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Magda Fahrni

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Aller au sommaire du numéro

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Résumé de l'article

Les récits de retour au foyer faits pendant les dernières années de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et les premières années de paix qui ont suivi réunissaient les ingrédients du roman sentimental : le brave héros, l'héroïne fidèle, une période d'épreuves se terminant par le retour triomphal du héros et l'étreinte de la femme qui l'attendait. Pourtant, ces retrouvailles marquaient le début d'une autre histoire, celle de la réinsertion des anciens combattants dans la vie familiale après la guerre et la séparation. Cet article traite de la renégociation des liens entre les hommes revenus de la guerre et leur conjointe, leurs enfants et leurs parents. Utilisant Montréal comme cadre de son étude, l'auteur affirme que bien que la famille ait servi d'instrument de guérison après la guerre, la réadaptation des anciens combattants à la vie familiale a été difficile. Le fait que la guerre avait altéré et parfois détruit des relations était plus difficile à admettre, étant donné la vigueur rhétorique du récit du retour des anciens combattants dans leur famille.

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The Romance of Reunion: Montreal War Veterans Return to Family Life, 1944-1949

MAGDA FAHRNI

"They return with new cells, old eyes,
to their strange children and older wives."
- Earle Birney, "Young Veterans" (1945)[1]

This article is entitled "the romance of reunion" because the narratives of homecoming that were told during the last years of the Second World War and the first few years of peace included many of the elements of a literary romance. Like a romance, these war stories had young, valiant heroes and loyal, virtuous heroines who had suffered through a period of trial and tribulation. As in a romance, these heroes and heroines had vanquished evil and been vindicated by victory. These narratives of reunion, like romances, ended with the welcoming embrace between the returning hero and the girl he'd left behind. And, like romances, these stories had great popular appeal. "Integrating" myths, aimed at all classes and cultures, they were told in fiction and film, in song, in advertisements, and in magazine articles. They were also told in photographs: a couple embracing at a train station, or children on the knee of a father in uniform.[2]

Earlier versions of this paper were presented to the York Women's History Group and the York Graduate History Conference in the spring of 1998. I would like to thank all those who offered suggestions for improvement, especially Bettina Bradbury. I would also like to thank Nancy Christie for helping me locate the records of the Dependents' Allowance Board, and the *Journal*'s anonymous referees for their comments. The financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada is gratefully acknowledged.

1 Earle Birney, "Young Veterans" in *Now is Time* (Toronto, 1945), 55.

2 For reunion photographs, see *La Presse*, 30 avril 1945, p.3; National Archives of Canada (NA), MG 28 I 311, Montreal Soldiers' Wives League (MSWL), Vol. 4, File 83, Clipping from *The Gazette*, 22 December 1943. On the romance in literature, see Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976). Kate Darian-Smith has argued that Australian women interviewed decades after the Second World War described their wartime experiences using the structure and language of "conventional romantic narratives." See "Remembering Romance: Memory, Gender and World War II," in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*. Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, eds. (Cambridge, 1995), 117-29.

Historians have also told this tale. V-E Day and V-J Day meant the return of the armed forces. North America settled down into domesticity, into the suburbs, into relative affluence. And, one is left to assume, everyone lived happily ever after. Recent historical literature has challenged assumptions of postwar prosperity, suburban homogeneity, and contented nuclear families. The fifties are beginning to look more complicated.[3] Historians of Canada have remained largely silent, however, about the period of transition in family life that was the late 1940s.

This paper, part of a larger project on the renegotiation of family in the wake of the Second World War, examines the reworking of relationships between, primarily male, war veterans and their families. The study focusses on Montreal, but its conclusions, I would suggest, apply more broadly. A city of at least three solitudes, French-Catholic, English-Protestant, and Jewish, Montreal provides an internal contrast of language, religion, and ethnicity. While Montreal itself was a particular, perhaps unique, juxtaposition of language and culture, the variety of relationships within the metropolis point to the possibilities elsewhere in the wake of the war. The conclusions drawn here underline the centrality of heterosexuality to the postwar renegotiation of relationships.[4] They also suggest the benefits to be gained from examining military and family histories as linked, rather than isolated, experiences.

The metaphor of reunion resonated even for those who did not themselves have loved ones overseas. Indeed, governments and communities, as well as individuals and families, participated in the romance with Canadian veterans. Some of the elements of romance no doubt rang true for many postwar families, and I am not trying to posit a simple dichotomy between the sentimental ideal and a more pedestrian reality. But the moment of reunion, while it may have been the ending to one story, was the beginning of another. Suffering from wounds, illness, "battle exhaustion," or anxiety about the future, veterans and

3 Susan Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto's Postwar Daycare Fight," *Studies in Political Economy* 30 (Autumn 1989): 115-41; Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal, 1992); Line Chamberland, "Remembering Lesbian Bars: Montreal 1955-1975," *Journal of Homosexuality* 25 No.3 (1993): 231-69; Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia, 1994). On postwar pressures for domesticity, conformity and "normality," see Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto, 1996); Veronica Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945-1960," *Canadian Historical Review* 72 (December 1991): 471-504; Mona Gleason, "Psychology and the Construction of the 'Normal' Family in Postwar Canada, 1945-60," *CHR* 78 (September 1997): 442-77; Mona Gleason, "Disciplining Children, Disciplining Parents: The Nature and Meaning of Advice to Canadian Parents, 1945-1955," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 29 (May 1996): 187-210.

4 On "the constitution of heterosexual normality" in postwar English Canada, see Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto, 1997).

their advocates looked to the family as an agent of postwar healing. Women, as wives, girlfriends, or mothers, were to ensure the "mental reestablishment of soldiers."[5] Yet veterans found that returning home was often difficult, and that readjusting to civilian status and family life required considerable work. This gap between expectations and experience, aggravated by the fact that war had sometimes soured relationships, was harder to bear given the rhetorical force of the reunion narrative for soldiers and their families. The adjustment of male war veterans to family life in the late 1940s can be viewed through four different sets of relationships: those with prewar wives and girlfriends; those with war brides; those with sons and daughters; and those with parents.

Wives and Girlfriends

The romance of reunion emerged from the heightened idealisation of the heterosexual family during the war. Men posted overseas, single and married, had had plenty of time in which to romanticise ideas of marriage and parenthood. Veterans were returning to start their own homes, while girls and women were assumed to be eagerly anticipating weddings and children now that the boys were back. As one married French-Canadian sergeant told his chaplain in September 1944, "j'ai bonne espoir que tout cela sera fini bientôt et que je pourrai enfin reprendre la vie tranquille que je menais avec ma chère épouse avant la guerre."[6]

Yet social service agencies, in Montreal and across the nation, discovered to their dismay that the soldiers' return produced "intimate and complex" domestic problems.[7] Veterans suffering from "shattered nerves" found it difficult to readjust to family life.[8] The fact that so many of these unions were

5 NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 3, File 64. Speech by Brock Chisholm, 13 November 1944: Women's Responsibility for Mental Reestablishment of Soldiers. On battle exhaustion, see Terry Copp and Bill McAndrew, *Battle Exhaustion: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945* (Montreal and Kingston, 1990).

6 "I am hopeful that all this will be over soon and that I will finally be able to take up the calm life I led with my dear wife before the war." Archives Nationales du Québec à Montréal (ANQM), P257, Mouvement des Travailleurs Chrétiens (MTC), Vol. 11, File: Cent Mariés – J.M., C.G. Sgt J.M. to Rév. Père Victor-M. Villeneuve, 11 septembre 1944. See also NA, MG 30 C 92, Marion Creelman Savage papers, Vol. 7. *Consumers' News*: (June 1945) : 7; (November/December 1945) : 2.

