantly, the image is the most recent act in the temporal sequence of the novel, and it functions as the conclusion of the novel itself. Unlike Western commemorative practices, Niska's storytelling, removes temporal limits typically placed on memorial culture, and envisions future continuation. By maintaining cultural practices and most importantly, through the act of storytelling itself, Niska enacts a survivance that reverberates throughout the novel and ultimately continues with Xavier.

When faced with the realization that Xavier has returned home only to die, critically ill from his addiction to morphine, Niska turns to storytelling as a means of saving her nephew's life. She knows that failure to cure Xavier will mean the end of her family and the disappearance of vital cultural practices. Niska again utilizes the teaching of her father; he was, as Niska suggests, "the last great talker of our clan. He told stories softly so that you had to lean close to him to hear, so close you could smell the smoke in the hide ribbon my mother weaved in his hair, the scent of his neck like the wind coming off the Great Salt Bay" (34). Again, the novel's hair motif is emphasized. The hair is now not only long, but braided, a symbol of the intertwined narratives of past, present, and future in the novel. Niska's father bound the community together and preserved them through story. Niska states, "I used to imagine that he weaved his stories all summer, his words forming invisible nets that he cast over us on the long winter nights, capturing us and pulling us in closer together so that we collected each other's warmth. And sometimes his stories were all that we had to keep us alive" (34-35). In this way, storytelling becomes not only the element that holds their community together, but also ensures the community's active presence in the future. Niska uses this example from her

own story as a way of resisting the ramifications of war and assimilation, ensuring the future of the community, when she says, “Nephew cries out but then goes silent again. The sound of it, the animal fear at the very bottom of that cry, makes me think something I haven’t thought about in a long time. It is the story of my childhood. Now I tell it to you, Xavier, to keep you alive” (35). This phrase which initiates the narrative of the novel as a whole also illustrates that *Three Day Road* is not a morbid narrative but a life-giving story. As Xavier nears death, Niska again relies on storytelling to help her nephew resist the effects of the war and morphine, associated with its source, the poppy, which has accumulated a unique symbolic resonance and commemorative capital in relation to the sacrifices of the First World War, to ensure his presence in the future. She realizes she does not want him to die without knowing his story, and tells him of her dreams of him before he was born (354). This process enables his own telling, freeing him of the windigo Elijah, and provides a vision of the future. What Niska and Xavier participate in is not a conclusion, but a continued conversation that is fluid and designed to renew.

The three-day canoe journey Niska and Xavier take when he returns from the First World War is also a demonstration of survivance. Xavier, too, plays his part; while in pain, he actively listens to Niska’s story. Indigenous education scholar and member of the Stó:lō Nation Jo-Ann Archibald (Q’um Q’um Xiim) describes storytelling as an exchange between teller and listener: “Listening requires the concomitant involvement of the auditory and visual senses, the emotions, the mind, and patience. The act of story listening occurs in relation to using our other senses” (76). Xavier’s listening is consistent with Archibald’s description. Unable to speak for long periods because of withdrawal symptoms and incapable of putting his recollections into words, Xavier demonstrates

survivance as he takes in Niska's story with his senses. He watches Niska (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 136), he smiles at her and connects emotionally with her (221), and Xavier listens to his aunt. By listening, he realizes mistaken correspondence, a failure of written language to engage his aunt's recognition and identification, led Niska to believe he died during the war and him to believe she had died back home (302). This error spurred Xavier's hopelessness in the later stages of the War: "I would laugh at it all if the letter had not done such damage to me. It soured me and I lost my desire for survival" (302). Here, written communication makes Xavier lose his desire; this contrasts with oral communication, which represents and provokes survivance. While Xavier recalls his war experience as he travels by canoe, he is largely silent as he listens to Niska. Archibald also identifies silence as integral to the storytelling process. She states, "Silence is respectful and can create good thinking" (89). Literary scholar Julia Emberley suggests that Archibald's "understanding of silence underscores a processional dimension in which a meaningful response *unfolds* over time" (152). In *Three Day Road*, the canoe trip allows for this processional dimension and the three-day journey permits meaning to unfold. Both Xavier's silence during the three-day journey and his listening help him reach out to Niska on the final day of their river journey.

Xavier's detoxification is not a linear progression from addiction to sobriety. Midway through the journey, he debates taking the rest of his morphine supply to end his life. Niska's storytelling presence interrupts Xavier's thoughts: "All morning Auntie paddles me further north in even strokes, sometimes humming songs to herself, sometimes speaking directly into my muffled world with stories of her youth" (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 177). Instead of taking his whole supply, he proceeds to inject "just



enough to take the knife's edge of pain away" (177). The next day, he explains his morphine has run out and asks her to paddle him to shore (324, 344). Niska, having paddled him to shore and finished her own story, tells Xavier the story of his childhood (364). The sequence of Niska's telling has led Xavier to a moment when he must remember Elijah: "I can no longer escape him. I do not have the energy. I remember our last days together" (364). His detoxification climaxes as Xavier finally becomes the teller, recounting to Niska Elijah's death; Niska assumes the role of listener, allowing for long silences as Xavier struggles for words (380-381). Both Niska's storytelling and listening and Xavier's listening and storytelling are assertions of Anishinaabe and Cree cultural presence. The process enacted by Niska guides Xavier from hopelessness, through detoxification, to a place where Elijah can once again be remembered.

Niska and Xavier both perform the vital role of storyteller in *Three Day Road*; they also assume the role of listener. Archibald indicates that the role of listener is integral to the process of making meaning from storytelling: "Bringing heart and mind together for story listening was necessary if one was to make meaning from a story because often one was not explicitly told what the story's meanings were" (76). Xavier is often cast as the listener to Elijah's teller. Elijah's ease with English ensures a smooth transition with his fellow soldiers but comes at great cost. Xavier states, "He couldn't speak in his old voice even if he wanted to now. It's gone somewhere far away" (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 138). Elijah's lost voice disrupts his relationship with Xavier. Separated from his voice, Elijah is a storyteller who does not engage in "a high level of interactive exchange between storyteller and listener," as Emberley describes Archibald's theory of Indigenous storywork (148). Elijah is divorced from what Archibald would call "the

ultimate responsibility of the storyteller to know which story to tell and to know how much to tell or explain about meaning” (Archibald 77). In contrast, Niska’s role as teller considers the reciprocal relationship between teller and listener. Having learned from her father, whose “stories were all that we had to keep us alive,” Niska knows what story she has to tell to nurture Xavier: “It is the story of my childhood. Now I tell it to you, Xavier, to keep you alive” (Boyden *Three Day Road* 35). Niska’s storytelling considers Xavier’s needs but also continues his storytelling mentorship. Storytelling is only one of the custodial practices in which Niska instructs her nephew. The family role of windigo-killer is also passed onto Xavier and functions as another act of survivance.

The windigo-killer represents a resistance to forces that threaten the survival of the community and an assertion of traditional Indigenous knowledge whose performance of justice exists outside settler-colonial legal and medical systems. After Niska rescues Xavier from the residential school and they are living in the bush, she is approached by an old hunter who tells her of a member of his group that has gone windigo. She questions whether she can take on the role of her father; however, Niska ultimately accepts that she must become the windigo-killer. Just as Niska was present during her father’s last windigo-killing, Xavier watches as she kills this windigo man. Niska reflects, “Just as I had witnessed it at your age, you had now seen something that you were too young to understand fully. I needed to explain to you that I was a healer, and that sometimes healing entailed cutting out the sickness” (264). Niska also acknowledges that the windigo threat exists in many places. As Niska begins telling her life story to Xavier she states, “war touches everyone, and *windigos* spring from the earth” (49). Ostensibly a vision of the carnage experienced by millions during the First World War and a

foreshadowing of Elijah's fate, Niska's warning, according to literary scholar Sophie McCall, "may also be suggesting genocidal practices in Canada, in which Cree territories are being appropriated, Cree institutions of law are being ignored, and Cree people's lives and freedoms are being taken away" (64). As McCall and Visvis have illustrated, in *Three Day Road*, the windigo acts as a hinge between colonial and military history and violence. The text bears this out when Xavier applies what Niska taught him; telling Elijah, "'You have gone mad. There is no coming back from where you've travelled'" (Boyden, *Three Day Road* 370). Xavier acknowledges that to survive, he must become a windigo-killer, accepting the future of which Niska dreamed. His last martial act, in the closing days of the war, is to accept the role of windigo killer when he recognizes that Elijah has gone windigo and he kills his life-long friend. Xavier recalls the experience near the end of the novel as his detoxification and war remembrance reaches its height. Xavier states, "I press down harder. Elijah's eyes shine with tears. His face grows dark red. He tries to whisper words to me but I know that I cannot allow Elijah to speak them. I must finish this. I have become what you are, Niska" (370). This passage illustrates that he and Niska have a similar resolve and also shows the vital continuation of cultural understanding and knowledge. Xavier, who has been preoccupied with achieving honours and decorations in the martial world, puts aside these concerns as he kills the decorated Elijah and commits an act punishable within the military's strict codes of justice. Rejecting his military commitments, Xavier reluctantly accepts the mantle of windigo-killer, which has passed from his grandfather, to his aunt, and now to him.

Niska's narrative illustrates the damage of settler colonialism for the Mushkegowuk Cree. The novel responds to two formative moments in the nation's

history; they are also dual moments of foundational trauma: of settler colonialism and the horrors of trench warfare. The novel connects these events through the Anishinaabe and Cree understanding of the windigo. Niska and Xavier are transitional characters for Boyden: Niska marks the liminal space between life in the bush and life on the reserve, while Xavier marks the liminal cultural space between traditional bush life and industrialized, white society. Xavier and Elijah highlight the significant contributions of Indigenous soldiers as part of Canada's fighting force during the First World War. However, Boyden's ambivalence toward traditional narratives of the war, at times embracing popular notions of valour while simultaneously challenging conventional narratives of Canadian nationhood, is important to recognize. *Three Day Road* illustrates both the importance of recognizing Indigenous soldiers within the existing culture of memory and memorialization, but also highlights the problems at the heart of conventional Canadian mythology about the First World War. *Three Day Road* is the story of the repatriation of a barely-alive "Unknown Soldier". Misidentified as Elijah while he recovers from his injuries in hospital, the army believes Xavier to be one of the thousands of Canadian military dead with no known grave. Xavier is able to reclaim his identity on the canoe trip home. Xavier's return canoe journey differs from the repatriations discussed in Chapter 4 because Xavier is an Unknown Soldier who refuses to die. His repatriation does not memorialize him, but instead is nourishing and generative because it takes place on Cree lands and within Cree traditions. Consequently, his memory is not subsumed within the colonialist connotations of the national figure. *Three Day Road* suggests that Canada's traumatic birth did not occur solely on the battlefields of Europe, but also on Canadian soil, played out countless times across the

country and in numerous Indigenous communities over the course of centuries. The violence of the First World War is highly visible to many, and is easily vilified by being attributed to an identifiable “enemy” agent in a transnational conflict; however, the violence of settler colonialism is less visible to so many, even though it comes from within the Canadian nation, and *Three Day Road* makes clear the Canadian nation is founded on a history of colonial violence.

## Chapter Four:

### Grievability and Contemporary 'Unknowns': Jane Urquhart's *Sanctuary Line*,

### Nichola Goddard, and the Highway of Heroes

#### Introduction

This dissertation has illustrated the continued resonance of the figure of the Unknown Soldier in twenty-first century commemorations of the First World War in Canada. It has also addressed which soldiers are erased by a figure of white masculine heroism like the Unknown Soldier. This chapter addresses the ways in which the Unknown Soldier continues to impact Canadian commemorations of contemporary warfare. How can a figure that relies on anonymity for part of its commemorative impact continue to reverberate in the twenty-first century, when the Canadian military no longer experiences the tragedy of being unable to identify its dead? The paradoxical tension at the centre of the Unknown Soldier, between individualization and anonymity, between known and unknown, still has significance for contemporary losses, despite technological improvements that ensured all Canadian fatalities in the war in Afghanistan were identified. Recent Canadian fallen have been subject to a very public mourning in which personal anecdotes and photos have been shared widely via newspapers, television, and social media. The stories of these soldiers share many similarities and their public obituaries become conventional; in the process, a set of characteristics emerges describing a typical and idealized Canadian soldier. Consequently, the loss of soldiers, such as Canadian Forces Captain Nichola Goddard, who was killed during an engagement with the Taliban in 2006 and was widely eulogized in the Canadian press,

become what I would call “archetypal fatalities”; an expression of all contemporary military casualties. On the surface these are examples of individualization, but much is concealed about individual soldiers, the realities of modern soldiering, and the contemporary military in this method of commemorating. As a result, the recent conventional depictions of Canada’s military dead creates a situation where even though their names are identified, they are still, in many ways, unknown in death.

Set on a small farm on the shores of Lake Erie, *Sanctuary Line* is a story of familial loss that deliberately recalls and reinterprets the circumstances of the historical Nichola Goddard’s life and the panegyric discourse surround her death, and in doing so develops national and transnational resonances that prompt readers to consider the nature and function of the archetypal fatality. In this novel, published in 2010, shortly before Canada’s combat role in Afghanistan came to a close, Liz Crane, an entomologist, spends her days researching the annual procession of the Monarch Butterfly migration at nearby Point Pelee, while also exploring a triumvirate of familial migrations (her Mexican migrant-worker friend Teo’s fatal late night drive down the road Sanctuary Line, her family’s abandonment by her Uncle Stanley, and her cousin Mandy’s service abroad as a member of the Canadian Forces) that Liz struggles to remember and commemorate. Narrated in the present tense by Liz, she reflects on these losses by examining and interrogating her childhood memories. It is her deceased cousin Mandy Butler’s service in the Canadian Forces, Mandy’s eventual deployment to Afghanistan, and subsequent fatal mission that force Liz to address Mandy’s death and explore these earlier losses. Mandy is modelled on the real-life Captain Goddard, the best-known casualty of Canada’s campaign in Afghanistan. However, while gender is an important component of

Urquhart's character and Goddard's fame – she is often identified as the first female Canadian soldier killed in combat – Goddard's gender was in fact frequently effaced in media depictions after her death, and various tropes were used to render her masculine, making it possible for Goddard's actions to be incorporated into the masculinity valued when military fallen are commemorated. This contemporary masculinity in which Goddard was encompassed is the same the type of white masculinity presented by the Unknown Soldier I explored in earlier chapters. However, in contrast to the media representations, the novel emphasizes Mandy's gender in relation to her military service while contextualizing her death within the family's network of losses. Consequently, *Sanctuary Line* challenges the conventional masculine gendering war commemoration takes in Canada.

Mandy's transnational deployments as a member of the Canadian Forces are part of the novel's larger exploration of a variety of migrations. Long before her career researching the movements of butterflies, Liz's childhood intersects with the travel patterns of a group of Mexican workers during the summer months to her Uncle Stanley's fruit farm, where Liz spent her summers as a child and where she takes up residence as an adult. Joining the Mexican workers is Teo, son of migrant worker Dolores and Liz's childhood friend and first love. Liz realizes that seasonal movements define both Teo's life and her own: "Arriving each summer as we did from somewhere else, and then departing again at the end of the season, we were migratory in nature, the differences in our migrations being those of direction and distance and the fact that while I was away from 'home,' I was still in what could be called my natural habitat" (Urquhart, *Sanctuary Line* 127). What Liz does not realize at the time and only learns in adulthood, is that her



Uncle Stanley, a fruit farmer with a gift for storytelling, and father-figure to Liz, is Teo's biological father. Uncle Stanley is a vital link to familial history for Liz, and his stories of the "great-greats" instruct Liz, Mandy, and Mandy's brothers about the family's mythology, including their emigration to and settlement in North America. What Uncle Stanley's storytelling also illustrates is the importance of narrative as a commemorative mode. Because Teo's familial connection is never formally acknowledged in Stanley's stories, he is erased from the family mythology, but through Liz's narration in *Sanctuary Line*, he is finally integrated into the family's narrative. In *Sanctuary Line*, Liz must commemorate the loss of Teo while she grapples with truly knowing her cousin Mandy.

When Liz discovers at the end of the novel that Teo is also Uncle Stanley's child, she realizes he is also her cousin. While the tragic death of her cousin Teo and the disappearance of her Uncle Stanley occurred years earlier when Liz was a teenager, Mandy's death brings all three losses into focus for Liz and allows her to finally commemorate and memorialize each of her lost loved ones. Liz's commemoration takes the form of the novel itself, as *Sanctuary Line* is the narrative Liz tells Vahil, also an officer in the Canadian Forces and Mandy's secret lover, when he visits her at the farm. Urquhart's emphasis on Mandy's literary imagination and Liz's (and her uncle's) storytelling highlight the importance of literature as a commemorative mode and illustrate that literature allows for a type of understanding to take place, distinct from official commemoration. Further, *Sanctuary Line* explores the ways both literature and martial customs have the capacity to manufacture meaning to understand and commemorate loss. Liz's reading of Mandy's library following the latter's death becomes one way in which she attempts to understand and grieve for both her cousins' loss, and

her narrative is an attempt to “know” their lives in a manner alternative to official commemorations, and thus make them “grievable.”

