

“THAT’S MY STORY.” UNPACKING  
CANADIAN WAR BRIDE VETERANS’  
LIFE HISTORIES

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## **Abstract**

### **“That’s My Story.” Unpacking Canadian War Bride Veterans’ Life Histories**

This thesis analyzes the life histories of women who served in the Second World War British auxiliary services (the Auxiliary Territorial Service, the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force, and the Women’s Royal Naval Service) who migrated to Canada as war brides (the wives or fiancées of Canadian servicemen). It argues that understandings of womanhood which connect ideal femininity with domesticity operate on the ways in which war bride veterans view themselves as veterans and how they remember their experiences as servicewomen. In their oral histories, these women portrayed themselves both in accordance with and in opposition to traditional feminine roles. However, identities associated with traditional femininity such as ‘sweetheart,’ ‘wife,’ ‘mother,’ and ‘grandmother’ were frequently most prevalent. My findings indicate that war brides who had more satisfying and smooth transitions to Canadian life generally remember and emphasize their war bride past over their military history and view themselves as having a Canadian identity. Alternatively, those who had more difficult experiences of migration gain composure in remembering their experiences as servicewomen since these experiences were less troubling and complicated. These women tend to assert their British identities. This project contributes to scholarship in gender history, memory studies, and studies of migration through unpacking how cultural discourses regarding gender in wartime and national identity intersect with stories of migration in the life history narratives of war bride veterans. It provides a new framework for the study of women in war in Britain, as well as war bride history in Canada. This thesis produced and draws from eighteen comprehensive life history interviews with war bride veterans. Part I begins with a chapter exploring theoretical concepts setting out the combined material and cultural epistemology of this project, including popular memory theory, as well as understandings of gender and nationality that assisted the methodology developed for analyzing war bride veterans’ narratives in relation to historical and cultural research. This methodology based on the work of T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, Michael Roper, and Richard Johnson, recognizes the circular and nuanced relationships people have with cultural codes and memories. The historical context chapter examines historical understandings regarding appropriate roles for men and women in wartime through primary source research and contemporary gender historical theory. It also examines how war brides have been recognized in Canadian cultural memory. Part II applies this work with three chapters centred on life history interviews with Wendy Turner, Victoria Sparrow, and Penny MacDonald (pseudonyms).

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## **Acronyms and Definitions**

ATS – Auxiliary Territorial Service

CWAC – Canadian Women's Army Corps

WAAF – Women's Auxiliary Air Force

WRNS (Wrens) – Women's Royal Naval Service

War Bride Veterans – Women who served in the British women's auxiliaries who came to Canada as the wives and fiancées of Second World War Canadian servicemen

LA – Lauren Auger

GB – Gwendolyn Barry

BC – Beatrice Cartier

PM – Penny MacDonald

VS – Victoria Sparrow

WT – Wendy Turner

HM – Henry MacDonald

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Lauren Beth Auger

June 2017

## **Declaration**

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Lauren Beth Auger

June 2017



## Introduction - “That’s My Story.” Unpacking Canadian War Bride Veterans’ Life Histories

Yes. I had of course, been in the services. Uh and my husband was active in the Legion and I thought, well I suppose I better join the Legion but, because I had served alongside men, and had done a man’s trade, I didn’t feel like joining the women’s group. I wanted to join the *men’s* group. Not that I would have gone to their meetings, I would have gone to the women’s meetings but, when it came to November the 11<sup>th</sup> I felt I should be *marching with the men...* not the women. And so I asked about this, to the president, and he said, “Certainly not!” He said, “We, we can’t have you drinking with the men.” I don’t even drink! So I would not have been drinking with the *men!*<sup>1</sup>

During the Second World War, Gwendolyn Barry served in the British Women’s Auxiliary Air Force as a mechanic. In her oral history interview conducted for this thesis her posting at RAF Hawkinge, according to her the southern-most air base in Britain, was central to her memory of her war years. Despite Gwendolyn’s service, due to her gender, her local Royal Canadian Legion chapter denied her recognition and her identity as a veteran. This thesis examines the life histories of eight war bride veterans drawing on interviews with women who served in the British auxiliary services: the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), and the Women’s Royal Naval Service (Wrens or WRNS) between 1939 and 1945 who came to Canada as war brides (the fiancées and wives of Second World War Canadian servicemen). In recognition of both their pasts in the services and as war brides, I refer to these women as war bride veterans.