7 NA, MG 30 C 92, Savage papers, Vol. 3, File, Council of Women, Montreal Local, 1948-51. 1947 Report of the Convener for the Welfare of Members of National Defence Services and their Dependents. See also, eg., NA, MG 28 I 129, Montreal Society for the Protection of Women and Children (SPWC), Vol. 5, File, Minutes of Board Meetings, June 1943 to 22 March 1945. Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Directors of the SPWC, 20 September 1944.

8 NA, MG 28 V 86, Jewish Family Services of the Baron de Hirsch Institute (JFS), Vol. 12, File, Minutes of Meetings, Case and Adoption Committee, Jewish Child Welfare Bureau, 1944-48. Minutes of Meeting of Placement Committee, 28 March 1944; also Vol. 10, File, Minutes of Meetings of Case Committee, Family Welfare Department, 1944-45. Minutes, 28 October 1944.

"mariages éclairs" – whirlwind weddings that had taken place immediately before enlistment, during wartime leaves, or in the first flush of homecoming – was part of the problem. The usual strains of new relationships were exacerbated by problems of inadequate housing, lodging with in-laws, and the attendant lack of privacy. Yet even long-established relationships suffered from the strains of separation. Many husbands found wives changed by the time apart, imbued with a new sense of independence and self-sufficiency.[9] Other wives had suffered from loneliness and a lack of leisure activity while their husbands were away. Both parties had experienced serious problems of morale. Women were stretched thin by years of managing households and children alone, men by long periods of time away from home and family.[10]

Separation by time and distance meant that a great deal of weight had been placed on letters that crossed the Atlantic, with consequent problems of miscommunication. Wives and mothers worried about a lack of news from husbands and sons in action.[11] Military officials noted that the only thing as bad for soldiers' morale as discouraging news from home was no news from home. Women were encouraged to write frequently to their companions, to eschew complaints, and to fill letters with good news.[12] Not all couples wrote regularly to one another, however. Even among frequent correspondents, there was room for misinterpretation and for fretting over silences and omissions. The most potent source of worry had to do with infidelity. Wives and girlfriends worried about soldiers' references to women met overseas.[13] Friends and relatives took it upon themselves to keep soldiers and their partners informed of any misbehaviour, often without much evidence. As one young, unmarried sergeant overseas wrote to his Montreal priest in June 1944, "J'ai été les plus sincères avec

9 NA, RG 36, Series 18, Dependents' Allowance Board (DAB), Vol. 12, File, Committees Local – General Correspondence. "Volunteer Citizens' Committees"; Marion V. Royce, *The Effect of the War on the Life of Women: A Study* (Geneva; Washington, 1945), 71; Canadian Youth Commission, *Youth, Marriage and the Family* (Toronto, 1948), 46.

10 On wives' loneliness, see Archives de l'Université de Montréal (UM), P16, Fonds de l'Action Catholique Canadienne (ACC), P16/R 219. R. P. Valère Massicotte, O.F.M., "La Délinquence juvénile et la guerre" (Montreal, 1944); NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 5, File 25. Women's Auxiliary of the R.C.C.S., Annual Report, 1944. For a soldier-husband's perspective on "personal family trouble brought upon by discouragement and loneliness and war bastard that prey on soldier wifes [sic]" see NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 29, File, Inadequacy of Allowances, Complaints, Etc. DAB 5-6, Vol. 3. Letter from C.E.N. to DAB, n.d.

11 NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 5, File 25. Report of Victoria Rifles Ladies Association [1944-45?] regarding men's neglect in writing regularly to their wives and mothers.

12 Robert England, *Discharged: A Commentary on Civil Re-establishment of Veterans in Canada* (Toronto, 1943), 325; *La Presse*, 22 avril 1944.

13 NA, MG 28 I 10, Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), Vol. 134, File 600. Response to Questionnaire from Welfare Convener, Royal Montreal Regiment; NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 29, File, Children of Unmarried Mothers, DAB 5-5. G.F. Thompson to DAB, 6 March 1943.

R—— et il me semble avoir fait tous les sacrifices pour me la garder, on est si loin l'un de l'autre! Je ne comprends pas encore qui a bien pu lui mettre dans la tête que j'étais attaché de quelque façon que ce soit à une autre fille. *C'est parfaitement faux* et vous pouvez me croire."[14] The morale of servicemen and of their families was adversely affected, the Artillery Branch of the Montreal Soldiers' Wives League noted, by "anonymous letters containing malicious information."[15]

Tales of wartime infidelity were common currency in 1940s Canada. Military Lotharios and ungrateful women who refused to wait for soldier-sweethearts had become stock characters in public discourse.[16] The enforced mobility of married men and the increased visibility of women living alone fuelled the narratives of unfaithfulness. Determining how often rumours of infidelity were founded was difficult enough then; any attempt by the historian to quantify infidelity in the past is foolhardy. It is likely that war, through spousal separation, increased geographic mobility, and new work opportunities for women (which provided a measure of independence as well as new possibilities for romantic partners) did hasten the breakdown of some relationships. War also seems to have provided an escape from those relationships that were already rocky: there is a great deal of evidence to indicate that unhappy home lives were one spur to military enlistment.[17] Although it is probably safe to assume that anxiety about infidelity was more common than actual instances of adultery, those instances that did come to light were enough to fuel a larger discourse of disloyalty.[18]

The public concern about infidelity was paralleled by policy-makers' more private negotiation of its consequences. Soldiers,' and later veterans,' personal

14 "I have been most sincere with R—— and feel that I have made every sacrifice to keep her, we are so far from one another! I still do not understand who could have put the idea in her head that I was somehow attached to another girl. *It's perfectly false* and you can believe me." Emphasis in the original. ANQM, P104, Jeunesse Ouvrière Catholique (JOC), Container 250, File, Militaires. Sgt. G.L. to R.P. Victor Villeneuve, 24 juin 1944.

15 NA, MG 28 I 10, CCSD, Vol. 134, File 600. Response to questionnaire from MSWL, Artillery Branch, June 1942. See also NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File, Reports on Conferences and Inspections. DND Memorandum by Ruth Harvey, 16 December 1941.

16 See ANQM, P257, MTC, Vol. 24, File: Divers - Faits. Faits [n.d.]; ANQM, P104, JOC, Container 170, File, Divers (Amour - guerre- chomage). Forum populaire: "L'Amour est-il aveugle?"; *La Presse*, 15 août 1945, p.18.

17 NA, MG 28 V 86, JFS, Vol. 10, File, Minutes of Meetings of Case Committee, Family Welfare Dept., 1946-47. Case of the T. family, 3 May 1946; NA, MG 28 I 10, CCSD, Vol. 134, File 600 (II). Response to questionnaire from David G. Stevenson, Children's Aid Society for the County of Ontario and the City of Oshawa, June 1942.

18 See NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 50, File, Procedure 43. Gwyneth Howell to Ruth Harvey, 30 April 1943; Charles H. Young to R.O.G. Bennett, 20 October 1942. Young claimed that the number of unfaithful wives was "small compared with the total number of enlisted men," but noted that "nevertheless such problems loom very large to the local groups who have to deal with them."

lives were open to scrutiny in a way that those of most civilians were not. Candidates for military enlistment submitted their health, finances, and family relationships to examination by the various military bureaucracies; they were thoroughly "administered" citizens. At the same time, they had access to sources of state assistance that many civilians did not. Activities that had always taken place, then, came to the attention of state and private agencies more frequently during the War. The application process for Dependents' Allowances, in particular, uncovered "irregular" relationships such as common-law marriages, adulterous unions, and illegitimate children.[19] Social service agencies in Montreal and elsewhere, long used to dealing with the problems of unmarried mothers, now discovered the wives of soldiers giving birth to the children of men other than their husbands.[20] Frequently, women in such a situation attempted to place their children for adoption, often before their husbands returned or learned of the situation. Other wives came to the attention of family agencies because they were deliberately neglecting their illegitimate children out of "guilt and anxiety over the husband's re-action."[21] Wives' infidelity was attributed to loneliness, to "disreputable" leisure pursuits such as frequenting dance halls and beer parlours, and to retaliation for their husbands' own extramarital encounters overseas.[22]

The Dependents' Allowance Board (DAB) suspended allowances to wives on evidence of their sexual infidelity. It was, the Board's Chairman argued, "a general practice in welfare legislation to demand fidelity on the part of the wife in receipt of public funds."[23] Even questionable leisure activities, such as wives

19 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 36, File, Petitions of Unmarried Applicants, DAB 7-24-117. R.O.G. Bennett to Colonel Ralston, 8 August 1942; Memorandum to Deputy Adjutant-General from H.T. Cook, 21 October 1942.