While struggling to truly know both cousins, Liz grapples with the fulsome public acknowledgement of Mandy’s death in comparison to Teo’s erasure after his fatal car accident. In this chapter, I employ queer and literary theorist Judith Butler’s work on grievability, violence, and war to understand why in contemporary Canada some deaths are mourned, marked, and commemorated and others are not. Butler writes in the context of the September 11 attacks and the resulting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in relation to American losses. She compares those American military and civilian losses to those who were ignored, tortured, and killed because of American military actions. However, her writing is applicable to events in Canada since 2001 as well. She breaks down the differences between a just or legal war as a matter of framing, which distinguishes “those lives to be preserved from those whose lives are dispensable” (Butler, *Frames of War* xviii). Lives that are often seen as “dispensable,” according to Butler, are those civilian populations caught in the middle of violence and war (xviii). Such a distinction can be applied to Canadian military actions such as Afghans killed by the fighting between International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) coalition troops (including Canadian Forces troops) and Taliban soldiers. She contends that the value of life can only be determined through its loss: “Only under conditions in which the loss would matter does the value of the life appear. Thus, grievability is a presupposition for the life that matters” (14). That certain losses are felt less is integral for war and the more dispensable a life, the less grievable it is as “the differential distribution of grievability upon which war depends. Ungrievable lives are those that cannot be lost, and cannot be destroyed,

because they already inhabit a lost and destroyed zone” (xix). The grievable life is also recognized as a life and is knowable (6-7). To be publicly grieved like Mandy is dependant on being both knowable and valued. Mandy’s death is commemorated and mourned because of her value to the nation as a soldier. As such, Mandy’s life is publicly grievable while Teo’s is not. *Sanctuary Line* illustrates different forms of mourning that recognize essential features that are silenced in official commemorative traditions.

Still, I would suggest that Butler’s qualification of “knowability” is only part of why Mandy is publicly memorialized. Mandy’s death on the battlefield can be marked in the public realm because of the longstanding and familiar martial traditions that maintain cultural knowledge, such as the Unknown Soldier, about appropriate responses to military deaths during war. This knowledge allows newer commemorative modes, such as the Highway of Heroes, and other alternatives and adaptations of traditional martial commemoration, to provide a framework for mourning. Such rituals are central to the narrative of *Sanctuary Line*. The nature and scale of the conflict, in association with technological advancements, meant there were no literal Canadian Unknowns from the war in Afghanistan. Canada’s military casualties from Afghanistan were deeply mourned, most notably in the Highway of Heroes ritual that became commonplace along Highway 401 each time a fallen soldier returned to Canada, a practice that literally brought these deaths home to the public, and made Canada’s casualties *feel* known to those who participated and were brought into a more intimate relationship with them. The dead who were carried along this route were already recognizable to the Canadian public because of the media attention surrounding their deaths and repatriation. Prominently profiled in Canadian newspapers and eulogized on popular programs like the weekly *Hockey Night*

*in Canada*, details about each soldier were disseminated before they journeyed on the Highway of Heroes. This trip both made the fallen recognizable to a larger public and made them grievable in ways not previously experienced on a national level. Butler's work on the "hierarchy of grief" and its relationship to the obituary genre has applicability for the public mourning that has occurred in Canada since 2002 ("Violence" 20). The knowability of the Canadian fallen also contrasts with the comparably less visible Afghan casualties whose lives and deaths were not recorded and observed with such exacting detail in Canada.

Urquhart's examination of grievability pivots around the contradictory gatherings along the Highway of Heroes. These assemblies occupy a unique space within the country's commemorative landscape: official and unofficial, codified and spontaneous, the gatherings have marked the return of each Canadian fatality as they have arrived from Afghanistan. Like commemorative practices involving the figure of the Unknown Soldier, then, the Highway of Heroes demonstrates significant internal paradoxes. In contrast, the migrant worker community of which Teo is a member is not only seen as disposable labour, but their commemorative traditions take place on the margins of the text. Liz alludes to the potential for commemorative action for Teo in his native country when she discusses the Mexican reception for returning migratory monarch butterflies: "The Mexicans who watch their arrival, I've been told, believe that they are witnessing the annual return of the souls of their beloved dead" (Urquhart, *Sanctuary Line* 262). Mandy's death takes place on foreign soil and fits within an understanding of the renewed importance of the military to Canadian identity; in contrast, Teo's death takes place on Canadian soil and is understood as banal and accidental. Mandy is accorded the

honours befitting her death in theatre, including a return journey along the Highway of Heroes in which Liz participates. Nevertheless, Liz struggles with the version of Mandy presented in official commemoration. What Liz is navigating is the paradoxical aspects of the fictional Mandy. By extension, the novel addresses the contradictory portrayal of the real-life Goddard, who was presented as both masculine and feminine, known and unknown, and ultimately both grievable and un-grievable.

Understanding the losses in *Sanctuary Line* through a lens of grievability opens up the possibility of supplementing existing conventions for Canadian martial commemoration. *Sanctuary Line* helps readers engage with these concepts in order to better understand real-life commemorative responses to Canada's recent military engagements, most notably the Highway of Heroes, which transform individuals into archetypal fatalities. While personal details of individual Canadian Forces casualties have been made public, when taken together they generate a conventional Canadian military casualty who fits with established patterns of freely given sacrifice characteristic of the Unknown Soldier. If, as Butler contends, grievability in war depends on knowability, then it follows that the universalizing tendency of the Unknown Soldier neutralizes the disruptive power of individual deaths during war even in an age where it is possible to speak of no more Canadian unknowns.

### **Captain Nichola Goddard and Mandy Butler**

Discussing the relationship between commemorative traditions like the Unknown Soldier and the Highway of Heroes and their relationship to grievability in the context of the commemorative efforts in *Sanctuary Line*, first requires an overview of Captain

Goddard's life and how the fictional Mandy is modelled on the real-life captain. Between 2002 and 2011, 158 members of the Canadian Forces died in Afghanistan, including four women.<sup>118</sup> Goddard was a junior officer, the first Canadian woman to die in direct combat, and because of this fact, she became famous in death. Urquhart specifically states that Mandy Butler also died while on duty, the victim of an IED (*Sanctuary Line* 5). While Captain Nichola Goddard was not killed by an IED, she died on duty when she was hit by a piece of shrapnel during a fire-fight between Canadian soldiers and Taliban insurgents (Fortney 11). Urquhart's fallen soldier is a successful officer; Liz refers to Mandy as "a brilliant officer and ambitious military strategist" (*Sanctuary Line* 17). This parallels the posthumous characterization of Goddard as a successful young officer destined for historic achievement in the Canadian Forces. Valerie Fortney, a *Calgary Herald* journalist and Goddard's biographer, described Captain Goddard's role in targeting artillery while stationed in Afghanistan as momentous for the Canadian Forces:

Standing in the hatch of her LAV, Nich calibrated the exact locations of the farms from which Taliban fire was coming, and radioed the targeting information back to the 155-mm cannon about 11 kilometres to the west of the battle group. High-explosive shells rained down on the precise locations she had intended, while other LAVs pounded the targets with

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<sup>118</sup> Trooper Karine Blaise was killed nearly three years after Goddard, 13 April 2009. Major Michelle Mendes was Canada's next casualty after Blaise, dying of a self-inflicted gunshot wound a few days after her arrival in Afghanistan on 23 April 2009. The last Canadian woman to die in Afghanistan was among Canada's final fatalities of the combat mission: Master Corporal Kristal Giesebrecht, a medic with the Royal Canadian Regiment, was 34-years-old when her vehicle hit an IED on 26 June 2010. Of the four, Blaise and Giesebrecht were comparatively low-ranked; Goddard and Mendes were among the highest-ranked Canadian casualties in Afghanistan. Mendes' death is further differentiated by many as "non-combat", an important distinction during war that served to isolate Mendes and lessen the impact of her death. Of the four, only Goddard received significant attention, the other were normalized as part of "the fallen" in part because of the commemorative patterns Goddard's death helped reinforce.

machine-gun fire. The significance of this act was not lost on all of the members of her FOO party: they had just called in the first artillery fire against enemy combatants since the Korean War. (250)

The event was significant, not just for Goddard personally, but also for the Canadian Forces more generally: “For Nichola, it was a double victory. She wasn’t the first female soldier in fifty years to execute a fire mission – she was the first soldier. She had truly overcome the gender divide” (10). Goddard earned the right to take part in this historic military moment because of her excellence as a soldier, excellence that had her earmarked for rapid advance at the time of her death (“Canadian woman 16th”). Urquhart emphasizes that Mandy Butler possesses the same bright, military mind Goddard possessed to further the connection Mandy has with her real-life counterpart. To fully appreciate these implications, a better understanding of Goddard’s life, her time spent in the Canadian Forces, and the subsequent attention she received in death, is necessary.

Goddard was born to a Canadian mother, Sally, and an English father, Tim, in Papua New Guinea in 1980. Her parents were educators; their work led them to Papua New Guinea, and would eventually take the growing family all over Canada (Fortney 12-13). Goddard’s childhood included stops in the east and west of Canada as well as time in the north. Fortney represents this childhood experience, coupled with in-country deployment that is common in military life, as exemplifying an upbringing nurtured by a multicultural Canada. As Fortney observes,

As her nomadic family made its way through various parts of Canada, she spoke Dene with the First Nations children of Black Lake, Saskatchewan, explored the natural wonders of Baffin Island and made lifelong friends

from the prairies to the East Coast. The woman who as a child dined on taro, caribou, and seal had no trouble sitting down to a meal of goat soup with Afghan village elders. (13)

What Fortney suggests is that Goddard's life experience makes her representative of Canada's diversity and mobility and therefore deserving of the "Canada's daughter" moniker occasionally attached to her name (Rankin). In Fortney's reading, Goddard's upbringing illustrates positive aspects of Canada's national identity, tolerance, inclusivity, and diversity, that are widely cherished by Canadians and thus make Canadians uniquely suited to the type of democracy promoting military role the Canadian Forces encountered in Afghanistan.<sup>119</sup> Appellations like "Canada's daughter" indicate both a connection to Goddard and a familial mourning of her loss on the part of Canadians more broadly. In this way, Goddard the individual becomes an archetype and is used to mark not only military deaths, but to indicate the integrity and decency of Canadian soldiers more generally.

Goddard's status as the first woman to die in combat while serving in the Canadian Forces set her apart from other Canadian casualties. On the surface, Goddard's gender appears to complicate conventional depictions of the Unknown Soldier and its generic presentation of a specific type of white masculinity. However, her gender was

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<sup>119</sup> Canada's claim to exporting democracy stands on shaky ground; during the war in Afghanistan, Canada contributed to "democratizing" efforts by sending law enforcement officers to train Afghans in policing (McCready 19). Police training in Afghanistan was part of a longstanding Canadian international practice "But these law enforcement agencies have themselves come under severe criticism for widespread racism, sexism, and abuse, calling into question Canada's claim to be able to export democracy" (19). In particular, the RCMP, with its "imposition and enforcement of the colonialist Indian Act," as well as contemporary failures such as ignoring the numerous disappearances of Indigenous girls and women across the country and numerous lawsuits filed by female RCMP officers against the organization for incidences of sexual harassment, "and the grounds for Canada's leadership in instituting global democracy becomes shaky indeed" (19).



presented in two ways in mainstream accounts of her life, by emphasizing her commitment to peacekeeping as a distinctively Canadian and feminized endeavour, and by suggesting that she was an example of the post-gender military, who illustrated that women have overcome the gender barrier in the Canadian Forces, as Fortney indicates in her description of Goddard's role in targeting artillery fire against an enemy in battle. Goddard's commitment to peacekeeping has been emphasized in posthumous commemoration. In *Sunray*, Goddard's decision to attend the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) is understood in terms of the Canadian peacekeeping tradition, at that time a hallmark of successive federal governments' version of Canadian identity. Throughout her biography of Goddard, Fortney goes to great lengths to stress that both Goddard and her parents understood her chosen profession through the lens of peacekeeping, then an almost fifty-year tradition in Canada, in opposition to the "warrior" culture which would quickly develop post-9/11. At the time of her admission to the school, Tim and Sally Goddard saw future deployment to longstanding peacekeeping hotspots as an acceptable trade-off. Fortney writes, "But if she was serious about the school, a couple of years of peacekeeping in a place like Cyprus, they reasoned, didn't seem like a terrible exchange for a free education" (56). Goddard herself insisted to friends who worried or objected to her chosen profession that she "would be helping people. I'll be doing peacekeeping in a place where I'm needed" (60). Goddard's description of peacekeeping highlights the nurturing and caring aspects of such service, commonly understood as feminine capacities.<sup>120</sup> In these instances, peacekeeping is not

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<sup>120</sup> A.L. McCready notes that scholars "have long observed that peacekeeping narratives serve to obscure the militaristic nature of peacekeeping engagements, contribute to militarized masculinity and promote an unrealistic idea of national innocence, benevolence, and moral authority" (12).

simply promoted as a worthy type of military service; it is also understood to be significantly safer, and thus more conventionally feminine, than serving during war.

For Goddard, the Canadian Forces' hands-on, community approach of the late 1990s had obvious appeal. Goddard's assertion as a high school student and young cadet that she wanted to be a "peacekeeper" is echoed by Urquhart's Mandy, who insists to Liz that she wants to wear the blue beret for Canada (*Sanctuary Line* 82). Liz immediately sees her cousin's career choice in domestic, familial terms, extrapolating that Mandy's interest was in resolving her family's problems, to locate her missing father, and bring her family back together. Urquhart writes, "All the time Mandy was talking I envisioned her in a long line of volunteers, walking through the fields of her farm, beating back thick grass, searching for and eventually rescuing her father. Then I imagined her making peace between her father and mother, though exactly how she would achieve the latter, or the former for that matter, never came fully into focus" (84). This search-and-rescue scenario Liz imagines is not so different from the types of domestic deployment the CF engaged in in the late 1990s, most notably to Manitoba to assist communities in the wake of the Red River Flood of 1997 and the ice storm that impacted eastern Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick in 1998.<sup>121</sup> Liz expresses a lack of familiarity with the military and

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<sup>121</sup> The Canadian Forces was negatively defined by the Somalia Affair during the early to mid-1990s, but domestic deployment to provide disaster relief in the late 1990s helped to change the negative impression of the CF held by the Canadian public. Future Chief of Defense Staff General Rick Hillier was the ground leader in Manitoba in 1997, and credits the deployment with changing public perception about the role of the military in Canada. Hillier writes,

The Winnipeg flood became the turning point. The flood was a dark cloud, causing massive property damage, turmoil, insecurity and fear in so many people's lives, but there was a silver lining: people bonded together and conquered adversity. The men and women of the Canadian Forces were a fundamental part of that experience. Canadians concluded that, hey, this is a pretty good organization and they've got some pretty great people out there. Although it took a while to see, that flood was the start of change for the CF. (182)

with military deployment of the Canadian Forces beyond the iconic imagery of “peacekeeping”. Liz states, “But then her future role in the military never came into focus either, at least for me. Beyond the echo of my uncle’s own short-lived experience at Maritime Command in Halifax, there was nothing solidly military anywhere near me – or near her” (84). Her failure to understand Mandy’s career choice is a failure of imagination and articulates the distance between Canadians and their armed forces that began to be bridged in the late 1990s.

At a time when the Afghanistan mission was just beginning to be distinguished from earlier peacekeeping missions, both in terms of Canadian casualties and because of an “active combat” military engagement that required Canadian soldiers to use force, the characterization of Goddard as a thoughtful protector and committed peacekeeper in the Canadian media had the additional effect of drawing support to Canada’s mission in Afghanistan. As political scientist Claire Turenne Sjolander and feminist theorist Kathryn Trevenen observe, “Here, gender is critical – both Goddard’s and that of those Canada is protecting in Afghanistan. By personalizing Goddard – providing background about her

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The Canadian Forces’ deployment in January 1998 because of a devastating ice storm in eastern Canada provided the military a chance to build on the skills and relationships forged the previous spring. On stage at a relief concert once the deployment was over, Hillier, the brigade commander, addressed the crowd and reinforced the impression that the Canadian Forces provides aid in the service of others: “I told them that what the Canadian Forces had done for them during the ice storm was all part of our mission and the whole reason we were in uniform in the first place: to look after Canadians when things go wrong” (204). General Hillier would later proclaim a mandate for the Canadian Forces that was significantly different in tone from the one he expressed in 1998: “I had gone on to say that the Canadian Forces are not the Public Service of Canada, and our job is to kill people. I admit to being stunned by the reaction of some segments of our society to that idea, which seemed pretty obvious to me. They said that killing isn’t our job, but I asked myself, why do they think we spend millions, even billions of dollars a year on equipping, training and building air, land and sea combat units?” (331). It is clear that General Hillier emphasized the CF’s more benevolent “helping” side only when such emphasis was required to build trust between the Canadian (and later Afghan) public and the military.

childhood, her articulate defence of the mission, and her exemplary leadership – the media focuses our attention away from other, broader questions and anxieties, and constructs the Canadian state as a benign and laudable international protector” (136-137). Playing upon traditional western gender roles in which men fight and protect in the public sphere while women are positioned as the nurturing peacekeepers who provide the “moral anchor for their societies,” solidifies the presentation of the “Canadian state as protector” (136, 127).<sup>122</sup> Given peacekeeping’s status in Canada at the time, emphasizing Goddard’s commitment to peacekeeping serves to incorporate her into normalized deployment of the Canadian Forces. Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated on the occasion of her death that ““Capt. Goddard died while helping to bring peace, stability and democracy to a troubled region of the world”” (“Canadian woman 16<sup>th</sup>”). The death of Captain Goddard provided an opportunity for those invested in Canada’s Afghan mission (the federal government, the Canadian Forces, and much of the nation’s mainstream media) to present Goddard as both “every soldier” and a feminine “peacekeeper” with support for a new kind of Canadian military mission as the predictable result.