This thesis analyzes the experiences, memories, identities, and subjectivities of war bride veterans. Although the thesis primarily focuses on eight interviews, eighteen oral histories with war bride veterans were conducted in 2010 and 2011 using the life history method. To find meaning in war bride veterans’ oral history accounts, this thesis contextualizes these oral histories within women’s contribution to the Second World War in Britain and Canada, war brides’ romances with Canadian servicemen and their

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<sup>1</sup> Gwendolyn Barry, interviewed by Lauren Auger, August 11, 2010, Huntsville, Ontario.

migration to and settlement in Canada, and social discourses regarding appropriate femininities and masculinities in wartime Britain and Canada. Cultural memory in Canada regarding the Second World War and especially that centred on war bride veterans will also be examined to better understand the connection between past and present understandings of gender and war and how social discourses regarding gender impact personal memory, identity, and subjectivity.

In 2005, the Canadian government recognized veterans of the Second World War with the declaration of 2005 as the 'year of the veteran.' In 2006, the provincial governments of New Brunswick, Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island declared 2006 'the year of the war bride' and Saskatchewan declared November 2006 the 'month of the war bride.'<sup>2</sup> The cumulative event honouring war brides took place on November 8, 2006 at Pier 21 in Halifax, Nova Scotia which is now a museum for immigration to Canada.<sup>3</sup> War brides have received cultural recognition in Canada through films<sup>4</sup> and popular books<sup>5</sup> focused on war brides as well as events surrounding the 2006 celebrations. However, it is interesting that the Canadian government, the provincial governments of Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Québec, nor the territorial governments of Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut formally recognized war brides in 2006. This lack of recognition suggests that certain wartime experiences have greater significance in Canadian cultural memory than others.

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<sup>2</sup> "Frequently asked Questions," The Canadian War Brides, <http://www.canadianwarbrides.com/faq.asp#question4>

<sup>3</sup> Carrie-Ann Smith, "Pier 21's Welcome Back War Brides Event" (Newsletter, Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 2006), 1.

<sup>4</sup> *The War Bride*, DVD, Directed by Lyndon Chubbick, (DB Entertainment, 2001); *The War Brides: From Romance to Reality*, DVD, Directed by Anne Hainsworth, (Kiss the Bride Productions, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Melynda Jarratt, *Captured Heart's New Brunswick's War Brides* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Publications, 2008); Melynda Jarratt *War Brides* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009); Eswyn Lyster, *Most Excellent Citizens Canada's War Brides of World War II* (Victoria: Trafford, 2009); Helen (Hall) Shewchuk, *If Kisses Were Roses a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute to War Brides* (Sudbury: Journal Printing, 1996); Ben Wicks, *Promise You'll Take Care of My Daughter- The Remarkable War Brides of World War II* (Don Mills: Stoddart, 1992).

However, the recognition of war brides in most provinces as well as the cultural events surrounding the 2006 'year of the war bride' declarations suggest that war brides feature in Canadian public memory of the Second World War.<sup>6</sup>

This thesis will explore cultural memory regarding war brides in relation to how war brides themselves articulate their memories and identities. It will consider how cultural discourses regarding women and war and appropriate masculinities and femininities in wartime Britain and Canada impact how elderly war bride veterans remember their war service, their migrations, and their post-war lives. The identities and experiences that most give war bride veterans a sense of satisfaction and comfort will be analyzed as well as the ways in which these women negotiate with aspects of themselves that they have difficulty processing and reconciling.