20 See NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 2, File 33. E.I. Smit to C.H. Young, 5 May 1943; J.F. Chisholm to Children's Service Association, 10 November 1943; NA, MG 28 I 129, SPWC, Vol. 5, File, Minutes of Board Meetings, 18 April 1945 to 15 January 1947. Executive Secretary's Report, Annual Meeting, 22 March 1946.

21 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File, Reports on Conferences and Inspections. Children's Aid Society Meeting [Ottawa], 1 December 1941.

22 See, eg., NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File DAB 4-5, Vol. 4, General Correspondence with Welfare Agencies; NA, RG 38, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Vol. 184, File, Rehabilitation, Confidential Letters, Vol. 2. Counsellors' Reference Book, April 1945, "Collaboration of Social Welfare Agencies with Ex-Service Personnel and the DVA"; NA, MG 28 I 10, CCSD, Vol. 134, File 600. Responses to questionnaire, 1942; CYC, *Youth, Marriage, and the Family*, 44-45.

23 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 50, File, Procedure 43, Suspension of Allowances for Wife on Ground of Improper Conduct. R.O.G. Bennett to Charles H. Young, 27 October 1942. The Chairman added that "Even in needy Mothers' Allowance Regulations, where in most cases, the mother is a widow, the procedure is to declare her ineligible for a Government allowance is [sic] she has irregular relations with a man." It appears that Mothers' Allowances in other provinces were also cut off upon news of recipients' "illegitimate" pregnancies. See "Report on the Visit to the Montreal Agencies, March 29 and 30," by R. Harvey, DAB, 3 May 1943, in the same file.

entertaining men in their homes, were cause for the DAB to assign the family to the supervision of a social agency. Part of the concern over disloyal and "immoral" wives was that they were perceived to be abdicating their "domestic responsibility."[24] The children of adulterous wives were sometimes removed to the care of relatives or institutions, particularly when wives were living with their new male companions.[25] If the wife promised to mend her ways, her children were allowed to remain in the home, and their dependents' allowances were increased in order to compensate for the loss of their mother's allowance.[26]

The unfaithfulness of soldiers and their partners inspired considerable comment. Gossip played an important role in the public and private negotiation of disloyalty. In addition to affecting the relationships in question, gossip frequently had a tangible effect on wives' and children's material well-being. The DAB relied heavily on rumours and innuendo to pinpoint unfaithful husbands and especially wives. Neighbours and in-laws, in particular, took it upon themselves to inform the Board of sexual disloyalty.[27] The Board insisted that the allowances of unfaithful wives whose soldier-husbands were overseas were not suspended without prior investigation. In the case of wives whose husbands were posted in Canada, however, a husband's request was sufficient to have his wife's allowance suspended until allegations of her infidelity were disproven.[28] Moreover, private citizens used the Dependents' Allowance system as a means of condemning disloyalty. One Montreal woman whose husband was having an affair with the wife of a soldier, for instance, reported this "other woman" to the DAB in order to have her Dependents' Allowance cut off.[29] Such tattling

24 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 50, File, Procedure 43. R.O.G. Bennett to Charles H. Young, 27 October 1942; R.O.G. Bennett to Miss R. Robertson, 3 December 1943.

25 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB: Vol. 50, File, Procedure 43. Memo re D.A.B. & C.W.C. by Nora Lea, 14 June 1941; Vol. 28, File: Montreal Welfare Department, DAB 4-7. "Families referred by D.A.B. to the Bureau d'Assistance Sociale aux Familles for supervision and re-education," 31 July 1944.

26 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 50, File, Procedure 43. R.O.G. Bennett to Charles H. Young, 27 October 1942.

27 See NA, MG 28 I 10, CCSD, Vol. 134, File 600 (II). Response to questionnaire from Local Superintendent, Children's Aid Society of Huron County, Goderich, 15 June 1942; NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File, Report on Conferences and Inspections. DND, Memorandum by R. Harvey, 16 December 1941; File, DAB 4-3, Vol. 1, Investigations, Department of Pensions and National Health. K.M. Jackson to R.O.G. Bennett, 24 August 1945.

28 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 50, File, Procedure 43. R.O.G. Bennett to Charles H. Young, 27 October 1942.

29 NA, MG 28 V 86, JFS, Vol. 11, File, Minutes of Case Conferences: Family Welfare Department and Jewish Child Welfare Bureau, 1944-46. Case History to be presented at conference between Child Welfare Bureau and Family Welfare Department, 26 December 1944. See also NA, MG 28 I 10, CCSD, Vol. 134, File 600 (I). Response to questionnaire from Family Service Bureau, Hamilton.

reflected personal grudges, but also pointed to the larger question of who was perceived to be entitled to state support. In the minds of the public, like that of the DAB, the criterion for receiving military allowances was clearly loyalty: men's loyalty to their country, and women's loyalty to the men who were loyal to their country. As Nora Lea of the Canadian Welfare Council emphasised, the unfaithful wife who was not remorseful had "forfeited her right to consideration as the soldier's wife."[30]

Yet gossip concerning sexual infidelity occasioned a certain backlash. The Dependents' Allowance Board was criticised by representatives of some family agencies on a number of grounds, one of which was its reliance on gossip as sufficient evidence for withholding allowances.[31] When it did undertake to investigate claims of immorality and infidelity, these agencies charged, the DAB and affiliated public bodies used "Gestapo" and "bullying" techniques. Montreal agencies complained "that information secured in this way was not treated as confidential and that before the investigation was completed a large sized scandal was public property in the neighborhood."[32] A family agency elsewhere in Canada likewise accused the Department of Pensions and National Health of taking "a murky satisfaction in the sexual delinquencies of the soldiers' wives."[33] Furthermore, critics noted, the suspension of allowances harmed the soldier's children as much as his wife by decreasing the family's income.[34] Married women pregnant with "illegitimate" children, moreover, were avoiding seeking medical care for fear that their allowances would be suspended.[35] Certain Montreal social agencies were accused of keeping wives' adultery a secret from the DAB so that allowances would not be withheld.[36]

30 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 50, File, Procedure 43. Memo re D.A.B. and C.W.C. by Nora Lea, 14 June 1941.

31 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB: Vol. 28, File, Report on Conferences and Inspections. DND, Memorandum by R. Harvey, 16 December 1941; Vol. 50, File, Procedure 43. Gwyneth Howell to Ruth Harvey, 30 April 1943.

32 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File DAB 4-7, Montreal Welfare Department. "Conference on Working Relationships Between the Dependents' Allowance Board and Protestant Welfare Agencies of Montreal," 15 October 1941.

33 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File DAB 4-5, Vol. 4, General Correspondence with Welfare Agencies. K.M. Jackson to Ruth Harvey, 16 November 1943.

34 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 50, File, Procedure 43. MCSA, Memorandum on Problems caused by Stoppage of Pay, or Reductions in Allowances paid to Dependents of Enlisted Men, October 1942; NA, MG 28 I 10, CCSD, Vol. 134, File 600. Response to questionnaire from G.B. Clarke, General Secretary, Family Welfare Association, Montreal, 12 June 1942.