Goddard’s commitment to peacekeeping was promoted after her death to resolve the potentially destabilizing impact her gender might have on the way Canadians

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<sup>122</sup> Sjolander and Trevenen argue that both the gendered representations of Goddard in the Canadian media after her death as “gender-neutral soldier” and “extraordinary peacekeeper” facilitate the foundation of the “state as ‘protector’” (126). Traditionally this gendered hierarchy presents the state as masculine; “confers upon it a responsibility to a gendered hierarchy within the private sphere, just as the husband/father, responding to a gendered hierarchy within the private sphere, has a responsibility to protect. As defender of Afghan civilians (notably women and children), and as combat soldiers (who are really peacekeepers), the image of the Canadian state as protector becomes one against which political opposition becomes difficult to articulate. As protector, the Canadian state’s participation in the Afghanistan mission is both ‘natural’ (consistent with gender hierarchies) and an unquestioned good – conferring legitimacy upon the entire mission in the same breath” (127).

remember and commemorate war and to support current Canadian Forces missions. As Sjolander and Trevenen state, “The print media (often aided by military spokespeople) constructed representations of Goddard as both the ‘gender-neutral soldier’ and the ‘(extra)ordinary peacekeeping soldier.’ We argue that these representations speak fundamentally to Canadians’ conceptions of appropriate gender roles, the Canadian military, and Canadian foreign policy toward the war in Afghanistan” (127). Some of the media reports and newspaper columns reporting Goddard’s death emphasized her as proof of contemporary gender equality; however, many chose to highlight her devotion to peace and democracy, her belief in peacekeeping, and her support of military action when required. *The Vancouver Sun* published on May 19, 2006, that Goddard “died doing a job she loved on a mission she believed was helping improve the world” (“Soldier died”). Yet, despite claims that her death illustrated a victory for equality in the Canadian Forces, several newspaper reports of Captain Goddard’s death called attention to more traditionally feminine characteristics. Murray Brewster, a journalist writing for the *Winnipeg Free Press*, highlighted Goddard’s nurturing personality, noting that she “took a protective attitude towards the dozen or so troops under her command,” and that she “often fussed over her troops, keeping them occupied with maintenance duties, training films and games at an indoor volleyball court” (“Canadian woman”). Here, words like “protective” and “fussed” suggest Goddard’s interactions with her troops had a mothering quality. Others noted her gender to minimize its significance. An article in Montreal’s *The Gazette* two days after Goddard’s death quoted Canada’s first female combat soldier, Heather Erxleben, who stated that Canadians should not focus on the fact that Goddard was female, because it brings ““this whole gender thing back into it again””

(“Goddard proved”). The same article goes on to state that “a soldier is a soldier,” that Goddard was “just like the male soldiers” and that Goddard is representative of the equality of Canadian society: “But it matters that Canada has fielded female combat soldiers. These women are the result, the very heart and soul, of the sometimes difficult effort in this country to make sure that whatever Canadian women aspire to, no artificial barriers would bar their way” (“Goddard proved”). Other papers quoted family members in order to illustrate Captain Goddard’s support for the ongoing Afghanistan mission and her desire to be treated as just another soldier. In the *Ottawa Citizen*, for instance, Goddard’s husband Jason Beam was quoted confirming that “his wife’s death had not changed his support for Canada’s role in Afghanistan” (McGinnis).<sup>123</sup> Collectively, these remarks both highlight Captain Goddard’s gender as a victory for equality and attempt to deemphasize gender from the reporting about her death to affirm the skill of an officer who was just like any other soldier, avoiding contentious discussions about gender and sexism in the Canadian Forces.

The leadership skills Goddard demonstrated in Afghanistan, especially her concern for those under her command, were characterized as nurturing, mothering instincts in the days after her death but yet were not attributed to her success as a captain and leader of troops in battle. Such omissions reveal the preference for masculinity in the military. As Sjolander and Trevenen write,

Nowhere do the authors of these articles reflect that perhaps it was in part her more ‘feminine’ qualities that made her so good at her job. The

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<sup>123</sup> Similarly, journalist Jim Farrell of the *Winnipeg Free Press* followed the lead of CF press officers by noting that “Only recently have women been allowed to serve in battle, but that doesn’t matter” echoing statements by public affairs officer Maj. Marc Theriault (Farrell).

assumption throughout is that if she was a good soldier, it was because she was not defined by her gender, because she was not acting like a woman. Nowhere in the gendered representations of the military, or war, and of soldiers is there an acknowledgement that the so-called feminine traits of nurturing, compassion, creativity, and emotional openness might be the skills that soldiers need (136)

CTV reporter Lisa LaFlamme spent eight days with Captain Goddard and her Forward Observation crew in theatre. When asked by LaFlamme what her biggest fear was, Goddard responded in a way that expresses both the nurturing aspects Canadian media highlighted after her death as well as her assertion that her concerns were typical of any leader:

I said that it is that I will make a poor decision that will hurt someone unnecessarily. That is my biggest fear, and something that I think every leader struggles with all the time. All I can do is try my best and hope that I will do the best possible thing for my guys. I don't think that was really moving enough for her, which was kind of ironic because it is almost all-consuming to me. (Goddard "Letters" 63).

Here, Goddard suggests characteristics usually articulated as feminine are actually qualities that make a good leader. Her "all-consuming" concern for her men is not unique, but does correspond to traits usually associated with femininity.

Urquhart's Mandy exhibits the same leadership characteristics illustrated by Captain Goddard. According to Liz, Mandy developed bonds with her soldiers because of her communication skills and nurturing concern. Urquhart writes,

I am certain she could talk to a homesick boy from Hamilton, or a lovesick boy from Nanaimo, or a young married man from Quebec frantic with worry about a sick child with full empathy. And, I imagine, all of the soldiers would respect her military judgement as well, her perceptiveness, the way she could cut through the complicated intricacies of military language right to the core of a particular manoeuvre, the choreography of any planned diplomacy or violence, if it came to that. That they would talk to her about the chaotic events of the day before and ask her to tell them her thoughts about what she felt might unfold next. She would be a comfort to these men, many of whom were frightened or angry about things they barely understood. She brought a focused energy with her into any room and a sense that each man's troubles were as important to her as they were to them. (*Sanctuary Line* 212)

Urquhart's description is constructed in gendered terms as well. Mandy's demonstrated leadership skills are traditionally classified as feminine; she is nurturing and compassionate in this passage. Unlike many members of the mainstream Canadian press who covered Captain Goddard's death, Urquhart does not avoid the subject of Mandy's gender, nor does she suggest she exists in a post-gender military. Instead, Urquhart emphasizes Mandy's gender through Liz's recollections and assumptions. Urquhart does not directly depict Mandy's experiences in Afghanistan; instead, Liz imagines what Mandy's experiences at the front would have been like. This creates a framing narrative of sorts, in which Mandy's gender is highlighted rather than obscured.



The depiction of Goddard's military role and her success as a type of gender-neutral soldier rest on longstanding assumptions about gender. While many military acquaintances, family members, and media representations suggest that Goddard was "just like the men" ("Goddard proved"), what such statements actually confirm is that masculinity is still the accepted framework in the Canadian military. As Sjolander and Trevenen suggest, these examples of gender-neutrality presume masculinity as typical and normative and help maintain conceptions of the nation as a "protector" because women have typically been barred from "state-sanctioned roles of protector or defender" (130).<sup>124</sup> They indicate that highlighting Goddard's gender challenges patriarchal assumptions about the state and has the potential to disrupt the discriminatory structures of Canadian society. Sjolander and Trevenen suggest that women in the military have the capacity to disturb the patriarchal foundations of the nation, "unless her (female) gender is erased" (130). The result is that by "constructing Goddard as having no gender, the

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<sup>124</sup> Consider Sjolander and Trevenen's observation in relation to two other recent productions of Canada's combat role in Afghanistan: *Afghanada* and *Hyena Road*. Paul Gross's 2015 film *Hyena Road* is a clear example of men (and by extension the Canadian state) fulfilling the role of protector. In the film, an all-male team of CF snipers, lead by Warrant Officer Ryan Sanders (played by Rossif Sutherland) work with an intelligence officer, Captain Pete Mitchell (played by Gross) to, among other things, secure the safety of Afghan girls kidnapped with the intention of being sold into sexual slavery by a local, corrupt militant in the pay of the CIA. The film clearly positions Canadian soldiers as good "protectors" in contrast to local, corrupt, misogynistic men. The few CF women we see in the movie offer operational support from the relative safety of KAF. Captain Jennifer Bowman (played by Christina Horne) does not serve "outside the wire" as Goddard did, and is part of a secondary romantic plot with Ryan. When she tells Ryan that she is pregnant, he responds with excitement and his interest in formalizing their familial situation. Jennifer is effectively domesticized, then, both away from the combat of war and sufficiently maternal. In the CBC radio drama *Afghanada*, Sergeant Pat "Coach" Kinsella leads her small, all-male forward operating party (FOP) of Canadian Forces soldiers on operations "outside the wire". From her nicknames which conceal her gender, to her initial "safe" command approach, contrasting with the daring leadership of the FOP's original leader, Sergeant Daniel Quinn, who is compared to Mark Messier, a well-known hockey leader ("Episode 1"), to her uniform disguising her gender ("Episode 2"), Pat's gender, as it relates to her career in the military, is minimized. On multiple occasions, she too discusses her desire to obscure her gender. Pat states, "I have spent years doing everything in my power to make my superiors and my fellow NCOs, and most of all my men forget that I am female. Because I'm a soldier first" ("Episode 25"). Pat assumes the role of "protector" to Afghan civilians and to the men under her command, but must actively minimize her gender to do so.

message being sent is a reassuring one. If the Canadian military – an institution frequently criticized for its sexist, racist, and homophobic discrimination – is gender-blind, then Canadians can stop worrying about gender-based oppression or structural discrimination” (130). This “gender-neutrality” also has implications for contemporary martial commemoration. Depicting Goddard as a genderless soldier allows for her memory to be effortlessly merged with longstanding commemorative traditions like the Unknown Soldier but also permits a more generalized veneration as well. Despite being recognized as the Canadian military’s first woman to die in direct combat, depictions of Goddard often minimized her gender, allowing the focus on masculinity in martial commemoration in Canada to be maintained.

Unlike the newspaper reports, Captain Goddard’s emails from the front suggest an officer who was highly aware of gender and her role in the Canadian military. Goddard’s personal correspondence illustrates both the difficulties of being a woman in the military and acknowledge the benefits when her gender is obscured. Her emails home consider the dangers Western women faced in Afghanistan, specifically the dangers female soldiers are confronted with at Kandahar Airfield (KAF), the primary base for Western forces in Kandahar province during their time deployed in Afghanistan. Her uniform and helmet masked her facial features and obscured her identity; because of this, most of the local inhabitants she passed were unaware she was a woman. Goddard writes, “I don’t think they realize that I am a woman when we drive by, which is fine by me” (“Letters” 54). However, once locals realized she was a woman, she became noteworthy, according to Fortney: “But once she was spotted, she became the main attraction. ‘Woman! Woman!’ cried villagers of all ages as they pointed in her direction. Youngsters took turns running

up and poking her” (201). In Fortney words, when Captain Goddard would attend shuras,<sup>125</sup> conversation quickly turned to her marital status and ability to cook (201). These comments indicate that rather than operating in a genderless world where all that mattered was how good a “soldier” she was, Goddard worked in an environment in which it was easier for her to do her job by obscuring her gender. These statements also suggest an attempt to distance the Canadian Forces, and by extrapolation the nation they represent, from the attitudes of the local population, elevating an apparently genderless, but still preferably masculine, Canadian society as the ideal.

Urquhart is not the first Canadian artist to draw inspiration from Goddard’s life and death,<sup>126</sup> but her depiction of the personal life, and death, of a female officer in the Canadian Forces is neither mere celebration of Goddard’s life, nor solely commemoration of her death. Mandy challenges the gendered hierarchy in which Goddard’s legacy is circumscribed while Urquhart highlights this inequity by paralleling Mandy’s experiences with domestic examples of injustice – the difficulties faced by migrant workers in Canada – on which a conception of the nation as fostering relations of peace and equity rest. The unnoticed injustices faced by migrant workers are paralleled by Urquhart’s description of the war in Afghanistan. Mandy and Liz’s home on the shores of Lake Erie is populated by migrant workers, and while Urquhart’s treatment of the

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<sup>125</sup> A shura or shirra is a community meeting comprised of elders. Canadian Forces members frequently attended shuras as part of reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

<sup>126</sup> In 2010 Canadian rock band The Trews released a song titled “Highway of Heroes” written in collaboration with veteran Canadian rocker Gordie Johnson. The tune was inspired by Goddard’s death, who lived for a time in the hometown of the band (Peat). Proceeds from iTunes sales went to the Hero Fund, a group which provides scholarships for military families (Peat). Canadian country music star Michelle Wright was at KAF entertaining Canadian troops the day Captain Goddard died (Wright). Inspired by the experience, Wright wrote a poem in honour of Captain Goddard, performed it a benefit for Light Up Papua New Guinea, a Nichola Goddard Foundation project, and presented her parents with the original manuscript (Wright).

migrant workers is secondary, her focus on the home front shows violence and oppression occurring domestically, countering the suggestion of the nation as protector and expanding the list of who is grievable.

### **Grievability, Obituaries, and Martial Commemoration**

In *Sanctuary Line* Liz struggles to deal with the deaths of Teo and Mandy. When Stanley and Dolores' affair is made clear in the text, Teo's emotional reaction to Liz's aunt Sadie violently confronting the lovers is to ask Liz for her mother's car keys. Angry, he drives down the road Sanctuary Line, dying after he crashes through the cement overpass of the highway (Urquhart, *Sanctuary Line* 238). Teo's tragedy is immediately dismissed by authorities, who treat the incident as a car theft. The police officer who ferries Dolores and her brother back to the farm after they have identified Teo's body attempts to remain positive in the face of tragedy. In doing so, his comments to the Butler family dehumanize and erase Teo:

“At least there is something to be grateful for,” the officer eventually said, putting his cap on his head and adjusting the angle of the visor.

“Really?” my uncle said, still not turning from the window. “And what's that?” These may very well have been the first words he had spoken all day.

“At least no one was killed.” The officer had his hand in the lower pocket of his jacket. I could hear the jingling of his keys. “An hour later and there would have been a number of cars on that highway. It could have been a disaster.”

“But someone *was* killed,” my mother said, distress on her face and in her tone.

“I mean besides the car thief.” The officer had the doorknob in his hand. “It could have been a disaster,” he repeated. (244)

Here, Teo is shown to be unknowable both because of his membership in the group of migrant workers and his status as an unacknowledged member of the Butler family. His unremarked death on a public road stands in sharp relief with the ritual tributes for soldiers on the Highway of Heroes. This final injustice is consistent with the Butlers’ treatment of the migrant workers throughout the novel. Mandy’s mother arranges the plane tickets for Dolores and Teo’s body’s final journey, the first time they “would be departing from the regular airport” (243). This is noteworthy because the traditional route into the country required the workers to be “flown to the cargo terminal at the Toronto airport” (20), a route that suggests their designation as goods, rather than human beings. The workers lived for the summer in “bunkhouses” built by Uncle Stanley who, “in spite of the low wages he paid,” was “kind without being patronizing to his employees” (20). Liz adds an element of doubt, when she says “Or so we were told, perhaps by him. And it seemed, at the time, to be so” (20). Stanley, we learn, is literally patronizing in his role as Teo’s biological father. Tellingly, the migrant labourers are often an afterthought in the text, part of the farm’s orchard scenery during Liz and Mandy’s teen years of the 1980s and not seen as central to the narrative in Liz’s memories of the Butler family’s actions and conversation. It is only in retelling her family’s history to Vahil, a character Liz initially others and ostracizes in her re-telling, that Liz questions the way the migrant

labourers were marginalized by the Butler family and how that, in effect, made Teo ungrievable.

Prior to *Frames of War*, Judith Butler explored the thematic concern of grievability in “Violence, Mourning, Politics” (2003). Here, Butler discusses what she refers to as a “hierarchy of grief” in which subjects’ “lives are supported and maintained differently” (“Violence” 20); some lives are recognized and mourned, and others do not qualify for grief. Their very roles as human is in question. It is this sort of societal bias that Liz grapples with in *Sanctuary Line*. For Butler, the obituary proves to be a revealing example of this hierarchy because it elevates certain lives to a level of public importance: “We have seen it already, in the genre of the obituary, where lives are quickly tidied up and summarized, humanized, usually married, or on the way to be, heterosexual, happy, monogamous” (20-21). What Butler describes here are individuals who fit existing societal norms in countries such as the United States and, I would suggest, Canada. Butler focuses her discussion on individuals and groups of people who have been denied this type of public mourning and who do not fit specific “cultural frames”: “To what extent,” she asks “have Arab peoples, predominantly practitioners of Islam, fallen outside the ‘human’ as it has been naturalized in its ‘Western’ mold by the contemporary workings of humanism?” (21). For Butler, this list also contains sexual and gender minorities who face specific types of violence based on their identity (21). She acknowledges that there are no obituaries for the casualties of American military violence and the same holds true for those Afghans who died as a result of Canadian military action in Afghanistan (22). Ultimately, for Butler, “the obituary functions as the instrument by which grievability is publicly distributed. It is the means by which a life

becomes, or fails to become, a publicly grievable life, an icon for national self-recognition, the means by which a life becomes noteworthy. As a result, we have to think the obituary as an act of nation building” (23). Here the obituary is a synecdoche for the “publicly grievable” life, providing the boundaries for who garners the attention of the media and nation, in death.