Over the course of the Second World War, 494,000 Canadian servicemen served in Britain.<sup>7</sup> Canadian soldiers first landed in Scotland in December 1939 before travelling to Southern England where most Canadian troops were based before deployment to more active wartime theaters. Within a few weeks of the Canadians' arrival, the first marriages between Canadian soldiers and British women took place. 47,783 war brides married Canadian servicemen during and immediately following the conflict.<sup>8</sup> 44,886 of these women were from Great Britain.<sup>9</sup> As of December 31, 1946, 21,385 children had been born from these relationships.<sup>10</sup> By December 31, 1947, 42,935 war brides and 20,519

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<sup>6</sup> War brides received some public recognition prior to 2006 as demonstrated by the following books and films: (Hall) Shewchuk, *If Kisses Were Roses*, 1996; *The War Brides*; *From Romance to Reality*, 2001; *The War Bride*, 2001; Wicks, *Promise You'll Take Care of My Daughter*, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Col. C.P. Stacey and Barbara M. Wilson, Preface to *The Half Million: The Canadians in Britain, 1939-1946* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), xi.

<sup>8</sup> Library Archives Canada, File HQ650-124-33, *History of the Directorate of Repatriation*, 34; Also cited in Melynda Jarratt, Appendix to *War Brides The Stories of Women Who Left Everything Behind to Follow the Men They Loved* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), 269.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

children had been admitted to Canada.<sup>11</sup> The number of war brides and children who migrated to Canada as the dependents of Canadian servicemen bears special significance given the relatively small Canadian wartime population of eleven million people.<sup>12</sup>

This thesis contributes to literature and debates centred on women and war, women veterans and oral history, memory studies and oral history, and studies of migration and transnational oral histories. Scholarship focused on British women during the Second World War examines how social understandings of gender influenced women's roles in the conflict.<sup>13</sup> This scholarship examines the range of opportunities for women in the war effort.<sup>14</sup> With more nuanced interpretations of gender in the historical community,<sup>15</sup> recent

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<sup>11</sup> Library Archives Canada, File 2964-E-40, *Servicemen's Dependents*.

<sup>12</sup> "Canadian Women at War," *Veterans Affairs Canada*, <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/historical-sheets/women>

<sup>13</sup> See: Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in the Two World Wars* (London; New York: Pandora Press, 1987); Gerard J. DeGroot, "I love the scent of cordite in your hair" Gender Dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries during the Second World War," *History* 82 (265) (January 1997); Gerard J. DeGroot, "Lipstick on her Nipples, Cordite in her Hair: Sex and Romance among British Servicewomen in the Second World War," in *A Soldier and a Woman Sexual Integration in the Military*, eds. Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2000); Gerard J. DeGroot, "'Whose Finger on the Trigger?' Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries and the Female Combat Taboo," *War in History* 4:4 (1997); Lucy Noakes, *Women in the British Army War and the Gentle Sex 1904-1948* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006); Juliette Pattinson, *Behind Enemy Lines Gender, Passing and the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2007); Juliette Pattinson, "'The Thing that Made Me Hesitate' Re-examining Gender Intersubjectivities in Interviews with British Secret War Veterans," *Women's History Review* 20 (2) (2011); Corinna Peniston-Bird and Penny Summerfield, *Contesting Home Defence Men, Women and the Home Guard in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Of Hockey Sticks and Sten Guns: British Auxiliaries and their weapons in the Second World War," *Women's History Magazine* (76) (Autumn 2014); Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Penny Summerfield, "'She Wants a Gun not a Dishcloth!' Gender, Service and Citizenship in Britain in the Second World War," in *A Soldier and a Woman Sexual Integration in the Military*, eds. Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2000); Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

<sup>14</sup> The above research broadly argues that despite the increasing participation of women in the war effort, for instance their role on anti-air craft gun sites, contemporary understandings of womanhood that connected women to domesticity and encouraged their performance of feminine identities such as sweetheart, wife, and mother remained largely resistant to change.