35 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File, Report on Conferences and Inspections. Children's Aid Society Meeting [Ottawa], 1 December 1941.

36 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File, Montreal Welfare Department, DAB 4-7. R.O.G. Bennett to Charles Young, [n.d. but 1941]; and "Conference on Working Relationships Between the Dependents' Allowance Board and Protestant Welfare Agencies of Montreal," 15 October 1941 for the Montreal SPWC's denial of these charges.

Others applied to the Board for the reinstatement of wives' allowances where they thought it warranted.[37]

Clearly, the reaction to women's infidelity was not monolithic. A concern for the morale of soldiers overseas, and a desire to preserve family units for the postwar period, meant that certain social agencies were willing to turn a blind eye, or at least a forgiving one, to sexual indiscretions. Some family agencies tried to prevent official reports from going to husbands overseas, particularly when wives appeared repentant. As one social worker explained, "Not that we wish to excuse them whatsoever, but we feel too, that if the matter could be kept quiet, we might be able to keep the family together for the sake of the husband who is Overseas."[38] Many social workers, including some employed by public bodies, agreed that "a definite family break could be avoided" if husbands were not informed of wives' illegitimate children until the couple had a chance "to meet and talk things over."[39] At the very least, family agencies pleaded, wives should be given the opportunity to tell their husbands themselves rather than have them receive the news from the DAB.[40]

The DAB also professed concern for the soldier's morale, but it took a different tack. Wives would "have greater peace of mind" if they confessed all, the Board argued, but regardless, husbands ought to be informed of wives' illegitimate children as soon as possible. As R.O.G. Bennett, Chairman, explained,

> Careful as one tries to be in covering up the situation, the chances are the man will get word at some future time and distressing as the news will be to him now, it is thought by the Board that it is better for him to know when he has time to think over things while away rather than to return home and find out later. It is the attitude of the Board that to be fair to the soldier overseas, he should be informed how things are going at home.[41]

The differing attitudes of the DAB and the private family agencies are interesting. At one level, this was a difference between those who formulated policy and those faced with implementing it. But there were other reasons for

37 NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 5, File 18. Report of Welfare Committee, Women's Division, Black Watch (R.H.R.) of Canada, 1942.

38 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File, DAB 4-5, Vol. 4, General Correspondence with Welfare Agencies. Olive M. Snyder to R.O.G. Bennett, 3 May 1943.

39 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File, Reports on Conferences and Inspections. Report on Canadian Conference of Social Workers, May 1944. See also NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 29, File, Children of Unmarried Mothers, DAB 5-5. B.W. Heise to R.O.G. Bennett, 5 August 1942.

40 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 50, File, Procedure 43. F.N. Stapleford to Joseph E. Laycock, 24 June 1941; Vol. 28, File, DAB 4-5, Vol. 4, General Correspondence with Welfare Agencies. George F. Davidson to R.O.G. Bennett, 28 June 1944.

41 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File, DAB 4-5, Vol. 4, General Correspondence with Welfare Agencies. R.O.G. Bennett to Olive M. Snyder, 28 May 1943.

the contrasting approaches. Veterans of the First World War often filled key positions in federal departments such as the DAB and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.[42] The "clients" of the DAB were members of the armed forces and, in a sense, the Board was standing in for the absent husband and father, while social agencies were concerned with the needs of various family members.[43] Local agencies had roots in their communities that predated the war, and intended to continue serving their clients once peace was secured. Federal bodies such as the Dependents' Allowance Board and the Dependents' Board of Trustees (DBT), on the other hand, took their direction from Ottawa and were intended to function only "for the duration." It is worth noting that in the Quebec context, where enthusiasm for military enlistment was muted and opposition to conscription intense, the intervention of the DAB and the DBT in marital difficulties probably did little to improve French-Canadian families' opinions of the federal government.[44]

In general, agency workers were more willing to give erring wives a second chance, to keep in mind the difficulties of surviving without an allowance, and to think of the long-term consequences of confession. From the perspective of the DAB, women who chose not to remain faithful were traitors to their country as well as to their menfolk. The men they took up with were, furthermore, those who were not overseas: those who had either not enlisted, or who had volunteered but had failed to make the grade. The masculinity of such men, from the point of view of soldiers, veterans, and the Board, was undoubtedly somewhat suspect.[45]

Women's infidelity was interrogated to a far greater degree than men's. The occasional lapse of judgement by men far from loved ones was not ideal, but it was tolerated and perhaps even expected.[46] As Ruth Jamieson has shown for Britain, for the military bureaucracies, the sexual fidelity of a soldier's wife "was also taken to be an index of her commitment to the national interest."[47] The question of soldiers' own loyalty was slightly more ambiguous. Their loyalties to their families, to the nation, and to comrades-in-arms may have been reinforcing, but perhaps, as Susan Hartmann suggests, fidelity to fellow soldiers

42 England, *Discharged*, 78; Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada: From Champlain to the Gulf War*, 3rd ed. (Toronto, 1992), 176, 182.

43 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 50, File, Procedure 43. R.O.G. Bennett to Miss R. Robertson, 11 March 1944.

44 My thanks to Denyse Baillargeon for this observation.

45 On returned Australian soldiers' views of "the shirker" as a "non-man," see Stephen Garton, "Return home: War, masculinity and repatriation" in *Gender and War*. Damousi and Lake, eds. 191-204.

46 See Susan Hartmann, "Prescriptions for Penelope: Literature on women's obligations to returning World War II veterans," *Women's Studies* 5 (1978): 230-31.

47 Ruth Jamieson, "The Man of Hobbes: Masculinity and Wartime Necessity," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 9 (March 1996): 33.

took precedence. The result, she argues, was that in the United States, "The sexual double standard was reinforced on the grounds that the horrors of war both excused male infidelity and required female faithfulness."[48]

There is no doubt that, as Jamieson and Hartmann show for Britain and the US respectively, women's infidelity was denounced in both public discussion and public policy. But the exposure of Canada's social service workers and government bureaucrats to wartime adultery may have developed in some of them a greater tolerance of "irregular" sexual relations, or at least, a pragmatic recognition that few marriages were uncomplicated.[49] There was considerable debate within the DAB and the Department of National Defence over how to handle marital infidelity,[50] as well as occasions on which the DAB demonstrated more flexibility than usual. As the war in Europe drew to a close and the soldiers' return appeared imminent, for instance, the Board shifted its focus from the punishment of wives to the preservation of households. The "necessity of considering the deterrent effect of Board decisions which existed in the past has now largely disappeared with the approach of partial demobilization," the Board noted. Past decisions revoking wives' allowances might be reconsidered more sympathetically, "providing the Dependent does her part." Like the family agencies, the Board increasingly counselled forgiveness and reconciliation, and insisted upon the importance of maintaining "home and family circles" for the postwar period.[51]

How, then, did postwar couples deal with relationships that were at the very least strained, and often fractured? Most married couples probably stuck it out. It is possible, as one social service agency argued, that the impact of their wives' infidelity on soldiers' morale was less than might be supposed. Certainly some soldiers, despite "rather desperate" first reactions, took the news of wives' infidelity in stride. The DAB claimed that a serviceman's reactions would "depend a good deal on their marital relationship before he enlisted, on his behaviour since they have parted, and on the point of view of his relatives and their influence upon him."[52] Some soldiers accepted their wives' "illegitimate" children as their own.

48 Hartmann, "Prescriptions for Penelope," 231, 236.

49 See Royce, *Effect of the War*, 59.

50 See, eg., NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 50, File, Procedure 43. Memorandum from the Office of the Deputy Minister of National Defence to R.O.G. Bennett, Chairman, DAB, 30 August 1943; Memorandum re Erring Wives of Soldiers, 20 May 1941.