These observations resonate with the treatment of Canadian Forces casualties during the War in Afghanistan. The obituaries for Canada’s military casualties since 2002 have taken a variety of forms; while the families of many Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan no doubt paid for personal obituaries in local and national newspapers, Canadian media provided an assortment of obituaries for soldiers. More traditional death notices ran in major Canadian newspapers, in television news coverage, as well as in prominent online news agencies, such as the CBC. The highly visible obituaries are among the most prominent forms of war memorialization in Canada in the past two decades. They offer immediacy (typically written in the hours and days after a soldier died), scope (providing details of a soldier’s life), and reach (available to Canadians across the country and can be accessed months and years later). The most conspicuous obituaries for Canadian soldiers who have died since the turn of the century are the declarations on the weekly Saturday night first intermission spot *Hockey Night in Canada (HNIC)* on the CBC.<sup>127</sup> When a Canadian soldier died, Don Cherry, the program’s outspoken commentator, would provide a few details about their life and show their pictures while often being visibly upset. These segments did the work of traditional print

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<sup>127</sup> Since October 2014, *Hockey Night in Canada* has aired on the CBC but creative control lies with Sportsnet.

obituaries, but magnified the reach of each notice. The *HNIC* obituaries continued even after the Canadian Forces left Afghanistan in 2014; that same year, the October killings of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent in Montreal and Corporal Nathan Cirillo at the National War Memorial in Ottawa two days later were mentioned by Cherry the following Saturday night on *HNIC*. Cherry made a plea for Canadians to support the Canadian Forces Morale & Welfare Services with donations in honour of Vincent and Cirillo (Harrison). Cherry's insistence resembles conventional obituaries that urge mourners to donate to a charity with personal significance to the dead individuals. Cherry's emotional connection to his subject was clear, as his fellow military booster and historian Jack Granatstein writes, Cherry "spoke movingly about each and every soldier killed in action" (*Canada's Army* 435). The frequency of these obituaries and Cherry's personal, emotional connection to them, cemented this type of commemoration as part of *HNIC*'s conventions.

Not all Canadian media members viewed Cherry's *HNIC* obituaries sympathetically. As *The Globe and Mail*'s media critic John Doyle writes, "CBC Television, a public broadcaster, allows Cherry to do what he does and allows *HNIC* to stray from broadcast and analysis of NHL hockey to engage in a passionate love affair with the military and all its doings.... Zip your lips if you think the CBC is diminished or the brave and hard-working military are demeaned by engagement in this theatricality of patriotism" (Doyle). Cherry's *HNIC* segments about Canadian Forces deaths are an example of "the obituary as an act of nation building" to put it in Butler's terms ("Violence" 23). These segments connected nationally popular symbols like hockey with Canada's military through what reporter Susan Delacourt calls Cherry's "brand of



combat patriotism” (Delacourt). Despite his controversial personality, his “immense popularity testifies to the prominent position that borderline violence continues to occupy in the game, and Cherry himself remains a complex and polarizing figure who is something of a litmus test on attitudes toward violence and masculinity” (Buma 156). The *HNIC* obituaries’ nation-building function relies on a type of masculine violence that is rooted in the physical superiority of the hockey player and the soldier and connects Canadian military engagements with the accepted national symbolism of hockey.<sup>128</sup>

In contrast, what sets the extended narrative obituary Liz constructs in *Sanctuary Line* apart from the tradition Judith Butler discusses is that Liz’s obituary is not employed as an aspect of nation-building. Rather, Liz attempts to construct a literary obituary for Mandy, using her cousin’s childhood library and correspondence while serving in the Canadian Forces, to create a valedictory narrative that tells Mandy’s life story more fully, and in the process registers both Teo’s life and death as knowable and grievable.

### **Captain Nichola Goddard, Mandy Butler and Literary Understanding**

The similarities between the fictional Mandy and the real-life Nichola Goddard extend beyond their military careers and notably, to their love of literature. As Liz narrates their life story and by having her character explore Mandy’s library, a literary understanding that counters official commemorative practices is revealed. Growing up, Urquhart’s character is a voracious reader, an imaginative and intelligent young woman

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<sup>128</sup> As literary scholar Michael Buma writes of Don Cherry, “By means of frequent sermonizing to young players about developing strengths, team focus, and fair play, as well as through his championing of ‘good Canadian boys’ (a category which he variably applies to hockey players, soldiers, and working-class labourers), Cherry propounds a version of national manhood in which adolescent development, civic responsibility, and personal strength become inextricably linked” (157).

who dreams of becoming a “peacekeeper”. Urquhart stresses Mandy’s love of literature as a child early in the novel, an interest that expands the future soldier’s perspective in ways beyond her childhood experiences spent on a small Lake Erie farm:

Mandy was almost two years younger than me, but it had never really seemed that way. This may have been because, when she wasn’t cavorting around the farm with the rest of us, she was reading, increasing her knowledge of experiences outside of the world of this place and its ancestral narratives. She consumed all of Dickens, I remember, and could speak about orphanages and evil step-parents with authority. By the time she was twelve, Walter Scott had grabbed her imagination and with him came wars and love affairs. This addiction to books was something she came by honestly, an inheritance from several of the great-greats, but I’ll tell you more about that later. Robert Louis Stevenson was her introduction to poetry, which had happened at a very early age. (*Sanctuary* Line 27)

Mandy’s reading lists foreshadow the course of her adult life. Liz’s narration depicts her cousin’s military career and Mandy’s love affair with Vahil, a fellow Canadian Forces’ soldier and her superior officer, in romanticized Scott-like terms. Liz also voices her disapproval of Vahil, who she initially refers to as “Mister Military” because Mandy has been secretive about her romantic relationship with her superior officer. However, the reader is left to wonder if Mandy’s childhood romantic notions of war and love meshed with her time spent at the front as an adult.

While Captain Goddard attended the Royal Military College of Canada, Fortney's biography and Goddard's own substantial correspondence portray a cadet and soldier with literary proclivities. An avid reader throughout her life, she became an English major during her second year at RMC. In discussions with English professor Michael Hurley, Goddard talked of her love for J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) and Margaret Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970) (Fortney 86). According to her professor, Goddard was fascinated with Atwood's concept of requiring "wolf's eyes to see the truth" (86). Her choice of English as a major was an unconventional decision at the school and it separated Goddard from her peers: "Choosing an education in the arts might have been seen as rebellious in an academic institution that in its first sixty years focused almost solely on educating future officers in the fields of engineering and the sciences. Even at the start of the twenty-first century, nearly half of RMC's graduates would come from the engineering discipline" (87). Yet Goddard reportedly relished her schooling and her English studies. Goddard's professor for Renaissance Studies, Sylvia Berg, was impressed with the cadet's reasons for changing her studies from medicine to literature. Goddard informed Berg that "In history we study wars and famine; in English literature we learn why people acted the way they did in times of war, why they made the decisions they did and how they felt in the process. In my summers I learn how to be an officer, to lead people in times of war and peace. Studying literature allows me to learn from those who have gone before me, from both their positive and negative experiences" (91). For Goddard, literature allowed her to identify and mediate contrasting ideas. Berg was further impressed by her student's articulation of the relevance of literature for a future officer:

“One day we may have the opportunity to serve overseas; it is imperative we learn from the mistakes and experiences of those who have gone before us. Without English literature and the works of poets such as Owen and Hardy, we would not be able to appreciate how immense the sacrifice made by soldiers in the past has been. . . . Finally, as young officers, it is vital that we be able to express ourselves both orally and in writing. The greater the clarity and conciseness of our words, the faster our troops will understand our orders and our superiors will approve requests.” (92)

While it was unconventional, for Goddard the synthesis between the literary world and her military career was clear, especially in the works of First World War poets like Wilfred Owen. Fortney writes, “Nichola soaked up the assigned literature, and then some: she burned her way through such Canadian literary greats as Margaret Laurence, Michael Ondaatje and Alice Munro. She knew that pursuing an English degree at a military school was a bit out of the ordinary, but over time she realized that this, and not medical school, was what she really wanted” (87).<sup>129</sup> In contrast with Urquhart’s fictional character’s reading list which often focuses on domestic and familial concerns, Captain Goddard’s reading of canonical texts from English-Canadian literature suggests literature

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<sup>129</sup> This synthesis continued after graduation when Goddard had embarked on her career as an officer in the Canadian Forces. Deployment to Afghanistan would disrupt any plans for a graduate degree in literature, but her English training was something that permeated her work life regardless. Major Anne Reiffenstein, Goddard’s commander when the captain was posted to CFB Shilo in Manitoba, believed the young officer had the potential to become a senior officer: major, lieutenant-colonel or even higher in the Canadian Forces (Fortney 128). Reiffenstein also saw evidence of Goddard’s literary training in her military work. Fortney writes, “When she [Goddard] dropped off a beautifully written, three-page report on the major’s desk, Reiffenstein burst her literary bubble. ‘Number one, no one in the army reads past the first page,’ she told Nich. ‘You’re using too many big words – it’s an exercise instruction not Hemingway’” (130).

provides narratives to understand the nation that are relevant for the soldier, especially soldiers engaged in “nation-building” in a foreign country.

Goddard’s most significant literary achievement was her participation in the longstanding tradition of battlefield writing, undertaken during her tour in Afghanistan in the winter and spring of 2006. A practice that was common during the First World War,<sup>130</sup> Goddard’s letters illustrate a wide range of emotions and impressions of life on the battlefield. While Goddard presented a strong front in theatre, she spent much time at Canada House working at one of the ten computers writing “carefully edited mass letters” and more personal notes to her parents, sisters, and husband Jay (190-191). Her writings were used extensively in the Fortney biography *Sunray* (2010) and make up a chapter in *Outside the Wire: the War in Afghanistan in the Words of its Participants* (2007), edited by Kevin Patterson and Jane Warren. Not merely a record of her daily activities and the kinds of fears that a reader might expect from someone in a war zone, her emails depict a soldier with a broad view of the world and wide-ranging personal experience. For example, able to look past the heat, she saw the beauty of the Afghan landscape. Nichola Goddard writes,

I can see why people dream about visiting here. It is stunningly beautiful in areas. I got to see the Red Desert to the south – it was amazing. I don’t think any description or photo could do it justice. It was silhouetted on both sides by the mountains to the East, and the plains to the West. It stretched South for as far as we could see. It wasn’t flat, like the deserts in

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<sup>130</sup> The American Civil War was the first conflict in which a considerable number of common soldiers were literate (Fussell 195). Fussell notes that, by the time of the First World War, the literary understanding of common soldiers had dramatically increased: “By 1914, It was possible for soldiers to be not merely literate, but vigorously literary” (195).

the movies. Instead, it was rolling and a blood colour. The sand was so fine, you couldn't even pick it up. ("Letters Home" 54)

Here she evokes the sublime; the desert is "stunning" and "awesome" and its sand is an undulated "blood colour". Goddard's personal emails illustrate a young officer grappling with the philosophical reality of the danger of her work in a literary way.

She wrote of attending ramp ceremonies, a commemorative experience that would become synonymous with losses related to Canada's participation in the war in Afghanistan. Her writing on the subject, though, considers the different impact of the Canadian ceremony as compared with those held for Canada's allies. She writes,

Early this week, I attended my second American Ramp ceremony. The service was virtually identical to the first one, except that it was emotionally much harder because the feeling that this wasn't going to be the last one was unavoidable. I'm not sure exactly how many American soldiers have been killed in theatre (between here and Iraq), but I know that it is in the mid-2500s...it was difficult to accept how matter of fact they were about the whole thing. It was also harder because this time it dealt with a normal soldier, just like us. The time before it had been for American special forces guys – it is easy to think of them as different from 'us.' But this soldier was just like any one of us, and it was horrible. I was in the first row behind the American troops that were lining the route, and I could hear a couple of them crying. That was really tough.

Two days later, we attended the first Canadian Ramp ceremony held in theatre. This time, it was a soldier that I had lived near and worked with in

Shilo. This time, I knew the pallbearers, and I was one of the soldiers lining the route. Our service was longer than the American one, but I found it very moving. The casket was driven onto the parade, and soldiers from his section acted as pallbearers. The four Canadian Padres serving in theatre said a brief blessing and short prayer, and the procession moved onto the plane. I ask that your thoughts and prayers go with the young man's family. He is survived by his wife and two young daughters. (55-56)

Goddard's articulation of risk and loss not only conveys the danger of war, but also the commemorative difference between Americans – whose wars in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2001 resulted in much higher casualties and familiarity with war – and Canadians gathering for the first (of many) ramp ceremonies. Goddard's proximity – both physical and emotional – to the Canadian soldiers impacted by the second ramp ceremony alters her response to the moment. For Goddard, the Canadian casualties are more grievable on a personal level, because she has greater personal knowledge of the fallen, which is why she asks her readers for "thoughts and prayers" for the Canadian soldier and acknowledges the loss his young family experiences.

Yet, despite her acknowledgement of the dangers of serving outside the wire in Afghanistan, Captain Goddard was also an officer who continually resolved the philosophical inconsistencies between war and peacekeeping, through her steadfast belief in the mission and frequent articulation of the Canadian and Afghan cause. Knowing that many friends and relatives she wrote to were skeptical of the NATO mission, Goddard

often expressed what she believed Canada's role in Afghanistan was and her own place in that deployment. She states,

I don't want you to feel that I am depressed or defeated. Far from it. The longer that we are in theatre and the more that we actually interact with the Afghan people, the more I feel that we are serving a purpose here.... We are here to assist that legitimate and democratically elected government. It is easy to poke holes in that statement and say that the system is corrupt and that violence and poverty make people easy targets for our own agendas. Those statements are true; however, we have to start somewhere. With the best of intentions, we have started in Afghanistan. There is nowhere else that I'd rather be right now. (56-57)

Goddard's topics are wide-ranging; from the Afghanistan landscape, the conditions at KAF, to patrolling outside the wire, the reasons behind the deployment, ramp ceremonies, Tim Horton's, family, the difficulties of being a woman on deployment, shirras, food, and the future. Her emails from Afghanistan address a wide range of issues Canadian soldiers confronted during their time on the front lines. In her attempt to understand Goddard's career path, Fortney concludes "the honours English graduate left us with perhaps the most detailed account – her observations, philosophical arguments and sometimes tangled emotions – of the Canadian soldier's experience in this twenty-first-century war" (13).

*Sanctuary Line* contains no such account of Mandy's experience. Through Mandy's library Liz tries to understand who her cousin was and who she became. Confused and hurt by Mandy's reluctance to share more details about her secret love



affair with another officer, Liz is compelled to read the books Mandy left behind at her childhood home, where Liz now lives, to understand her now-deceased cousin:

As I've said, now that she is gone, I've begun to read the books Mandy left behind in this house. I wish I had done this earlier; I would have known her and understood her better if I had. I might have become acquainted with the hesitancy, the frailty of spirit that attends certain kinds of love, as well as the baffling tenacity of a passion as difficult as Mandy's appeared to be. If I had read just one book of love poetry, her relationship could possibly have come into focus for me, and maybe I would have seen that certain lovers need to commemorate the knotted feelings, the emotional confusion. (Urquhart, *Sanctuary* Line 51)

Connecting with Mandy's literature also allows Liz, to her surprise, to connect with her long-lost Uncle Stanley. She reads Mandy's copies of Robert Frost's poetry and comes to better understand her family, recognizing the recently deceased, Mandy, and the still missing, Uncle Stanley. Liz states,

But there is a good deal of poetry as well, a world I have ignored until now, though I admit that Mandy tried now and then to make me enter it. I began by reading Robert Frost, as she said I should, because as she pointed out he is both profound and easy to understand, especially for those of us who know farms or who come from farming stock. Most of Mandy's poetry books are paperbacks, but those written by Frost are hardcover editions, complete with dust jackets, and I was surprised to discover my uncle's name, rather than Mandy's, on the flyleaf of each

collection. But then I remembered how often literature surfaced in the tales of the great-greats, as if some of them had been afflicted by it in one way or another. (52)

In fact, much of Mandy's and Liz's childhood is narrativized by Uncle Stanley in Liz's retelling. Uncle Stanley's creation of the "great-greats," ancestors in only the most distant sense, loom large in the imaginations of Liz and her cousins during childhood. The narratives of ancestors who spent their time tilling the land or tending to lighthouses become ingrained in Liz well into adulthood (62-63). A similar storytelling tradition is also reflected by the Goddards. Captain Goddard's extensive correspondence, as well as her father's eulogy, illustrate a family that connected to each other, and to those around them, through storytelling traditions. At her funeral, her father Tim Goddard stated, "We are a family of story-tellers. We sit around the dining table for hours after a meal, with a bottle of wine or some coffee or whatever, and tell stories" ("Eulogy"). When Liz remembers and retells these stories, she keeps Uncle Stanley in the present-tense of the novel. For Liz, the family stories commemorate the lost and the dead more effectively than other typical acts of commemoration, such as funeral rites.

As Liz struggles to understand Mandy's decision to join the military, Mandy uses her literary knowledge to help Liz comprehend the decision. Recalling her cousin's lifelong love of literature, Liz mentions poetry in an attempt to force Mandy to realize the inherent contradictions between a literary world view and a military career (Urquhart, *Sanctuary Line* 84). Mandy, who spent her teenage years training in search-and-rescue, counters her cousin's assertion that a martial life and a literary life are mutually exclusive. Urquhart writes, "Search-and-rescue is perfect for poetry, she said with what I

now see as a surprising amount of insight. Think of it as a metaphor” (84). Mandy’s use of “search-and-rescue” as a metaphor for poetry is a good one, as it describes the search in literature for both meaning and resolution. Liz devours Mandy’s library because she is looking for meaning and resolution for the familial losses she has experienced. In fact, she ultimately “rescues” Teo from his ungrievability and asserts his familiarity through this process.

Uncle Stanley’s frequent recounting of Butler family narratives connects the family through death. The stories, termed “sagas” by the Butlers, convey a process of inheritance; ownership shifts from Uncle Stanley to Liz as Liz ages and subsequently tells these stories to Vahil (8). The family’s narrative history expands the children’s horizons. Liz tells of the “seminal Butler story”; a gothic tale of children swept to their deaths on Irish cliffs because of a storm. Urquhart writes, “And it was a story that, because of its references to steep rocks and ancient history and magnificent weather and strange architecture, we were unable to place in our own calm landscape” (101). However, the children also learn about death through stories, foreshadowing Teo’s and Mandy’s premature ends (101). Just as the responsibility for keeping and telling the family’s story falls to Liz, the deaths of Teo and Mandy, as well as the disappearance of Uncle Stanley, are added to the family’s narrative tradition. However, unlike Uncle Stanley’s familial “great-greats,” legendary characters from his narrative repertoire, Liz tells the stories of Teo and Mandy as a deeply personal commemorative gesture. Uncle Stanley, distanced from the lives and tragedies he relays by generations, undertakes a familial mythologizing when he tells stories. In contrast, when Liz tells Vahil about the

lives and deaths of Mandy and Teo, it is a commemorative act, without embellishment, meant to remember intimate loss.

Avid reading habits were also a Butler family tradition Mandy shared with her father and other ancestors, and this trait reveals the family narrative. A great-great Uncle Gerald had an appetite for literature in common with Mandy. Urquhart writes,

Gerald was a reader, and, had been encouraged in this activity by the Church of Ireland pastor on Valentia Island, a literary man who wrote poetry and had a sizeable library, which he was happy to share with any young person interested in books. The bloodlust and romance of Walter Scott's novels particularly appealed to Gerald – he was very fond of *The Heart of Midlothian* – as did the eccentricities of the characters invented by Charles Dickens. For a while in his teens he was drawn to Trollope, especially to those novels set in Ireland. But by the time he sailed, he was deeply affected by the tales of James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking series and by the – mostly imagined – Aboriginal and colonial world this series revealed to him, page by page. (141)

Engrossed in the romantic novels of the nineteenth-century, this Butler family ancestor spends his time tending a lighthouse and voraciously reading. Like Mandy, he is drawn to the works of Scott. Gerald continues his reading, working through Herman Melville's and Stephen Crane's catalogue, drawing similarities between the crew of the *Pequod* and the soldiers in *The Red Badge of Courage* (144-45). Gerald's recollection of Robert Louis Stevenson's poems for children "The Land of Counterpane" and "Bed in Summer" further connect him to Mandy, who scoured Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*

while growing up (144-45; 27). Yet for this ancestor, reading proves to be a fatal flaw. While tending light and reading a Stephen Crane story in *Scribner's*, Gerald becomes engrossed in a tale of a ship engulfed in the storm waters of his own Mosquito Inlet Light (146). Gerald tries to rally the lighthouse keeper in the story to act, but realizes, to his dismay, he was the keeper who had failed, Crane having written the story about a real-life sinking off the coast of Florida (147). Gerald recognizes it was his infatuation with Melville while reading *Moby Dick* that resulted in his negligence. What follows is a consideration of the role of literature in the face of death. Urquhart writes, "He wondered, briefly, what duties the dead oiler had performed on the ship, then he put his head in hands and wept. He loathed *Moby Dick*. What did it matter if Daboo's tattooed arm resembled a quilted counterpane? Who cared about 'That ghastly whiteness...which imparts such abhorrent mildness'?" (148). Liz grapples with this question in the face of Mandy's death and finds no alternative but to become engrossed in the literature her cousin left behind, and use it as a way of constructing a narrative that seeks to reconcile Mandy's life with the fictional worlds in which she immersed herself, just as Urquhart might be seen as using the form of the novel to come to terms with the historical loss of Nichola Goddard. Through reading, Liz not only better understands her cousin, but the reading clarifies the relationship between the literary and the martial, and forces Liz to revisit the deaths of her cousins – Mandy and Teo – and to commemorate both in appropriate ways. Literary sensibility and military praxis both provide modes of making meaning and to understand and commemorate loss. In *Sanctuary Line*, Urquhart indicates that martial ritual is not always the most appropriate method to commemorate fallen soldiers. For Liz, commemorating Mandy means continuing to read her library,

continuing the family storytelling tradition, and gaining a literary understanding, an augmented knowledge of her cousin not available from conventional commemorative sources. Liz's commemorative effort is the novel itself, as *Sanctuary Line* is Liz's telling of her own-life and the lives of Mandy and Teo to Vahil.

### **The Highway of Heroes and Apolitical Commemoration**

The Highway of Heroes gatherings along the overpasses of Highway 401 paid tribute to fallen Canadian soldiers who journeyed on the road after landing at CFB Trenton on their way to the coroner's office in Toronto. This tradition began with Canada's first casualties in the war in Afghanistan, Tarnak Farm Friendly Fire victims Sergeant Marc Leger, Corporal Ainsworth Dyer, Private Richard Green, and Private Nathan Smith, in 2002. The tradition was not officially codified until 2007 and was the result of work by photojournalist Pete Fisher and *Toronto Sun* columnist Joe Warmington, an ardent military booster. Warmington used one of Fisher's photographs depicting people gathered on an overpass as the familiar procession drove by for a column he dubbed "Highway of Heroes" that ran on the front page of the *Toronto Sun* and the moniker stuck (Fisher 41-44). While frequently described as a grassroots memorialization, the gatherings along the Highway of Heroes are a commemorative contradiction; they are both official and unofficial, spontaneous and planned. In *Sanctuary Line*, Liz reflects on the phenomenon's paradoxical tension when she muses,

These assemblies, as you know, are in no way official. They simply came into being once it was discovered that each fallen soldier would be driven along that stretch of highway after the repatriation ceremony at the

Trenton air base. I remember Mandy telling me she found the government decision to put up official signage renaming the highway to be faintly ridiculous, that, to her mind, there were roads in Afghanistan to which the word *hero* could be more aptly applied. (165)

Liz's recollections of Mandy's impressions of the gatherings indicate a certain ambiguity about who is being valourized in this commemoration.<sup>131</sup> The perceived spontaneity of the Highway of Heroes is essential in establishing a more militarized identity by connecting Canadians with alleged non-partisan action. The nature of participation along the Highway of Heroes cannot be defined by the "official" or "unofficial" monikers but instead reveals conflicting impulses.<sup>132</sup> While the phenomenon was at first surprising to many who covered it, the Highway of Heroes has its roots in traditions established to

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<sup>131</sup> The term "Highway of Heroes" is generally meant to refer to the route the procession follows and to the fallen soldiers themselves. However, those who gather along the route have also been commemorated and honoured, in some ways becoming the "heroes" the name honours. The Afghanistan Repatriation Memorial unveiled in 2012 and located in close proximity to CFB Trenton, honours both the 158 Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan but also those who attending repatriation ceremonies along the Highway of Heroes ("Afghanistan Repatriation"). In 2011, a joint initiative between the True Patriot Love Foundation and the Government of Ontario announced that a series of bronze plaques would be added to 26 overpasses along the route to illustrate the passion Canadians feel for soldiers and their families; the plaques do not commemorate the fallen as much as they commemorate those who participated in such acts of commemoration (Legault 75-76). As Michel Legault describes it, "the plaque venerates the onlookers; it makes them the principal subject of our gaze," the commemorative "equivalent to having a cenotaph built to those who gather on November 11, and not the soldiers who fell" (77). The plaques also benefit from corporate sponsorship; sponsors receive a variety of benefits such as free advertising and access to tribute dinners, blurring "the line between commemoration and objectification" (76).

<sup>132</sup> Photojournalist Pete Fisher, author of *Highway of Heroes: True Patriot Love* (2011), believes that the outpouring of support along the Highway of Heroes is apolitical and illustrates participation at a grassroots level. He writes,

It was not a political statement, nor was it a show of support either for or against the role of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan. It was simply ordinary people paying their respects. It has always been a grassroots movement. People young and old – emergency service workers, Legion members, military personnel, friends and family members of fallen soldiers, and ordinary citizens – came to stand, with pride and sorrow in their hearts, on the bridges along the highway. (28)

Despite his sense that the gatherings along the Highway of Heroes were an apolitical grassroots movement by ordinary Canadians, Fisher's account of the first gatherings along the overpasses of the Highway 401 between Trenton and Toronto suggest otherwise. His description of the first repatriation ceremony, for the Tarnak Farm Friendly Fire victims Sergeant Marc Leger, Corporal Ainsworth Dyer, Private Richard Green, and Private Nathan Smith in 2002, indicates that there were always official and unofficial aspects to these gatherings.

commemorate the First World War: “This kind of heroism-in-death motif recalls older modes of understanding Canada’s role in the world through the patriotic sacrifice of its young (men) particularly in the national ‘coming-of-age through sacrifice’ narrative promulgated in and about the First World War” (McCready 59). To depict the Highway of Heroes gatherings as “apolitical” is to minimize its contradictory nature while simultaneously naturalizing the idea of the nation at war. This gesture deflects attention away from the divisiveness of Canada’s participation in the war and minimizes opposition. Ultimately, the Highway of Heroes reflects the type of public mourning and nation-building Judith Butler credits obituaries with performing: “It is the means by which a life becomes, or fails to become, a publicly grievable life, an icon for national self-recognition, the means by which a life becomes noteworthy” (“Violence” 23).

On two occasions Liz experiences military processions along the Highway of Heroes in the novel and she duplicates that mode of commemoration when she drives daily on Sanctuary Line. As Liz drives down the Line, she is conscious that her prosaic, yet ritual actions constitute a commemorative act. As Urquhart writes, “I drive it at night and see the two paths of the narrow track picked up by the headlights of the car and wonder if on that particular night the headlights were illuminated or if the driver navigated by the light of the moon” (*Sanctuary Line* 221). By referring to Teo’s death, Liz indicates the road’s memorial function. In this novel, just as in *The Stone Carvers*, Urquhart creates a memorial space that is not monumental, but deeply personal.

Liz’s repetition of the Highway of Heroes ritual differs in key ways. These differences make the procession she enacts along Sanctuary Line less official and less nationalist; the scale is no longer monumental, but intimate, ephemeral, and quite literally



familiar. It alters the conventional commemoration present in the public Highway of Heroes phenomenon, and presents a more continuous memorialization. In the process, it makes previously ungrievable lives like Teo's grievable. Consequently, Liz's repeats the commemorative action of the Highway of Heroes but when she enacts it along Sanctuary Line it is with significant alterations. The result produces an alternative to the form of obituary Judith Butler presents.

After her death in Afghanistan, Mandy's body is repatriated to Canada, taking the same journey Canada's real-life casualties from that conflict took, from CFB Trenton along Highway 401 to the coroner's office in Toronto. Mandy's fictional final journey provides an opportunity for Urquhart to explore both the commemorative methods and priorities of Canadian society during the nation's military involvement in Afghanistan. Liz's participation in Mandy's funeral procession along the Highway of Heroes initiates a response from the character that transcends her experience of Mandy's death and results in a similar commemoration of Teo. The deaths of Mandy and Teo, as well as the disappearance of Uncle Stanley, evoke the Highway of Heroes. By having Liz re-create the Highway of Heroes ritual along a familiar (fictional) route, Urquhart makes a private, domestic loss – Teo's death in a car accident on that stretch of road – that had previously been ignored, grievable.

The possibility that Teo is family does not occur to Liz until years after his death and for much of the novel he is viewed as solely part of the migrant worker community, as a culturally – and economically – defined other who comes from “elsewhere.” Here, the mythology of peacekeeping in Canada is important. This mythology allows Canadians to envision the state as charitable, good, and moral and those living in areas

“benefitting” from Canadian intervention as primitive, violent, and economically incapable (McCready 29). This is reflected in the novel; even though Liz plants a seed of doubt in the reader’s mind about the charitable nature of her Uncle Stanley, the fictional Butlers are still presented as benevolent business people who provide vital economic assistance to Mexican workers. As McCready writes, “contemporary militarization in Canada both relies on and obscures deeply seated and tenacious patterns of racial privilege, power and marginalization” (21).

In *Sanctuary Line*, the marginalized and the militarized are connected through the thread of migration that runs through the text. Military deployment is a type of migration, as Mandy’s transnational journeys make clear. The annual return of Mexican workers to the Butler family farm is another similar form of movement. In this way, The Highway of Heroes tributes are an appropriate memorialization for Liz to replicate in her attempts to honour Teo. Movement, first from Afghanistan to Canada, then along the ceremonial route between Trenton and Toronto is one of the defining features of the ritual. This drive reminds participants and viewers of the repatriation journey the Unknown Soldier took from France to Ottawa in 2000. Nevertheless, that the Highway of Heroes gatherings are repeated again with each new casualty is also important. In this way, the Highway of Heroes has its own migratory pattern, just as the workers at the Butler farm follow their own patterns of seasonal movement. Urquhart’s novel insists on a place for the marginalized migrant workers amid the commemorative martial landscape. However, this insistence is on the personal level; *Sanctuary Line* does not address issues of systemic injustice facing migrant labourers.

Teo's sad end on Sanctuary Line is duplicated pages later by his grieving father. Uncle Stanley leaves his wife, sister, children, and Liz forever in a quiet way, similarly driving down the Line. Liz remembers,

My uncle spoke one last time then, his voice broken. "I wanted to stop it," he said. "But what could I do?" He had turned and was looking at me as he said these words, but there was nothing I could say in response. He left the house a few minutes later. He didn't say where he was going, and no one leaned out the door to call to him, as we so often had in the past. We were no longer hoping to be taken on an adventure. We no longer wanted to follow him. We no longer wanted to be in his company. (Urquhart, *Sanctuary Line* 244)

This is the last his family sees of him. Uncle Stanley is missing for much of the novel, leaving when Liz, Mandy, Shane, and Don were teens. However, through Liz's retelling his presence fills the book. Yet his failure to both protect his son Teo and to acknowledge the boy's paternity, results in his abdication of his parental responsibilities to Mandy, Shane, Don and by extension Liz. As a young man, Uncle Stanley served briefly in the military during peacetime, at Maritime Command in Halifax. While not a combat fatality, Uncle Stanley is "missing" in much of the text (84). This loss continues to resonate with Liz years later. By travelling daily from the farmhouse, which she alone now occupies, to the Point to conduct her research, Liz re-enacts that final procession that Teo and Stanley both undertake. Travelling Sanctuary Line each day for work, the route of her uncle's disappearance and her cousin's death, Liz watches "the old sugar maples cruise by the car windows," the repetitive motion integral for Liz to come to terms with their deaths

through this “moving,” improvised, and private commemorative ritual (221). Liz must resort to this practice because she cannot participate in traditional Western elements of mourning, such as a funeral and a gravesite to visit. It is unsurprising, then, that she takes elements from Mandy’s repatriation and funeral, an officially codified mode of commemoration, and applies them to these other losses.

In *Sanctuary Line*, Urquhart further problematizes the monumental commemorative construction she thematized in *The Stone Carvers* by highlighting its fixed nature. The National Vimy Memorial in France is towering, a fixture on the Douai Plain, though the aesthetic of the memorial’s symbolic empty tomb proved transportable to the location of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Ottawa. By paralleling the Highway of Heroes commemorative processions with the personal memorial route Liz enacts on Sanctuary Line, Urquhart is gesturing to a mobile and fluid commemoration that remains established in the local (the specific communities like Trenton along the Highway of Heroes route and the locality of the road Sanctuary Line). This is integral as it relates to the relationship between sanctuary<sup>133</sup> and migration in the novel. In *Sanctuary Line*, migration is required, but does not necessarily lead, to securing the safety and sanctity of sanctuary. However, through commemorative acts, another understanding of sanctuary emerges; this understanding is imbued with spiritual significance. The

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<sup>133</sup> The novel highlights various types of sanctuary all dependent on movement or migration. Liz conducts butterfly research at a wildlife sanctuary, a protected landscape providing sanctuary for migratory species. As Urquhart writes, the lighthouse keepers from the Butler family history, such as Gerald Butler, provided sanctuary for seafaring travelers, among their responsibilities was “if necessary, to call upon rescue services and, upon occasion, provide sanctuary” (*Sanctuary Line* 143). Finally, the Butler farm acts as a type of sanctuary (though their sense of safety is undercut by Uncle Stanley’s treatment of his workers) to migrant laborers crossing national borders.

overpasses along Highway 401 become venerated in the novel; this veneration is repeated at each overpass and each gathering:

As I drove, I remembered the first overpass we saw the day that Mandy's body was driven to Toronto; how all the local volunteer firefighters and the few sad old veterans who had fought in previous wars, along with dozens of civilians, had gathered to pay tribute. There were duplicates of this makeshift honour guard on all the overpasses we slipped beneath in the long black cars, but the first one was somehow the most consoling.