51 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File, Report on Conferences and Inspections. Typed statement re: the DAB [no title, n.d.]. For the DAB's claims throughout the War that its aim was to preserve "home and family circles," see Vol. 49, File, Procedure 33. Watson Sellar to A. MacNamara, 30 September 1940; Vol. 28, File, DAB 4-5, Vol. 4, General Correspondence with Welfare Agencies. R.O.G. Bennett to Olive M. Snyder, 28 May 1943; George F. Davidson to R.O.G. Bennett, 28 June 1944.

52 NA, MG 28 I 10, CCSD, Vol. 134, File 600, questionnaire, Service Men's Families, Morale and Security, 1942. Commissioner, Bureau of Child Protection, Saskatchewan, to Dr. George F. Davidson, 15 June 1942; NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File, DAB 4-5, Vol. 4, General Correspondence with Welfare Agencies. R.O.G. Bennett to Olive M. Snyder, 28 May 1943.

One French-Canadian woman, for instance, gave birth to her eighth child during the War, a child fathered by someone other than her soldier-husband. The soldier and his wife were reconciled, however, and the family stayed together.[53] Soldiers could request that dependents' allowances be reinstated to their unfaithful wives and/or allocated to their wives' illegitimate children. The DAB would agree to these requests if the wife showed signs of changing her "immoral" ways, and if the soldier agreed to raise the children in question as his own.[54]

Evidence of formal or de facto postwar marital breakdown is substantial, however. Divorce, for instance, increased in Quebec in the immediate postwar period, particularly among servicemen's families. Petitions to the Dominion government from Montreal residents rose steadily through the War years and jumped sharply in the immediate postwar period.[55] Yet in a predominantly Catholic province with no divorce courts, where a divorce required the delay, expense, and notoriety involved in petitioning the Dominion government, legal divorce was but one form of marital dissolution. More common, especially for French Canadians, were legal separations of bed-and-board or informal separations. Catholic organisations warned Quebecers that civil divorce was not a valid way of dissolving Christian marriages, while even agencies that catered primarily to non-Catholic clients, such as Montreal's Society for the Protection of Women and Children, advised judicial separation rather than divorce in "cases of marital discord."[56] Some soldiers simply chose not to return to their relationships. Social service agencies noted the large number of wives abandoned by soldier-husbands; military enlistment was occasionally tantamount to desertion.[57] Some married Canadian soldiers formed second families in Europe

53 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 28, File, Montreal Welfare Department, DAB 4-7. "Families referred by D.A.B. to the Bureau d'Assistance Sociale aux Familles for supervision and re-education," 31 July 1944.

54 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB: Vol. 29, File, Children of Unmarried Mothers, DAB 5-5. R.O.G. Bennett to G.F. Thompson, 14 April 1943; Vol. 28, File, DAB 4-5, Vol. 4, General Correspondence with Welfare Agencies. R.O.G. Bennett to Olive M. Snyder, 28 May 1943.

55 *La Presse*, 6 avril 1946, p.32; CYC, *Youth, Marriage and the Family*, 52; NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 36, File, Permission to Marry (Army) - DAB 7-24-102g, Vol. 1. Circular No. 103, 3 April 1944; *Statutes of Canada* 1944-45; 1945; 1946; 1947; 1948; 1949 (8 George VI - 13 George VI).

56 UM, P16, ACC, P16/H3/18/84. "Le Mariage Chrétien" (1946); NA, MG 28 I 129, SPWC, Vol. 6, File, SPWC Minutes, 19 February 1947 to 24 March 1950. Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors, 19 October 1949. Approximately 20 percent of the parliamentary divorces awarded to Montreal couples between 1944 and 1946 went to couples where at least one of the partners had a French surname; clearly French-Canadians were under-represented. See *Statutes of Canada* 1944-45; 1945; 1946 (8 George VI - 10 George VI).

57 NA, MG 30 C 92, Savage papers, Vol. 3, File, Council of Women, Montreal Local, 1948-51. Local Council of Women, Vancouver, BC, Annual Report of Convener of Armed Forces. See also David A. Kent, "'Gone for a Soldier': Family Breakdown and the Demography of Desertion in a London Parish, 1750-91," *Local Population Studies* 45 (1990): 27-42.

and elected to stay with them: a precedent established during the First World War a generation earlier.[58] Meanwhile, soldiers who were unmarried but who had girlfriends or fiancées in Canada frequently came home with new wives, met overseas.

War Brides

Those who lived through the war were struck by the huge number of marriages hastily made, in Canada and overseas. The explosion of marriages after September 1939 has been attributed by one historian of Britain to a "last-dance" mentality that saw sexual tension heightened by the excitement of war and a reckless and romantic attitude in the face of an unknown future.[59] In Canada, other factors no doubt forced the formalisation of relationships that might otherwise have remained unsolemnised: hopes of avoiding conscription, for instance, or the opportunity to allocate and receive dependents' allowances. The improved economic situation, moreover, meant that couples who had courted in the depths of the Depression could finally afford to establish their own households. For many Canadian soldiers, a "last-dance" attitude would result in marriages to women met in Europe, primarily England. The subsequent arrival in Canada of close to 45,000 "war brides" and their more than 21,000 children captured the public's attention and also encapsulates many of the peculiar difficulties of postwar marital adjustment.[60]

The immigration of British brides began midway through the war and was largely completed by 1947.[61] Those who settled in Montreal were probably the lucky ones, benefiting at least from a city with all kinds of amenities. Some arrived while their husbands were still fighting overseas; many came with young children.[62] Brides were greeted by spouses and by in-laws: the publicity accorded these reunions was extensive. The photograph of "Jane-Margaret et son papa" that appeared in *La Presse* on 7 March 1946, for instance, depicted the reunion at Bonaventure Station of M. Bérubé, former member of the Fusiliers Mont-Royal,

58 James Snell, *In the Shadow of the Law: Divorce in Canada 1900-1939* (Toronto, 1991).

59 Raynes Minns, *Bombers and Mash: The Domestic Front 1939-45* (London, 1980), 180.

60 For statistics on war brides and their children, see Desmond Morton, *1945: When Canada Won the War* (Ottawa: CHA Historical Booklet no. 54, 1995), 11. For the reminiscences of English war brides, see Joyce Hibbert, *The War Brides* (Toronto, 1978).

61 *La Presse* noted that the last boatload of war brides and children was expected to arrive in Halifax on 21 November 1946 and that after 30 November, dependents of Canadian soldiers wishing to come to Canada would have to pay their own way. Yet an article on 8 February 1947 observed that 400 Canadian soldiers had recently arrived in Halifax and that the ship's passengers included 26 war brides and their children. See *La Presse*, 3 octobre 1946, p.4; 2 novembre 1946, p.28; 8 février 1947, p.35.