(164-165)

The gatherers provide Liz with a refuge, however brief, from her grief. In this way, commemorative efforts become another type of personal sanctuary in the novel.

The act of driving on Sanctuary Line in the present causes Liz to imagine driving on that same road the night Teo died. It is also an erotic landscape for her, as the road was the setting for her and Teo's teenage driving lessons and for their first expressions of passion and love. It was on that road that Teo first confessed to Liz "I am sick with love for you" (173). Even Teo's tragic death, hurtling off a highway overpass, evokes the all too familiar images of Canadians lined up along highway overpasses on the Highway of Heroes, commemorating Canadian casualties from Afghanistan. By commemorating Teo and Mandy in similar ways (both are memorialized in this sort of procession), *Sanctuary Line* illustrates the ways in which both Mandy the relative, friend, and lover is grievable outside of her existence as a soldier while allowing for a means by which typically un-grievable subjects like Teo, can become grievable.

Liz pleads for the communal acknowledgement and comfort that the Highway of Heroes represents. Urquhart illustrates a significant aspect of the remembrance that she addresses in both *Sanctuary Line* and in *The Stone Carvers*: she grounds the experience of war loss on the home front. Urquhart emphasizes the fallen, but significantly foregrounds their grieving families. However, unlike *The Stone Carvers* when Klara's workshop floor vest imprint proves to be an insufficient memorial, in *Sanctuary Line* commemorations that take place on Canadian soil prove adequate. While Mandy's loss is the subject of much of Liz's experience of trauma, Mandy is absent through most of the text. In *Sanctuary Line*, the trauma that needs to be commemorated occurs on Canadian soil, not foreign battlefields. In Liz's recollections of their shared lives, Mandy's childhood experiences are presented, but Mandy as a soldier and as an officer in theatre is erased from the text. Urquhart's erasure of Mandy's life in the Forces and her emphasis on the character's childhood, family life, and interest in literature establishes a domestic space for losses that are only typically considered in terms that are distinctly national. The novel's focus on Mandy's literary interests helps acknowledge what is suppressed in official commemorative practices. Mandy's opposition to the codification of the gatherings on the Highway of Heroes leads Liz to believe she would never take part in such a ceremony: "I decided at the time I would never stand on an overpass that overlooked someone else's misery. I could simply not allow myself to believe that it might be my own misery that would someday be briefly acknowledged from a small cement bridge" (166). Liz's aversion is to the role of spectator, a role she was previously forced into in the moments after Teo's death. Her active participation as a mourner as she frequently repeats her drive along Sanctuary Line, indicates how the commemorative

activity can be healing. Here, the experience of both the loss of a Canadian soldier in Afghanistan (Mandy) and of the commemorative act that subsequently followed (a procession along the Highway of Heroes) are both grounded in the experience of familial bereavement.

*Sanctuary Line*'s Liz remains ambivalent about collectively commemorating martial loss in the absence of commemorating other personal losses. When Liz finds herself driving on the Highway of Heroes a second time, she is significantly driving in the opposite direction from the familiar processions. Urquhart writes, "How disorienting it was to be travelling along that stretch of road, yet heading in the opposite direction" (164). During this same trip, she finds herself spontaneously participating in a procession along the Highway of Heroes. Liz states, "Another soldier had been killed, and, of course, there would be more to come. I realized as I waited that I had now become one of those who stand and wait for a glimpse of tragedy. And when the dark line of cars passed beneath, like the other civilians, I wept, though whether it was weeping for Mandy, or myself, or for the unknown young person in the long black car I can't really say" (166). What typifies both the soldiers lost in Afghanistan and their commemoration is that each is known by name, yet Liz has encountered another "unknown" Canadian casualty of war from a war in which in reality there were no "unknown" casualties. To participate in a ceremony for a soldier whose name she wilfully or simply does not know, not only continues to foreground her own grief, making her experience of loss present in each subsequent loss of life in Afghanistan, but also subtly undermines the knowability of current military casualties. Thus, Canada's contemporary casualties, despite their

increased individualized publicity, still reflect the tension at the heart of the Unknown Soldier.

Urquhart aligns Mandy and Teo's deaths by providing each with a complementary repatriation ceremony. In Teo, Urquhart combines two forms of loss, romantic and familial, that require the elevation of codified memorial acts but enacts them on an intimate level. Mandy's official, military ceremony begins the novel, and takes Liz, her mother, and cousins Don and Shane from the base in Trenton along the Highway of Heroes. The ceremony is not described in detail at this point in the novel, which is fitting: its real-life counterpart has become well-known to Canadians. Yet what Urquhart foregrounds in this scene is how Mandy dies: "The words *improvised explosive device* kept repeating in my mind, the sound of them coming out of the mouth of the official who had delivered the impossible news a few days before" (5). IEDs, the familiar killer of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan, also parallel the collision that occurs when Liz and Teo watch as Stanley is caught by his wife in the act of infidelity, a scene that leads to Teo's death. The return of Teo's body to Mexico is depicted in ways similar to a military funeral. As Urquhart writes, "The two plane tickets waiting at the airport: one for Dolores, one for her brother. The procedure for the transport of the body, the phone calls, the discussions with officials," all connect Teo's death to Mandy's years later (239). Teo continues to haunt Liz precisely because his commemoration is negated in her family and community, and is shifted to Mexico. His repatriation ceremony as it must have happened in Mexico does not include her or her family; his final journey excludes her.

In *Sanctuary Line*, Urquhart grapples with contemporary war loss in Canada. In the war in Afghanistan, every Canadian casualty was known by name and this seemingly



presents a problem for Canadian commemorative traditions, such as the Unknown Soldier. However, the Unknown Soldier contains an inherent tension between the individual and universal, known and unknown. It is also a phenomenon that makes the ungrievable (an unknown or unacknowledged corpse) fully grievable as the universal embodiment of martial sacrifice for a nation. For Judith Butler, grievability is dependent on the subject being knowable; this knowability allows the subject to access nationally relevant modes of commemoration, such as the obituary. National modes of commemoration like the Unknown Soldier or Butler's obituaries create a sense of unity and are connected to nationalism. Casualties like the fictional Mandy Butler or the real-life Nichola Goddard's military connections makes them both knowable and able to access the traditions of martial commemoration. Even newer traditions such as the Highway of Heroes revolve around the tension of knowability. Urquhart acknowledges these tensions and uses Mandy's library to construct a literary understanding in Liz. Liz uses Mandy's library to counter official mourning practices and by extension who is deemed grievable, to provide a more personal understanding of Mandy while simultaneously making their cousin Teo, knowable, and therefore, grievable.

## Conclusion

### Introduction

The repatriation of Canada's Unknown Soldier to Ottawa significantly altered the nation's commemorative martial landscape. A symbolic representation of freely given sacrifice, the Unknown Soldier contains an essential tension between the universal and the individual; it tests the limits between being known and unknown. When political scientist Robert Bernier and sociologist Jean-Yves Bronze initially promoted their idea to repatriate an unidentified Canadian soldier of the First World War in the late 1990s to become the nation's Unknown Soldier, it was because of the figure's potential to unify the country after divisive constitutional battles at Meech Lake and Charlottetown and the 1995 Quebec Referendum (Bormanis 222-223). Canada's Unknown Soldier, then, connects the martial and the national symbolically in an attempt to secure a solidarity, to create a sense of national cohesion. Of central importance to this dissertation are the ways in which this decades-old commemorative tradition, originating in Europe, was brought to Canada during a period of national discord but continues to resonate in this country in the twenty-first century, a full century after the First World War began. Since commemorative spaces are flexible, changing to meet the needs of mourners, veterans, and the nation as time passes (Winter, *Remembering* 155), an adaptable figure such as the Unknown Soldier is especially well-suited to meet the changing needs of society. While Canada did not suffer any unidentified military casualties during the war in Afghanistan, the Unknown Soldier nevertheless remains a powerful symbol both as a signpost that orients these losses within a larger tradition of martial commemoration, and because it

gives meaning to loss while emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation on the part of those soldiers killed during war. Crucially, the dead are remembered and political opposition is mitigated by stressing the “freely given sacrifice” of Canadian soldiers in events like the First World War or the war in Afghanistan.

However, much has changed in Canada since the Canadian Forces active combat role in Afghanistan ended in 2011. Recent events provide an interesting lens through which to evaluate the potential future impact of concepts such as the Unknown Soldier. Canada’s mission in Afghanistan was officially completed in 2014 when the Canadian Forces’ training and mentorship commitments to the Afghan National Army concluded, ending the nation’s longest war after more than a decade. The 2015 election of a majority Liberal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau changed the country’s ruling party after almost ten years of Conservative government led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. This dissertation evaluates the climate of commemoration during the past two decades, prompting ways of examining how Canadians adapt discourses of commemoration in light of contemporary cultural and political conditions. Whether these changes of national circumstance will lead to a dramatically altered sense of nation and identity remains to be seen, but this dissertation has articulated a framework for recognizing and evaluating the ways in which Canadian martial commemoration has adapted to the new century, and has charted its pervasive pedagogical influence, while identifying the ways in which the novels studied in this dissertation have simultaneously challenged and cemented these martial conventions, crucially articulating commemorative alternatives.

2017 marks Canada's sesquicentennial. The celebrations and commemorations planned for 2017 will help cultural critics evaluate whether the nation's commemorative imagination will move away from the bellicose "warrior nation" ethos that typified Harper-era symbolism in Canada. Previous significant anniversaries, such as the nation's centennial in 1967 and Canada 125 in 1992, worked to reinforce different discourses, narratives, examples, and definitions of Canadian identity in relation to international conflict. Currently these national norms are articulated by symbols of white masculine heroism such as the Unknown Soldier. Will the Canada 150 commemorations, celebrations, and activities strengthen themes of unity, identity, and nationalism that were articulated in 1967 and 1992 and emphasized more recently by the Unknown Soldier?

### **The Centennial and Canada 125: Road Maps to Celebrating the Nation**

Before investigating what role martial commemoration may have in Canada 150 celebrations, it is worth briefly discussing the impact of previous national anniversary celebrations in Canada.<sup>134</sup> If, as has been consistently stated by the nation's historians and explored in this dissertation, a mythology of Canada as being a nation was "born" at Vimy, then Canada's centennial celebrations in 1967 are conventionally regarded through this *bildung* narrative as the maturation of the nation. According to anthropologist Eva Mackey in *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada*

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<sup>134</sup> It is worth noting that a similar commemorative celebration takes place in *Broken Ground*. The ethnically diverse settlers of Portuguese Creek celebrate Dominion Day with an annual picnic that occurs even in the immediate aftermath of tragedy such as Archie "Mac" MacIntosh's death (Hodgins 69). The event features activities repeated every year, and the games played by the children are consistent with the nationalist celebrations of both the centennial and Canada 125. For example, Indigenous peoples are imagined former inhabitants who leave voluntarily, and are not dispossessed of their land; children play "pioneer" on the beach, which is Indigenous land granted to the settlement by the government, and search for a rumoured Indian woman, whose "small cooking fires had burned but no one ever caught sight of the woman herself" (70).

(1999), the centennial celebrations were the culmination of an increasingly “future-orientated” era of national symbols, such as the creation of a new flag in 1965, that were designed to create “unity and similarity between diverse and different cultures” (58, 57). The year-long celebration centred on an emerging national pride and achievement; “The main features of this immensely successful celebration were its air of optimism, its incredible expense, the prominence of an emerging bicultural vision of the nation and, finally, the foregrounding of Native people and ‘ethnic groups’ in the activities” (58). The commemorations had both a local and national component; the federal government matched dollars raised at the municipal level for various commemorative projects (many were infrastructure projects with a recreational component),<sup>135</sup> while the internationalist Expo 67, the World’s Fair held in Montreal from April 27 to October 29, 1967, was the highlight of commemorative events at the national level. Other national celebrations included events such as a touring Confederation Train and Centennial Voyageur Canoe Pageant (58). The Confederation Train was a \$48-million<sup>136</sup> train that travelled the country from the west coast to the east coast, then back to Quebec, stopping in 82 cities and towns along the way; the Confederation Caravan, a convoy of tractor-trailers, visited 655 communities not accessible by rail (Griffith 191-192). The Confederation Train recalled the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway and “acted as a concrete reference to Confederation and the unity of all provinces” (191). The train and truck cars featured

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<sup>135</sup> Perhaps the most famous example of a local centennial commemorative project is St. Paul, Alberta’s UFO landing pad, the first such purpose-built facility of its kind in the world. It has since become a tourist attraction; Queen Elizabeth II visited the site in 1978 (Gerson). The landing pad also reflects the period’s increased support for multiculturalism (multiculturalism as official policy would follow the year after the centennial). Officially welcoming extraterrestrials was another way to illustrate the town’s attempts at inclusivity and unity; a plaque at the site reads “The area under the world’s first UFO landing pad was designated international by the town of St. Paul as a symbol of our faith that mankind will maintain the outer universe free from national wars and strife” (Gerson).

<sup>136</sup> The \$48 million cost is in 1967 dollars.

exhibits on Canadian history, creating a national narrative that “immersed visitors in a colonial version of Canadian history, beginning with Indigenous peoples crossing the Bering Strait, through the steerage passage of a European immigrant, First World War trenches, and the Great Depression” (191-192). The Voyageur Canoe Pageant depicted a re-enactment of “a specific nationalist historiography that portrayed the voyageurs as ‘the founders’ of Canada and legitimized itself as a culturally and geographically unified nation” that illustrated the solidarity of Canada’s founding peoples, English, French, and Indigenous, while emphasizing the role of the canoe and fur trade in preventing American control of the territory that would one day become Canada (Dean 43, 47).<sup>137</sup> While the lengthy canoe race cemented historical notions of Canadian identity and difference from the United States, Expo 67 “was a site in which Canada could elaborate its emerging national identity: differentiating itself as a nation from external others as well as defining relationships between internal populations. It was a moment in which the nation ‘came out’ to the world, and to itself, in what was perceived as its new progressive and pluralist form” (Mackey 59). Expo 67 was a seminal moment, then, in Canada’s articulation of a new and mature national identity.

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<sup>137</sup> Organizers of the canoe pageant were influenced by economist Harold Innis’s work on fur trade economics, specifically by Innis’s assertion that Canada’s east-west orientation in terms of geography and politics had its origins in the economic movement of goods in the fur trade; such an orientation strengthened ties among future Canadians and prevented American expansion (Dean 47). According to Misao Dean, historian and canoe enthusiast Eric Morse, who was involved in the planning of the pageant, believed “the system of fur-trade canoe routes were the historical skeleton of the nation, and their geographical orientation both the explanation and the proud assertion of our independent sovereignty as a nation” (47). While the Canoe Pageant presented a unified version of Canadian history and identity, the all-male race crucially omitted women from its re-creation, ignored those who wished to conceive of nation outside of an economic framework, ignored increasing urbanization in Canada, failed to mention the dynamic power relationships between English, French, and Indigenous fur traders, overlooked Indigenous land claims and right to self-government, and by claiming voyageurs as the nation’s ancestors, failed to account “for the discrepancy that allows a white man to claim (metaphorically) aboriginal and mixed-race ancestry for Canada and all Canadians” (48, 55).

Canada's centennial celebrations also had a specific set of pedagogical functions. As Mackey notes, "mass spectacle" is essential to disseminate state-sponsored nationalism and Canada's centennial commemorations should be conceived of as such a spectacle (59). Mackey writes, "In Canada in 1967, the international exhibition and the centennial celebrations played a pedagogical role, providing an opportunity to educate the 'baby boom' generation of citizens about Canada's identity as a nation" (59). Mackey recalls her own school-sponsored trip to Expo 67 as a nationalist experience and extrapolates the meaning of having thousands of children like her attend such commemorative events: "These trips can be seen as 'pilgrimages of patriotism', that combine the ritual of participation in patriotic performance, with the pedagogical practice of learning about the nation, its relationship to the world, and one's role as a citizen and national subject" (59). Such inculcation included centennial themes such as biculturalism and cultural pluralism (59-60). Crucially, the national commemorations were pedagogically integrated; the Canoe Pageant and Confederation Train articulated a version of Canadian history steeped in settler colonialism and illustrated a progressive view of Canada's national history, while the majority of the Canadian-specific pavilions at Expo 67 produced similar narratives of Canadian history.<sup>138</sup> Even the presentation of

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<sup>138</sup> Another example of settler colonial pedagogy promoted at the national level is the centennial anthem "CA-NA-DA". The Bobby Gimby song was celebrated and not deemed controversial at the time because it united French and English Canada with bilingual lyrics (Griffith 190). However, the popular song that was sung by school choirs, played on radio and television, and "charted at number one alongside the Rolling Stones, Aretha Franklin, and the Monkees" was problematic in multiple ways (188-190). Gimby makes use of "Ten Little Indians", a well-known children's rhyme; its lyrics, as Griffith puts it, count "down as Indigenous bodies, line by line, die" (188). Griffith reminds us that "these lyrics have a long history of asserting White claims to territory through the vanishing Indian paradigm" (190). Gimby's use of counting in "CA-NA-DA" works in reverse, however, as its lyrics celebrate the nation's growth (188). From "one little, two little, three Canadians," the country's provinces are counted and culminate with lines that reflect the then-present demographics of the country: "now we are twenty million" (188). Griffith writes, the

information at the fair was designed to move education beyond rote learning; “Expo 67 was conceived of as educational, pushing boundaries with self-directed, immersive, and multimodal pedagogies” and was itself “a form of public pedagogy” creating an educational environment outside of the established classroom (Griffith 176). The Canadian Pavilion included elements of Indigenous culture such as Inuit sculpture, Haida masks, and a restaurant “offering tropes of Indigenous food” (187). Significantly, these inclusions of Indigenous culture served an archival function, situating Indigenous people as historically present but absent from contemporary narratives of Canada (187). Taken together, centennial commemorations taught Canadians a settler colonial narrative of national progress and inclusivity, even while they maintained the illusion of static Indigenous culture, crucially located in the past.

The Indians of Canada Pavilion pushed back at the centennial narrative on display in the rest of the Canadian Complex at Expo 67. The Indians of Canada Pavilion was created by Indigenous leaders from diverse Canadian regions, many of whom were residential school survivors, during a period of anti-colonial resistance and continued opposition to residential schools by Indigenous peoples (173). The exhibits and panel displays of the Indians of Canada Pavilion repudiated the belief that official policies of assimilation were progressive; in fact, the pavilion clearly articulated that the settler colonial pedagogy perpetuated and promoted more broadly at Expo 67 was a national failure because of the harm it caused to Indigenous peoples (176-177). As Griffith writes,

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“song exemplified the settler-colonial fantasy of a land evacuated of Indigenous presence, repopulated – naturally and peacefully – by non-Indigenous people” (188).



“While the rest of Expo 67 jockeyed for a chance to show off educational innovations, the Indians of Canada Pavilion exposed education that alienated Indigenous children from their families, cultures, and languages” (177). The criticism presented by the pavilion proved controversial with both the non-Indigenous viewing public and government officials (176).<sup>139</sup> Despite the resistance offered by the Indians of Canada Pavilion, Expo 67 overwhelmingly presented a positive and progressive model of Canadian identity.

Canada 125 celebrations, marking the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confederation, presented similar opportunities to engage with and interrogate national myths and pedagogical strategies in 1992. However, the nationalism and biculturalism as well as the growing understanding of Canada as a multicultural and plural society in 1967 provided a much different backdrop for the centennial celebrations than the events surrounding national festivities in 1992. Instead of a national commemoration of the problematic and potentially divisive Columbus Quincentenary, the federal government chose to celebrate Canada 125 (Mackey 6). However, Canada 125 took place in the aftermath and amid Indigenous acts of colonial resistance, including Oji-Cree Manitoba MLA Elijah Harper’s much publicized opposition to his province’s attempt to ratify the Meech Lake Accord in 1990, and the Oka Crisis/Oka Resistance land dispute between the Mohawk people of Kanesatake and the Quebec and Canadian governments, law enforcement, and military in

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<sup>139</sup> The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Affairs, Arthur Laing, who oversaw the project and monitored the work of Indigenous artists who contributed to the pavilion, threatened to close the pavilion because of its criticisms of the Canadian government and assimilation (Griffith 176).

the summer of 1990.<sup>140</sup> The standoff at Oka produced one of the most iconic images in Canadian history, photographer Shaney Komulainen's "Face to Face" (Wells).<sup>141</sup> In addition, national unity and biculturalism had been tested by the 1980 Quebec Referendum, by the Patriation of the Constitution in 1982, and by the constitutional talks begun at Meech Lake in 1987. In fact, the Canada 125 celebrations "were part of a series of complex political manoeuvres by the federal Progressive Conservative government," which included debates about proposed constitutional amendments, public displays of national unity, extensive debates on the constitution and, finally, a national plebiscite on the suggested constitutional changes (Mackey 7). In this respect, Canada 125 celebrations did not culminate with Canada Day events on July 1, but with a referendum on the constitutional amendments of the Charlottetown Accord on 26 October 1992.

Canada 125 built on the commemorative and celebratory methods successfully implemented during the centennial year, but with less success than 1967, perhaps because resistance to settler-colonial narrative had coalesced and heightened their profiles on the national scene. Canada 125 organizers tried to build on the success of the centennial festivities by incorporating multicultural expressions of national unity practiced in 1967

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<sup>140</sup> Mohawk territory was also violated during the celebration of Canada's centennial. Mohawk territory was expropriated to build the St. Lawrence Seaway; "The Expo site required the construction of 'new' land – Île Notre-Dame, which was created by dumping 6,825,000 tons of fill that came from both Montreal's subway and the St. Lawrence Seaway" (Griffith 174). As Griffith notes, "the creation of new land (Île Notre-Dame) to symbolize Canada during Expo at the expense of Mohawk territory also represents a deep irony" (174).

<sup>141</sup> "Face to Face" depicts 19 year-old Private Patrick Cloutier of the Royal 22e Régiment standing face-to-face with Anishinaabe warrior Brad Larocque, a university student from Saskatchewan. Cloutier's youthful appearance contrasts with his combat attire and "dead-eye stare" while Larocque's face is covered by a camouflaged-patterned bandana and sunglasses (Wells). The photo captured the tension of the standoff and more broadly, the divided sympathies of Canadians. It also suggested "warriors" in Canada had different racialized faces, and interests that might embody and militarize conflicts *within* Canada's national culture, and not just beyond it. "Face to Face" is the most famous of the numerous photos that emerged that summer depicting Canadian police and military in conflict with Indigenous warriors; these photos clashed with previous depictions of the military in Canada.

celebrations twenty-five years earlier, embraced as official policy in 1971, and finally enshrined in the Constitution in 1982. Such moves came during a period of increasingly vocal petitions for separation from Quebec, increased immigration from non-European countries, and repeated calls for redress from Indigenous peoples, amid nationalist fears of cultural colonization by America. As Mackey notes, “The Canadian state, therefore, created the official policy of ‘multiculturalism’ to respond to a range of complex and potentially dangerous conflicts in the cultural politics of Canadian nationalism, including the threat of Québec separatism, demands for recognition by immigrants and other minorities, and the need for immigrants to fuel prosperity” (70). In this way, acknowledgement and inclusion of varied cultures and ethnicities among Canadians became a marker of what separates and marks the nation as distinct from its geographic neighbours and cultural influencers. This seeming inclusion also served another purpose, as Mackey writes,

In the Canadian context, the state did not seek to erase difference but rather attempted to institutionalise, constitute, shape, manage, and control difference. Although ‘multiculturalism’ could be seen as vastly different from the more overtly racist and assimilationist policies of earlier governments, the institutionalisation of difference and ‘tolerance’ drew on previously existing patterns which had emerged in colonial and earlier national projects. The key issue here is that despite the proliferation of cultural difference, the power to define, limit and tolerate differences still lies in the hands of the dominant group. (70)

Here, Canada's promotion of multiculturalism allows the nation to present a progressive identity in terms of diversity as part of Canada 125 celebrations that built off the success of similar promotions during the centennial. In particular, that celebration of diversity serves to further the greater cause of national unity.

During the centennial celebrations and again during Canada 125, national unity was promoted through military events designed to honour and celebrate Canada's military history. The Canada 125 program included Parades of Honour, local events designed to highlight the contributions of veterans, a scaled-down version of the Canadian Armed Forces Tattoo that toured the country in 1967 (Tivy).<sup>142</sup> Like the Voyageur Canoe Pageant, the Canadian Armed Forces Tattoo had instructional implications; by re-enacting military history on the anniversary of Confederation, the Tattoo subtly connected unity and national maturity with military achievement. These popular military-themed events, in combination with the inclusion of Canada's experience during the First World War as part of the Confederation Train, illustrates a long-standing, if not as well-remembered, martial impetus to national celebration.

Many of the Canada 125 activities were similar to celebrations promoted during the centennial either thematically or in terms of content. While the budget of Canada 125 was only \$50 million in 1992 dollars, a fraction of what the centennial had cost 25 years before, a recession impacted both the government's spending ability and the public's appetite for additional money for commemorative activities (Tivy). There was not the

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<sup>142</sup> The Canadian Armed Forces Tattoo was the "largest peacetime event in Canadian military history to that time; it comprised 1,700 military personnel from all three branches of the armed forces re-enacting more than 300 years of Canada's military history in popular shows across the country" ("Canada's Centennial"). The Royal Canadian Air Force also "restored two Avro 504K planes, Canada's first military aircraft, and flew them at air shows across the country along with an acrobatic flying team called the Golden Centennaires, the predecessors of the Snowbirds" ("Canada's Centennial").

budget for an expensive touring caravan as there had been in 1967; however, Canada 125 commemorated the anniversary of Confederation in ways that thematically linked the country from east to west, just like the Confederation Train and the Voyageur Canoe Pageant had years before. The Trans Canada Trail, a connected set of “multi-use recreational trails, comprised of land and water routes across urban, rural, and wilderness landscapes” stretching “nearly 24,000 kilometers from the Atlantic to the Pacific to the Arctic oceans, through every province and territory” began as a Canada 125 project in 1992 (“Facts about the Trail”).<sup>143</sup> Significantly, parts of the trail utilized abandoned CN lines (Pratt). This practice physically connects the nationalist symbolism of railway construction in Canada in the nineteenth-century (and its commemoration in 1967) with the new recreational trail, emphasizing the unity of the nation.

The most obvious difference between the centennial celebrations and the events marking Canada 125 was the absence of an internationally significant event acting as the focus of national interest like Expo 67. This was a deliberate change and not simply the result of 1992’s difficult economic climate. As Mackey writes, “Indeed, the recurring images of families, local celebrations, ‘face-to-face’ and ‘grass-roots’, in the Canada 125 strategy were an attempt to make Canadian unity and patriotism natural, common-sensical, and non-political” (119). Yet the approach did not completely obscure its intention, nor did it achieve its aims, as the Charlottetown Accord was rejected in the October referendum of that same year and calls for Quebec separation increased until the

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<sup>143</sup> A considerable undertaking, the Trans Canada Trail is currently only 86 percent complete, 25 years after its fundraising campaign was first launched (“Facts about the Trail”). In the intervening quarter century, the federal government’s financial contribution to the project has increased to more than \$35 million (“Facts about the Trail”). Rebranded for 2017 as The Great Trail, TCT organizers plan to completely connect the network of trails during this anniversary year; to complete this task, the federal government is matching 50 cents of every dollar pledged to the TCT (“Facts about the Trail”).

province's second referendum on sovereignty in 1995. Both Canada's centennial celebrations and Canada 125 tried to accomplish assertions of national identity and unity. While both events expanded definitions of Canadian identity, neither the centennial commemorations nor Canada 125 seriously disrupted conventional settler colonial narratives that remained entrenched in Canada's nationalist mythology.

### **Canada 150: Reconciling National Mythology**

From the perspective of its early months, it is clear that the observation of Canada 150 owes much to its commemorative predecessors. In some cases, events marked in 2017 are a direct continuation of events begun during the centennial year or Canada 125, such as the anticipated completion of The Great Trail national recreational path. Canada 150 projects also mark a renewal of commemorations begun in 1967. Part of the Canada 150 budget is the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program, providing \$150 million over the course of 2016 and 2017 to projects that upgrade recreational facilities, grow green energy, or impact Indigenous communities and peoples ("Canada 150 Community"). Included in the 150 Community Infrastructure Program budget are funds for renovating existing cenotaphs ("Canada 150 Community").<sup>144</sup> Cities like Calgary are

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<sup>144</sup> London, Ontario, has received Canada 150 funding to restore the Victoria Park Cenotaph; the project will be completed in July 2017 and includes the "restoration of the original limestone veneer," the "repair and waterproofing of the inner concrete core," and importantly additional inscriptions for the Korean War and the war in Afghanistan ("Canada 150 Funding"). This recalls the way commemoration of more recent conflicts, such as Afghanistan, are often sutured onto existing First World War memorials as discussed in Chapter 3. It also serves as a reminder of the way commemoration of the war in Afghanistan is influenced by traditions established or generated by the First World War, as examined in Chapter 4. Markham, Ontario will also receive up to \$950,000 from the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program to rehabilitate the city's Veterans Square and cenotaph (Finney). At the project's announcement in 2015, Gary Goodyear, MP for Cambridge and Minister for the Federal Development Agency for Southern Ontario remarked that the Markham Veterans Square project was an appropriate way to celebrate Canada because the site provides a

using the Community Infrastructure Program to make improvements to local recreational facilities initially funded and built with grants during the centennial celebrations, such as the city's Centennial Arena (Ferguson). The core thematic concerns of Canada 150 are also linked to the thematic concerns of the centennial and Canada 125. According to Mélanie Joly, Minister of Canadian Heritage, Canada 150's thematic focus will be on "diversity and inclusion, reconciliation from nation to nation with Indigenous people, youth and the environment" ("The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary"). These themes were all present in 1967 and 1992 in various ways as well and were widely used to promote national unity.

Key to Canada 150 celebrations is the theme of reconciliation. The Department of Canadian Heritage has already announced major programs and initiatives designed to further reconciliation between Canada and Indigenous peoples such as \$1.8 million in funding for Reconciliation Canada's project "Reconciliation in Action: A National Engagement Strategy" designed to document Canadian attitudes to reconciliation and create a "narrative that will recognize our common history, highlight current achievements and create hope for the next 150 years" ("The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary"). A further \$200,000 has been earmarked for Indspire's Cross Canada Speaking Tour of Exceptional Indigenous Youth and \$398,000 has been contributed to 4Rs Youth Movement: Possible Canadas in which "approximately 5,000 Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth will participate in the face-to-face dialogue that highlights the contributions of Indigenous peoples over the last 150 years" ("The 150<sup>th</sup>

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gathering spot to "enjoy what is truly perfect about Canada, and that in this case, is what our veterans did to make this country strong, proud and free" (Finney).

Anniversary”).<sup>145</sup> Significantly, these specific projects are forward-looking, emphasizing a nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous peoples, moving forward out of Canada 150. This contrasts with marquee Canada 150 celebrations like the centennial of the Battle of Vimy Ridge and obscures Indigenous history and connection to the land that predates European arrival.

Canada 150 is also funding projects that directly address Canada’s history of genocidal policies, designed to assimilate and eliminate Indigenous peoples. Cree artist Kent Monkman’s multi-media art show *Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience* premiered at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto in January 2017; the exhibition tour includes eight additional stops across Canada in 2017. Monkman’s show directly addresses Canada’s ongoing violence against Indigenous peoples as well as their continued resilience. Crucially, Monkman did not seek to fit this violence within the temporal framework of Canada 150; instead he chose to re-examine the history of Indigenous-settler relations beginning in New France, 150 years before Confederation. The show confronts how western art history has portrayed Indigenous peoples and how it has impacted Canada. Monkman writes,

My mission is to authorize Indigenous experience in the canon of art history that has heretofore erased us from view. From Albert Bierstadt to

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<sup>145</sup> Some Indigenous projects to mark 150 years of Confederation purposely did not seek Canada 150 funding, such as the “Remember, Resist, Redraw” poster art series lead by historian Sean Carleton and the Graphic History Collective (Hwang). The organizers did not apply for funding because they believe the Canadian government wants to ask “challenging questions” in safe ways and while the project seeks to “unsettle some of that, and ask some critical questions. So I would imagine, that the kinds of questions that we’re wanting to ask in this project are not fundable questions” (Hwang). Lianne Charlie is a descendant of the Tagé Cho Hudän, a mixed-media artist, PhD Candidate, and political science instructor in the Yukon (Charlie, Hwang). Her piece, “We Still Think of the Yukon as the Our Land” is the first poster in the series and addresses the “double-edged sword” of land claims and the Umbrella Final Agreement,” text of which appears on the poster (Hwang).



Paul Kane and Cornelius Krieghoff, museums across the continent hold in their collections countless paintings that depict and celebrate the European settlers' expansion and 'discovery' of the North American landscape, but very few, if any, historical representations show the dispossession and removal of the First Peoples from their lands. This version of history excised Indigenous people from art history, effectively white-washing the truth from Canada's foundational myths and school curriculums ("Foreword" 4).