62 NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL: Vol. 5, File 25. Annual Report of the Recording Secretary, Women's Auxiliary of the R.C.C.S. (Montreal) [1944]; Vol. 3, File 54. Canadian Red Cross Society, Quebec Provincial Division, Lists of Dependents (Army) Arriving from Britain for Montreal.

his English bride, and their one-year-old daughter, Jane-Margaret. Newspaper articles gushed about "heureuses Canadiennes," "nouvelles citoyennes du Canada": young English women who were being received with open arms and who would create comfortable homes for their veteran-husbands.[63]

In addition to the usual resources offered by an urban centre, English women found special provisions made for them, largely by the city's Anglo-Protestant community. CN Rail and the Red Cross set up a canteen, a rest-area, and a nursery for British mothers and children arriving at Montreal's Bonaventure Station. The Acorn Club, established "to welcome and help in any way possible all British brides arriving in Montreal," sent "a letter of welcome to every member two weeks after her arrival" in the city. Members of the Local Council of Women were requested to do everything in their power "to help the British war brides to become happy and useful Canadian citizens." The YWCA, meanwhile, offered to arrange French lessons for them.[64]

Not everyone was caught up in the romance of the British brides, however. Many French-Canadians looked askance at these English women newly arrived on their soil. L'Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Canadienne Française (l'ACJC) argued that English women were morally unworthy of young French-Canadian men, despite their often superior education. French-Canadian families would not necessarily extend a warm welcome to these brides, the ACJC warned, and furthermore, would the children of these unions be French or English?[65]

War brides themselves found much to adjust to. Canadian observers were surprised by reports of unhappy British wives, and tended to attribute their discontent to Montreal's postwar housing crisis. The Victoria Rifles Ladies Association of Montreal felt it essential that the housing shortage be rectified so that "no Canadian or British bride will feel like returning home to mother just because we have failed to provide liveable homes for them."[66] Others blamed

63 *La Presse*: 7 mars 1946, p.4; 27 novembre 1944, p.4; 27 mars 1944, p.4; 2 novembre 1946, p.63.

64 *La Presse*, 6 décembre 1944, p.4; NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 3, File 65. Mary Elder to all Auxiliary Presidents, 1 June 1945; NA, MG 30 C 92, Savage papers, Vol. 3, File, Council of Women – National – 1940-1948. Marion D. Savage, National Convener, to Local Conveners, 13 October 1945; NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 1, File 91. Association Meeting and Directors' Meeting, 12 October 1945.

65 ANQM, P104, JOC, Container 240, File, Commission Canadienne de la Jeunesse. Mémoires soumis par le comité central de l'ACJC à la Commission Canadienne de la Jeunesse, 27-28 janvier 1945. See also UM, P16, ACC, P16/04/52, Commission Canadienne de la Jeunesse, Comité provincial du Québec, Mémoire sur la famille, for similar worries about the linguistic and religious problems posed by war brides.

66 NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 5, File 25. Victoria Rifles Ladies' Association, Report of Welfare Committee [1946?]. For more on British wives and the housing shortage, see NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL: Vol. 1, File 91. Executive Meeting, 5 January 1945; Vol. 3, File 54. Chairman of Oak Society for British War Wives to MSWL, n.d.; Vol. 3, File 66. President of Royal Montreal Regiment Ladies Committee to Mrs. Wright, 19 November 1945.

marital unhappiness on conflicts with in-laws. Montreal's Society for the Protection of Women and Children (SPWC) reported in 1945 and 1946 that it was seeing an increased number of cases involving "marriages contracted overseas by service personnel," including "numerous cases in which the War-bride is not accepted by the soldier's family." The SPWC noted "more or less acute marital difficulties" related to "culture, religion and race," to the transition to urban living, and to situations where "the soldier has reverted to an attachment made prior to his departure for overseas service."[67] One woman's story captures war brides' frustrations with both housing and in-laws. The woman's husband, a veteran, worked the nightshift, and the couple and their two children lived with the husband's married sister. Not long after her arrival in the city, the woman wrote to the Montreal Soldiers' Wives League, "Please can you refer me how to find out about returning home. I have two children and I am expecting another. We have one room here, and have been told that we must find another place. Whereas we can't – places are hard to get and I wish to return to England."[68]

Other war brides were also prepared to return home. Montreal service clubs such as the Oak Society for British War Wives perceived "this inability to settle down" to be widespread and problematic.[69] Newspapers noted that English wives were returning to the UK because they found Canadians cold and unfriendly.[70] Meanwhile, numerous instances of abandoned war brides were coming to the attention of social service agencies. A few women deserted by Canadian husbands overseas decided nonetheless to come to Canada.[71] The conclusions to some of these stories can be found in the *Statutes of Canada*: each year between 1945 and 1949 saw parliamentary divorces awarded to

67 NA, MG 28 I 129, SPWC: Vol. 6, File, Minutes, 19 February 1947 to 24 March 1950. Report of the Executive Secretary for the Year 1946; Vol. 5, File, Minutes of Board Meetings, 18 April 1945 to 15 January 1947. Executive Secretary's Report, Annual Meeting, 22 March 1946; also Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors, 16 May 1945.

68 NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 3, File 54. Mrs. V to MSWL, September 1945 and n.d.; also Canadian Red Cross Society, Quebec Provincial Division, List of Dependents (Army) who arrived in Montreal Ex. Vessels W933 and W934 on 29 August 1945.

69 NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 3, File 54. Chairman of Oak Society for British War Wives to MSWL, n.d.

70 *La Presse*, 2 novembre 1946, p.28. Barry Broadfoot's interviews with veterans also uncovered evidence of the poor reception given to some English wives and he notes that many returned to England after a very short time in Canada. See *The Veterans' Years: Coming Home from the War* (Vancouver; Toronto, 1985), 87, 134.

71 NA, MG 28 I 10, CCSD, Vol. 58: File, 489. K.M. Jackson to Monsieur L. Désilets, 25 février 1948; File 489A. Memorandum Re: Wives of Canadian Servicemen Overseas Proceeding to Canada but either Widowed or Deserted, 1946; File 489A. Reverend S.A. Yeo to Miss Lillian Thompson, 4 December 1946.

Montreal residents whose marriages had taken place in wartime England.[72] Yet as observers were quick to point out, those war brides who returned to Britain were the exception rather than the rule. *La Presse*, for instance, reported in November 1945 that only 29 of the 9,000 British war brides who had so far arrived in Canada had requested a return to England.[73] Many wartime romances no doubt took longer to unravel. But most war brides probably, as their French-Canadian neighbours would have said, "se débrouillaient."

Children

Many returning soldiers met their children for the first time, or encountered them after a separation of several years.[74] Wartime commentators had expressed considerable concern over Canada's temporarily fatherless children. Even worse was the prospect that this temporary state might become permanent. As the Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Canadienne Française worried, "Combien d'enfants ne connaîtront pas leur père et n'auront pas son aide pour se faire un avenir."[75] The nation-wide perception that juvenile delinquency was flourishing was rooted in anxiety over women's paid work and "latch-key" children. Were the children of employed mothers and enlisted fathers under proper supervision? Mothers were seen to be incapable of enforcing the strict discipline that was the purview of fathers. Members of the Montreal Soldiers' Wives League felt that soldiers' children were deprived of "the steadying hand of a father in their guidance and upbringing"; veterans' advocates worried that soldier-fathers would return from overseas "to find incipient juvenile delinquency in the home."[76] The effect of fathers' absence on children's emotional and (hetero)sexual development was also a concern. Observers worried about

72 *Statutes of Canada* 1944-45; 1945; 1946; 1947; 1948; 1949 (8 George VI - 13 George VI). See also NA, MG 28 I 10, CCSD, Vol. 58, File 489A. Memorandum re: Wives of Canadian Servicemen Overseas Proceeding to Canada but either Widowed or Deserted, 1946.

73 *La Presse*, 28 novembre 1945, p.4. See also comments by a representative of the Department of Immigration in NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 5, File 18. MSWL Welfare Report, n.d.

74 On veterans and their children in the United States, see William M. Tuttle, Jr., *'Daddy's Gone to War': The Second World War in the Lives of America's Children* (New York; Oxford, 1993), esp. Ch. 12. See also the scattered examples in Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto, 1997), eg. p.45.

75 ANQM, P104, JOC, Container 240, File, Commission Canadienne de la Jeunesse. Mémoires soumis par le comité central de l'ACJC à la Commission Canadienne de la Jeunesse, 27-28 janvier 1945, "Jeunesse et Famille."