Here, he rejects the common depiction of Canada as a *terra nullius*, a land without Indigenous peoples (a depiction of Vancouver Island that *Broken Ground* largely shares, and a view that is present in Urquhart's description of Ontario in *The Stone Carvers*), in Western art. Notably, Monkman articulates a pedagogical vision inclusive of Indigenous knowledge systems and that challenges Western understanding and conventional teachings of the Canadian nation. This emphasis is reminiscent of *Three Day Road* because on the one hand, Monkman presents a type of narrative of inclusion, presenting the violent dispossession of Indigenous land in this country from an Indigenous perspective: "Could my own paintings reach forward a hundred and fifty years to tell our history of the colonization of our people?" (3). However, on the other hand, both works provide alternative modes of understanding. *Three Day Road* articulates a commemorative tradition inclusive of Indigenous military service through Niska and Xavier's use of established Anishinaabe and Cree storytelling practices while *Shame and*

*Prejudice* is guided by Miss Chief Eagle Testickle,<sup>146</sup> a Two-Spirit trickster figure who challenges the Eurocentric view of celebrated artists like Paul Kane and George Catlin (Morris). Importantly, Miss Chief’s gender identity predates the enforced patriarchy of settler colonialism and addresses “the erasure of alternate forms of gender and sexuality from the standardized accounts of Native (and non-Native) histories. Miss Chief is avowedly two-spirit, embodying the attributes of both male and female. She represents a third gender category that was acknowledged and honoured in many traditional Indian communities” (Morris). *Shame and Prejudice* does not only create a narrative of inclusion; rather, Monkman uses symbols, iconic images, and patriotic cultural production from the pre- and post-Confederation periods to disrupt and crucially destabilize conventional narratives of Canadian identity while providing narrative alternatives that challenge western traditions and reveal a violent national history.

Monkman uses canonical western art and cultural artifacts from Canada’s settler history effectively in the exhibit. The injection of these works and artifacts, such as Robert Harris’ *Fathers of Confederation* (1884),<sup>147</sup> into the gallery space alongside Monkman’s own pieces, such as “The Daddies” (2016), force viewers to acknowledge that the last 150 years “have been the most devastating for Indigenous people in this country: deliberate starvation, the removal of children to residential schools and the

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<sup>146</sup> Miss Chief Eagle Testicle is Monkman’s alter ego (Morris); in addition to the figure’s inclusion in several paintings, Miss Chief is also the author of the textual components of *Shame and Prejudice* and figures in both photographs and installations in the show. Miss Chief has featured in a number of Monkman’s works for nearly two decades and had a solo tour *The Triumph of Mischief* (Morris).

<sup>147</sup> *Shame and Prejudice* displays one of Harris’ preparatory sketches for his celebrated *The Fathers of Confederation*. The painting was displayed in the original Canadian Parliament Building but was destroyed in the devastating 1916 fire that also destroyed much of Parliament (“The Fathers”). The painting was recreated by Rex Woods as a centennial gift to the nation paid for by the Confederation Life Assurance Co., and “was officially unveiled in the Centre Block on February 3, 1969, fifty-three years after the original was lost in the fire” (“The Fathers”).



Figure C.1: Kent Monkman, “The Daddies”, 60” by 112.5”, acrylic on canvas, 2016. Image used with permission from the artist.

sixties scoop, sickness and disease, persistent third world housing conditions on reserves, contemporary urban disenfranchisement, violence and poverty” (Monkman, “Foreword” 4-5). This is most apparent in the gallery room “Chapter V: Forcible Transfer of Children”. The focus in this gallery is the visually graphic “The Scream” (2016), a wall-sized acrylic painting depicting the forced removal of Indigenous children by the church (represented by the black robes and habits of priests and nuns) and the state (depicted in the form of the Red Serge of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police), unsettle the non-Indigenous viewer not just because of the violence the painting illustrates but also because it is displayed in a gallery room that magnifies that violence.<sup>148</sup> The painting and

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<sup>148</sup> “The Scream” is presented in a black-painted gallery room titled “V – Forcible Transfer of Children”. On either side of the Monkman painting are walls filled with Plains Ojibwa, Iroquois, and Cree cradleboards (baby carriers); these cradleboards are interspersed with wood and metal cradleboards, as well as blank spaces on the wall, with the cradleboard shape outlined in white, evoking tombstones (*Shame and Prejudice*). The overall impact of the room conveys the staggering numbers of Indigenous children forcibly



Figure C.2: Kent Monkman, “The Scream”, 84” by 132”, acrylic on canvas, 2017. Image used with permission of the artist.

room illustrate non-Indigenous complicity in that violence and the violent nature of nationally revered symbols like Mounties. Importantly, the piece highlights the problematic nature of upholding our national symbols and narratives of settler colonial progress in the face of such violence. Conventionally, violence has dominated commemorations of Canada’s military history and war violence is a celebrated part of Canada’s heroic legacy; commemorative sites such as the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France preserve sections of battlefield on its memorial grounds. *Shame and Prejudice* is an inversion of this trope.

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removed from their homes and the many who would never return, as Monkman writes, “estimates as high as 30,000 dead or missing” (“Foreword” 5).

*Shame and Prejudice* illustrates that the western art tradition, represented by Monkman's reinterpretations of the thematic concerns and works of artists such as Édouard Manet and Pablo Picasso, is in itself violent; this tradition intellectually influenced settler culture in Canada. As Monkman writes,

The last hundred and fifty years of Canada are concurrent with the rise of European Modernism and of the emergence of Modern Art. The Canadian treaty signings of 1873 occurred ten years after Manet's innovative painting, *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863), transformed conventions of pictorial space and set Modernism on its path. The painter's flattening of pictorial space echoes the shrinking of space for Indigenous people who were forced onto reserves that are tiny fractions of their original territory, now comprising only 0.2% of Canada. The Cubists' appropriations of tribal artifacts known as Primitivism were upending European art-making whilst Indigenous traditions and languages were being beaten out of Indigenous children in residential schools. Picasso's phallic bulls and his butchering of the female nude were contemporaneous with the European aggression against the female spirit (homophobia, violence against women), in North American Indigenous societies, many of them matrilineal. ("Foreword" 7)

Like *Three Day Road*, Monkman's work resists the idea that Canada's violent encounters are "elsewhere," fought solely overseas and illustrates that internally Canada is permeated by colonial violence and illustrates that violence should not be celebrated. Through its sustained critique of western art traditions and Canada's national symbolism,

*Shame and Prejudice* reveals the ways Canada 150 commemorations are implicated in a history of violence. Canada 150 demarcates the relationship of “Canada” and Indigenous peoples to a period contained within the last 150 years<sup>149</sup> and constructs the nation through the settler lens of Confederation. Canada 150 also continues to celebrate conventional Canadian achievements and notions of national progress, achievements and notions that have come at great cost and helped perpetuate violence against Indigenous peoples while simultaneously promoting a nation-to-nation program of reconciliation.

### **Vimy 100 and Canada 150**

Viewing Canada 150 celebrations through the thematic lens of reconciliation complicates planned martial commemorations for 2017. In 2017 the centennials for significant First World War battles such as Passchendaele and Vimy occur. The Vimy centennial celebrations, in particular, complicate any effort to distance the country from settler nationalism steeped in white martial achievement. Planned as a remembrance extravaganza at the beginning of April 2017, the Vimy centennial, or Vimy 100 as it has been dubbed by organizers, is a marquee event on the Canada 150 calendar and a 2015 poll conducted by Ipsos Reid for the Vimy Foundation found that 74 percent of Canadians believed “the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge should be one of

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<sup>149</sup> Many Indigenous people reject Canada 150 altogether. Métis artist and writer Christi Belcourt denounces the temporal limits placed on 2017’s commemorative activities. She’s insulted “that there are 10,000 or 20,000 years of history on this continent” but “Canadians are going to celebrate their 150 completely erasing and ignoring the thousands of years of Indigenous experience” (“What does Canada 150 mean”). In response, Belcourt was one of the creators of the hashtag “#Resistance150” and the twitter account of the same name that highlights “the history of resistance, resilience, rebellion, resurgence and restoration” of Indigenous peoples (“What does Canada 150 mean”). Eric Ritskes, editor of *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* created an alternative logo featuring an inverted maple leaf and the slogan “Colonialism 150”; Ritskes finds it striking “that 50 years ago we had a very similar discussion as we’re having right now about Canada 150” in reference to Indigenous artists using Canada’s centennial celebrations to articulate a different relationship with Canada (“What does Canada 150 mean”).

the most important celebrations during Canada's sesquicentennial" (Thompson). The poll results led Vimy Foundation director Jeremy Diamond to conclude "people are connecting Vimy 100 to Canada's 150<sup>th</sup>" (Thompson). Vimy 100 is also one of the more expensive celebrations of Canada 150. The bulk of the Canadian government's funding for the Vimy 100 is \$5 million for the recently completed educational centre at the monument site in France designed to help visitors, especially youth, understand the landmark battle's significance to Canada according to journalist Blair Crawford ("Corporate"). Considering the site's new visitor education centre alongside the annual pilgrimage of youths aged 15 to 17 (winners of the Vimy Foundation's annual Beaverbrook Vimy Prize) to the battle site, and it's clear that the Vimy centennial celebrations meet Canada 150's thematic concerns in terms of youth engagement ("Beaverbrook"). The annual high school trips to Vimy are part of a larger pattern of pilgrimage to the site; beginning with the memorial's official unveiling in 1936 and continuing with its renovation and rededication in 2007 for its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the movement of veterans, family, and Canadian youth in pilgrimage to the monument site in France is a conventional part of the monument's importance. It is also a pilgrimage that Urquhart fictionalizes in *The Stone Carvers* when Klara and Tillman journey to the site to take part in carving the memorial. However, these pilgrimages also function similarly to the way Mackey saw the youth pilgrimages to Expo 67 during the centennial year operate, as part of a "pilgrimage of patriotism" that served an obvious (and in the case of the newly revamped Vimy Memorial site specifically dedicated) pedagogical role in the inculcation of martial and more broadly, nationalist Canadian mythology.

Vimy 100 does not disrupt narratives of national origin beginning at Vimy Ridge. In his remarks on the occasion of the 99<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the famous battle in 2016, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau echoed the language used at the monument's rededication ceremony in 2007 by then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Trudeau's statement mentioned that not only was Vimy Ridge "a moment that defined our nation," he also repeated the conventional understanding of the campaign's significance: "It was the first time that soldiers from all four Canadian divisions – representing every region of our country – fought side-by-side on the same battlefield. As Brigadier-General Alexander Ross later said of Canada's accomplishments at Vimy, 'I witnessed the birth of a nation'" ("Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on Vimy Ridge Day"). Trudeau concluded his remarks by connecting the sacrifices of Canadian soldiers during the First World War with the ongoing sacrifices of the Canadian Forces today, again echoing the rhetorical strategies of his predecessor (examined in greater detail in Chapter 3), when he stated, "On this day, let us thank those who have sacrificed – and those who continue to sacrifice – on behalf of our country so that we can enjoy the peace and freedoms we have today" ("Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on Vimy Ridge Day").<sup>150</sup> Trudeau's statement illustrates that while his government's platform contains certain material differences from that of his predecessors, his rhetoric when discussing the place and importance of Canadian martial achievement is consistent with that of Prime Minister

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<sup>150</sup> This statement is consistent with remarks Trudeau made prior to Vimy's 99<sup>th</sup> anniversary. On Vimy's 97<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014, Trudeau, then Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, confirmed Vimy's centrality in Canadian history and the colony-to-nation paradigm in a statement: "At Vimy, Canada accomplished an irreversible shift in the tide of the Great War, and thereby earned its place among the nations of the world. It is difficult to overstate the significance of this moment in Canadian history" ("Liberal Statement"). Trudeau also made similar comments in June 2016 when dedicating a monument, which contains "sacred soil" from Vimy, on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CFB Borden (Perkel). Trudeau remarked, "The reason the world pays heed to Canada is because we fought like lions in the trenches of World War I, on the beaches of World War II, and in theatres and conflicts scattered around the globe" (Perkel).



Harper, and Trudeau's Liberal forebears. Connecting the achievement of peace and individual rights and freedoms with martial violence is not only conventional; it is problematic in this context because it ignores Canada's history of using violence and military force domestically, against Indigenous peoples to deny Indigenous rights and freedoms.

The commemorations at Vimy this spring restated similar sentiments as those expressed by prime ministers Harper and Trudeau. Trudeau continued to emphasize the Battle of Vimy Ridge and explicitly connected the importance of Vimy's centennial with that of Canada's sesquicentennial when he spoke with college students at New York University on 21 April 2016:

Next year, as many of you know, we're going to be celebrating our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary since Confederation, which is a great thing. And many of you who aren't Canadians, I encourage you to come up and visit Canada, because it's a wonderful place and next year will be a wonderful time to be there. But at the same time, a lot of us have the reflection that it will also be the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year, of the moment where for many, Canada actually became a nation in its own identity, at a place called Vimy Ridge. Where Canadian soldiers, for the first time in World War One, were brought together as a single group, with all the diversity (which was less than it is now), but still significant diversity of English and French, indigenous and others, coming together and won that battle, through tremendous sacrifice but also tremendous valour, as Canadians.

And that was a moment that was foundational for us. (“The Right Honourable”)

Here, martial commemoration is marketable. Commemorating military history not only allows Canadian politicians to position the nation as playing a crucial role in international events, promoting Canada as an important player on the world scene, but also suggests a much more direct commercial benefit to Canadians. He incorporates Canada’s multiculturalism, not just as an integral component of celebrating national anniversaries in Canada, but as linked to martial achievement which results in unity. Significantly, Trudeau skillfully incorporates Indigenous people into his narrative about Canadian martial success and multiculturalism. Trudeau’s official statement on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vimy restates similar themes of multiculturalism and nation-building: “Many of the soldiers wearing the Canadian uniform that day were immigrants to this country. People of many languages and backgrounds, representing every region in Canada, fought for the values we hold so dear: freedom, democracy, and peace. In the words of one veteran: ‘We went up Vimy Ridge as Albertans and Nova Scotians. We came down as Canadians’” (“Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the 100<sup>th</sup>”). Chapter 2 of this study illustrates why such narratives of violence are problematic especially when used as pedagogical tools but unfortunately *Broken Ground*, like *The Stone Carvers* examined in Chapter 1, instead situates such national unity in settler colonial enterprise erasing Indigenous presence. Ultimately, Trudeau’s New York speech and recent remarks suggests that Canada’s true centennial occurred on 9 April 2017.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge’s secure standing as the foundational event of Canadian nationhood undermines Canada 150’s stated intention of nation-to-nation reconciliation

with Indigenous peoples.<sup>151</sup> Vimy as national origin myth runs counter to an understanding of Canada as a set of relationships and agreements between nations. Currently, many Canadian politicians and historians are invested in the nationalist mythology of Vimy; however, I would suggest that such readings perpetuate similar problems to the ones Monkman identifies in western art traditions. Namely, celebrating Canadian identity through a filter of martial achievement on foreign land erases Indigenous participation in such achievements as I illustrated in Chapter 3 but also ignores how martial forces, such as the RCMP (and its precursor the North-West Mounted Police) and the Canadian Forces (and its predecessors), have enacted violence in Canada on Indigenous land, harming Indigenous people as part of that same martial tradition.<sup>152</sup> In this light, it is difficult to celebrate significant martial achievements such as Vimy, when such a celebration is antithetical to understanding Canada as formed through “nation-to-nation” agreements and treaties.

Many Canada 150 festivities are anticipatory, designed to envision the next 150 years of the nation. Canada 150’s thematic focus on reconciliation between not just the

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<sup>151</sup> The impact of this message going forward remains to be seen; however, the Trudeau government has faced criticism for failure to address the discrepancies between healthcare provided to Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and for the high rates of Indigenous children in foster care. Gitksan social work professor and Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada Cindy Blackstock argues that the federal government is “failing to address disparities between the quality of health and child welfare available to kids on reserves – which are funded by Ottawa – and services for children in provincial systems” (Ballingall). Concerns about the progress of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, established in September 2016, emerged in January 2017 when its first report card revealed communication issues between the commission and victims’ families (Troian). Concerns surfaced again in March 2017 when it was revealed that the commission’s list of missing only included 90 names to that point (Galloway).

<sup>152</sup> For example, the Royal Regiment of Canada, a Primary Reserve Infantry Regiment out of Fort York in Toronto, lists the North West Rebellion (specifically the Battle of Fish Creek and the Battle of Batoche) as the first Battle Honours earned by the regiment (“The Royal”). Additional regiment Battle Honours include the major Canadian battles of the First World War, including Vimy, which Boyden also uses as a shorthand to describe the “colony-to-nation” paradigm in *Three Day Road*. See Chapter 3 for more detail on the “colony-to-nation” paradigm (“The Royal”).

Canadian state but also reconciliation between non-Indigenous Canadians and Indigenous peoples in addition to Canada 150's focus on Canadian youth, suggest Canadian nationalism has the capacity to be reconfigured and to evolve. However, Canada 150's funding and continued promotion of problematic events and anniversaries recall the settler colonialism of earlier Confederation anniversaries such as the centennial and Canada 125. The Vimy 100 celebrations illustrate the continued influence of martially-inspired nationalism in Canada and demonstrate that Canada 150 will follow the example set by the centennial and Canada 125 by incorporating difference without significantly disrupting conventional Canadian narratives of nation.

The renewed interest in martial commemoration in Canada since the late 1990s is evident in the plans to celebrate the nation's sesquicentennial. This renewed interest revolves around the repatriation of Canada's Unknown Soldier, which influenced martial commemoration in Canada of both historic anniversaries of the First World War and Canada's role in the war in Afghanistan over the past two decades. The paradoxical nature of the Unknown Soldier proved a useful figure for reinforcing conventional national mythology about military action in Canada and a path for the novelists in this study. Urquhart, Hodgins, and Boyden all emphasized narrative and storytelling as essential to alternative commemorative cultural production. These novels augment official commemorative acts, figures, and conventions, with narratives that deepen understanding of the nature and meaning of Canada's martial participation while underscoring problematic ways in which martial commemoration has been employed in Canada.

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