76 NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 3, File 65. Mrs. Ward C. Pitfield to David Munroe, 30 March 1945; England, *Discharged*, 326. There is a growing secondary literature on juvenile delinquency in twentieth-century Canada. See Jeff Keshen, "Wartime Jitters over Juveniles: Canada's Delinquency Scare and Its Consequences, 1939-1945," in *Age of Contention: Readings in Canadian Social History, 1900-1945* (Toronto, 1997). For a study that explores the gendered and sexualised nature of postwar delinquency discourses, see Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal*, esp. Ch. 4.

daughters' "future adjustment to men and marriage." Sons, meanwhile, might become "overdependent" on their mothers as a result of being "thrown too much with women." "The boys who are raised during the war years," warned the Canadian Youth Commissioners, "must be safeguarded against becoming men who are 'tied to their mothers' apron strings.'"[77]

Commentators were aware that relations between returned soldiers and their children might be strained. A federal government brochure reminded veterans to "tenir compte de la croissance des enfants durant leur absence." Promoters of Volunteer Citizens' Committees noted that veterans were often strangers to their children. Veterans interviewed by Barry Broadfoot recounted the disappointment on the part of children who had expected their returning fathers to be larger-than-life war heroes and who found instead only ordinary men.[78] Awkward relations between veterans and children affected veterans' relationships with their wives; likewise, strained marital relations affected children's perceptions of their soldier-fathers.[79] Children also suffered from the fall-out of marriages shattered by war; some children were taken into institutional or foster care after their servicemen-fathers returned and their parents' marriages disintegrated.[80]

Some idea of the pressure that both military service and the return to family life placed on men can be ascertained from the more extreme and tragic examples of veterans' difficulties with their children. *La Presse*, for instance, published a photograph of a battered infant in March 1947, under the caption "Le pitoyable enfant d'un ancien combattant aussi malheureux." A 39-year-old Montreal war veteran, Edmond O'Driscoll, had been charged with injuring his six-month-old daughter Maureen three times in three months, breaking her arms and fracturing her ribs and collarbone. O'Driscoll had undergone lengthy treatment at Ste. Anne's Military Hospital for a head wound and apparently was not always conscious of his actions. Perhaps, the newspaper suggested, the baby's injuries could be attributed to the fact that the six-foot veteran was not aware of his strength and held her too tightly. O'Driscoll was scheduled for a mental examination by the judge hearing the case. The journalist's sympathy was clearly extended to the former soldier as well as to his child.[81] Montreal's Society for the Protection of Women and Children, meanwhile, described two

77 CYC, *Youth, Marriage and the Family*, 50-52.

78 *La Presse*, 12 juin 1945, "Le chemin du retour," p.6; NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 12, File, Committees Local – General Correspondence. Janet R. Keith, "Volunteer Citizens' Committees"; Broadfoot, *The Veterans' Years*, 94.

79 CYC, *Youth, Marriage, and the Family*, 50.

80 NA, MG 28 V 86, JFS, Vol. 12, File, Minutes of Meetings, Case and Adoption Committee, Jewish Child Welfare Bureau, 1944-1948. Minutes, Meeting of Placement Committee of JCWB, 28 March 1944. See also Sutherland, *Growing Up*, 83, 106.

81 *La Presse*, 5 mars 1947, p. 3.

cases of incest involving Second World War veterans and their daughters in its submission to the Royal Commission on the Criminal Law relating to Criminal Sexual Psychopaths in 1956.[82] Child-beating and incest were surely not the experience of most veterans. But such incidents do speak to the problematic nature of reunion and also to the ways in which veterans' troubles were framed in their communities.

Parents

Second World War veterans were "sons" as well as 'lovers.'[83] Married veterans and their wives were often depicted as the heroes and heroines of the postwar romance of reunion, but, in fact, most Canadian veterans were young and single.[84] Veterans were referred to in the popular press as "boys," often "our boys": in a sense, they were everyone's sons. Parents, and often siblings, were expected to contribute to the task of rehabilitation. The Department of Veterans' Affairs noted approvingly that Montreal parents were encouraging their sons to get "back to work."[85] The Jeunesse Ouvrière Catholique Féminine reminded families and friends that young working-class men were returning much changed by their military experiences, often nervous and irritable. Women were to help them to readjust by reintroducing them to good habits, notably religion.[86]

Yet while young soldiers were sons, they were often in the ambiguous position of allocating dependents' allowances to their parents and siblings.[87] This was not necessarily a new situation, given Montreal's history of child and teen labour and given the working-class background of many soldiers.[88] Parents of soldiers and veterans, used to relying on sons' earnings, had a clear sense of enti-

82 McGill Archives, MG 2076, Montreal Council of Social Agencies, Container 14, File 244. SPWC, Summary of Representations to be made before the Royal Commission on the Criminal Law relating to Criminal Sexual Psychopaths, 30 January 1956.

83 D.H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* (New York, 1913).

84 After the first year of war, during which the married unemployed enlisted in great numbers, the average soldier tended to be single. See NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 5, File 24. MSWL to Mr. E.I. Smit, March 1942. See also England, *Discharged*, 152.

85 NA, RG 38, DVA, Vol.193, File 65-47-A. Monthly Report on Activities, 1 August 1944. Robert England's massive rehabilitation manual, *Discharged*, was written to reassure servicemen and their parents (see p. 376).

86 ANQM, P104, JOC, Container 28, File, Bulletins des Chefs de la J.O.C.F. 1945-1946-1947. Bulletin mensuel J.O.C.F. Mars 1946. "Le retour de nos vétérans."

87 NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 1, File 91. Executive Committee Meeting, 19 January 1940; NA, MG 28 V 86, JFS, Vol.10, File, Minutes of Meetings of Case Committee, Family Welfare Department, 1944-45. Follow up, 9 May 1945.

88 On Montreal soldiers' class background, see ANQM, P104, JOC, Container 170, File, Organisation. Projet d'un service de soldat. Organisé par la J.O.C. et la L.O.C. 2e copie. On child and teen labour in mid-twentieth-century Montreal, see Dominique Marshall, *Aux origines sociales de l'État-providence: Familles québécoises, obligation scolaire et allocations familiales* 1940-1955 (Montreal, 1998).

tlement to state-administered allowances. As one woman reminded the Montreal Soldiers' Wives League in January 1946, "After all, I am a veteran's mother and entitled to my check . . . ."[89] Moreover, parents across the country exhibited a marked preference for soldiers' and veterans' allowances over other forms of social welfare; military allowances were a source of pride rather than stigma.[90]

Those veterans who were young and unmarried but whose adolescence had ended abruptly with their period of service found the return to the nest frustrating after several years of absence and mobility. Montreal's severe postwar housing shortage meant that veterans frequently moved back into overcrowded parental homes. Friction ensued as parents were forced to adjust to their young sons' independence and resistance to parental authority.[91] With regard to female veterans, the Canadian Youth Commission thought it likely that "once the first pleasure of returning home is over, the standards of the parents will appear more rigid than ever and the advice and restrictions more irksome than before."[92] Readers of the daily press were exposed to grim examples of the difficulties of rehabilitation. For instance, 25-year-old Laurent Leduc, a Montreal navy veteran, was charged in February 1946 with knifing his father in the back in a fit of hysteria, and with attempting to attack his mother and sisters.[93]

Well-known Canadian psychiatrist, Brock Chisholm, noted that "Many people still speak of our soldiers as 'boys,'" but insisted that "It is very important that we should not regard our soldiers as boys but rather that we should see them clearly as they are – grown-up responsible men."[94] War's function as a rite of passage was highlighted by the fact that these men often returned with new family responsibilities.[95] The transfer of assigned pay and dependents' allowances from mothers to new brides suggests one way in which the war transformed, and often strained, filial relationships. As soldiers and veterans

89 NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 2, File 33. Mrs. C to MSWL, January 1946. See also, NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 29, File, Mothers' Allowance, D.A.B. 5-1. Gertrude C[?], Secretary to the Child Welfare Board, Department of Health and Public Welfare, Winnipeg, to R.O.G. Bennett, 19 March 1942.

90 NA, RG 36, Series 18, DAB, Vol. 29, File, Mothers' Allowances, DAB 5-1. C.W. Lundy to R.O.G. Bennett, 26 July 1943.

91 *La Presse*, 5 novembre 1945, "Idéal à mettre à la portée de nos combattants," p.4; ANQM, P104, JOC, Container 216, File, Soldats (Service). Memorandum of the J.O.C. To the CANADIAN GOVERNMENT in Favour of Demobilized Young Men [n.d.]; CYC, *Youth, Marriage, and the Family*, 43.

92 ANQM, P104, JOC, Container 58, File, Emissions Radiophoniques – Campagne des loisirs – 1946. 3ème émission. Semaine de propagande de la J.O.C. 16 au 23 juin 1946; CYC, *Youth, Marriage, and the Family*, 62-63.

93 *La Presse*, 6 février 1946, "Accusé d'avoir tenté d'assassiner son père," p.3.

94 NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 3, File 64. Speech by Brock Chisholm, 13 November 1944: "Women's Responsibility for Mental Reestablishment of Soldiers." See also, England, Discharged, 329-30.

95 NA, MG 29 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 2, File 33. "Clothing Allowance for Discharged Officers," n.d.

transferred their allegiances and allowances from mothers to wives, mothers not only felt displaced, but suffered tangible consequences. Social service agencies noted the financial hardship caused to mothers by this switch, and by the fact that allowances to mothers were less than those to wives. Widowed mothers, in particular, often relied on their allowances to cover the costs of medical care.[96] Conflict was aggravated in situations where new brides were living with their in-laws. Housing shortages, the increased cost-of-living, fixed incomes, and perceptions of respectable living arrangements meant that families often doubled up, particularly while soldier-husbands were overseas. The General Secretary of Montreal's YWCA observed that in such situations, "Disagreements often start regarding allowances, discipline of children, etc., between the mothers-in-law and wives, both of whom may be the official responsibility of the enlisted men."[97] The heroine of an advertisement for Castoria, a young mother living with her mother-in-law while her soldier-husband was overseas, presumably spoke to a receptive audience when she complained "J'ai un emploi de guerre . . . et des ennuis avec belle-maman."[98]

Unfaithful spouses, unhappy war brides, unfamiliar children, and neglected parents were some of the darker elements of the postwar romance. As poststructuralist scholars argue, the telling of any story involves the suppression of other stories that might be told just as well; every narrative is built on omissions and exclusions.[99] The silences in the romance of reunion are important. Most obviously, this was a resolutely heterosexual narrative. Despite, or perhaps because of, the military bureaucracy's exposure to homosexual relationships between armed forces personnel during the war, such relationships received no sanction in the dominant discourse of postwar reunion.[100] Furthermore, sexual relation-

96 NA, MG 28 I 311, MSWL, Vol. 2, File 33. Janet Bennett to MSWL, 23 May 1944; also Report of Sub Committee on Need of Soldier's Widows and Widowed Mothers for Supplementary Grants, n.d. See also NA, MG 28 I 10, CCSD, Vol. 134, File 600. Response to questionnaire from H.P. Lyne, Kelvington Branch Canadian Legion, Kelvington, Saskatchewan, July 1942.

97 NA, RG 38, DVA, Vol. 193, File 65-47-A. Monthly Report on Activities, 2 February 1943; NA, MG 28 I 10, CCSD, Vol. 134, File 600. E.J. Verity to Director of Relief, Veteran Block, Regina, 10 July 1942; File 600 (2). Catherine Stuart Vance to Charles H. Young, 10 June 1942.

98 "I have a war job ... and troubles with Mother-in-law." *La Presse*, 7 avril 1945, p.15.

99 For a well-known statement of this position, see Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1988).

100 On the homecomings of gay and lesbian veterans in the United States, see Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York, 1990), esp. Ch. 9. For Canada, see the fragmentary evidence in Gary Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire: Homo and Hetero Sexualities*, 2nd ed., revised (Montreal, 1996), 154-57. For evidence of lesbian relationships in the Canadian navy, see Ruth Roach Pierson, *'They're Still Women After All': The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto, 1986), 275 n.83. For Australia, see Ruth Ford, "Lesbians and Loose Women: Female Sexuality and the Women's Services during World War II," in Gender and War. Damousi and Lake, eds. 81-104.

ships were privileged over others. More soldiers had parents than had wives, for instance, but it was the reunion of the male soldier and his female companion that attracted the most public attention.

Moreover, such was the commitment of the narrative to heterosexuality and to "traditional" gender roles that female veterans fit uneasily into the conventional story. The returning military hero was depicted as male; women's role was to wait loyally at home. The Canadian public was assured that women veterans, like their male counterparts, were eagerly anticipating establishing homes and families of their own. As historian, Ruth Pierson, has shown, servicewomen's marriages to servicemen were given extensive publicity.[101] But it was difficult to reconcile the female veterans' wartime mobility, military experience, and (albeit limited) degree of sexual freedom with the romance of reunion. Certainly those unmarried servicewomen discharged for pregnancy played little part in postwar romances.[102]

Narratives of reunion were also problematic given the anti-conscription, and sometimes antiwar, sentiment in Quebec. Indeed, the homecoming narratives coexisted uneasily with counter-narratives, such as those recorded by Pierre Vallières, of French-Canadian men "hidden in the woods, armed with their rifles," who had "mobilized their wives and children to organize resistance to the military police."[103] In this case, the North American military hero met his match in the French-Canadian antihero resisting the coercive power of the state and British imperialism. The reunion tales also tended to elide questions of class: the differing experiences of officers and rank-and-file servicemen, or the particular difficulties of working-class family economies. The romance of reunion was produced and narrated in Quebec, as it was elsewhere on the continent. But given the dynamic of French-English relations and the political economy of enlistment within the province, it also met with greater challenges than elsewhere.

This examination of "domestic demobilization" blends social and military history in an attempt to bridge the gap between accounts of Canadians in wartime and histories of families in Canada in the 1950s. The romance of postwar reunion had a certain timeless quality, harking back to a mythical golden age of Ulysses and Penelope, and was no doubt told in the wake of other military conflicts such as the First World War, a generation earlier. Indeed, the strength of the narrative can be attributed partly to its familiarity. But the length of the war, Canadians' "total war" effort, the extent to which women had taken

101 Pierson, *'They're Still Women,'* 159-61, 184.

102 See NA, RG 38, DVA, Vol. 197, File, Rehabilitation, Statistics, Women's Division. Proceedings: Training Conferences on Women's Rehabilitation, 83-87. On the question of servicewomen's sexual respectability, see Pierson, *'They're Still Women,'* Ch. 5; Ruth Ford, "Lesbians and Loose Women."

103 Pierre Vallières, *White Niggers of America*

on "men's jobs," the homosocial nature of life for many Canadians in wartime, and the legacy of the Depression, ensured that these heterosexual reunion narratives had a particular resonance in the late 1940s. Veterans faced other difficulties upon their return: securing employment, for instance, or finding a home despite Montreal's severe postwar housing shortage. Family strains were especially deeply felt, however, given that Canadian soldiers, like those pledging allegiance to other nations, had been encouraged to fight to preserve Home and Family, and given that the postwar years witnessed an intense pressure to rebuild households disrupted by war. Widespread evidence of troubled marriages and of women's sexual autonomy was, in part, what lay behind the push for conjugal domesticity in the postwar period. Many of the seemingly tranquil nuclear families of the 1950s clearly had unsettled histories.