<sup>15</sup> For scholarship regarding masculinities see: R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); R.W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000); Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994); Martin Francis, "The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity," *The Historical Journal* 45 (3) (September 2002): 637-652; Martin Francis, *The Flyer British Culture and the Royal Air Force 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds., *Manful Assertions in Britain since 1800* (London; Routledge, 1991).

research by Penny Summerfield, Sonya O. Rose, and Martin Francis<sup>16</sup> demonstrates that wartime social understandings of masculinity and femininity were fluid. Summerfield's work in particular demonstrates how women remember their wartime experiences and identities in a broader sense than simply active/supportive and masculine/feminine dichotomies.<sup>17</sup> This thesis contributes to this scholarship by exploring war bride veterans' fluid, complicated identities. It examines how national identities and gender identities intersect in their portrayals of their wartime experiences of military service, love, migration, settlement, and family life. This thesis will also consider the limits of fluid gender identities based on historical and contemporary understandings of gender particularly women's identities as girlfriends, war brides, wives, homemakers, mothers, and grandmothers.

Beyond examining British and Canadian women's wartime service, this thesis will also contribute to scholarship regarding the experiences of women in Second World War Britain by exploring wartime romances between Canadian servicemen and British women. Claire Langhamer examines love in mid-century Britain<sup>18</sup> and Alan Allport examines the effects of relationships between Allied servicemen and British women on the morale of British servicemen as well as on British divorce rates.<sup>19</sup> This thesis will provide an original contribution to knowledge by examining these wartime relationships not only in history but also in cultural memory and personal memory. It traces social understandings of appropriate masculinities and femininities performed by individuals in romantic relationships and social expectations regarding the nature of these relationships in wartime

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<sup>16</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, 1998; Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Francis, *The Flyer*, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, 1998.

<sup>18</sup> Claire Langhamer, *The English in Love The English In-Love; The Intimate Story of An Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Alan Allport, *Demobbed Coming Home After the Second World War* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 81-106.

sources, Canadian cultural memory, as well as in war bride veterans' personal narratives and identities. I analyze the transnational nature of love, particularly how national identities figure in memories of love, marriage, migration, and family life. How war bride veterans' experiences of love impact on their sense of self is of particular interest. This thesis is also interested in experiences of love beyond romantic love including war brides' experiences as daughters, mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and as elderly war brides involved in war bride clubs. It also explores how expectations regarding love and gender remain consistent as well as evolve across space, time, culture, personal roles, and life stage.

Summerfield examines how women articulate their wartime lives in their elderly years.<sup>20</sup> She argues that her respondents often presented their wartime experiences stoically or heroically and connects the tone of their narratives to the women's pre-war and wartime relationships with their British families.<sup>21</sup> This thesis will also examine and question how wartime personal relationships influence memories of war and how women articulate themselves as veterans. However, romantic relationships are generally the focus of this investigation. DeGroot, Peniston-Bird, Sheridan, Stone, and Summerfield<sup>22</sup> research women who remained in Britain. This thesis expands on their work by focusing on how

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<sup>20</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, 1998.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> DeGroot "I love the scent of cordite in your hair," 1997; DeGroot, "Lipstick on her Nipples, Cordite in her Hair," 2000; DeGroot, "'Whose Finger on the Trigger?'" 1997; Peniston-Bird, "Of Hockey Sticks and Sten Guns", 2014; Dorothy Sheridan, "Ambivalent Memories: Women and the 1939-45 War in Britain," *Oral History* 8 (1) Popular Memory (Spring 1990):

[http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179138?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179138?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents); Tessa Stone, "Creating a (Gendered) Military Identity? The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War," in *Women's History Review* 8 (4) (1999):

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09612029900200227#.VIJNupeTOqw>; Summerfield, "Dis/composing the Subject-Intersubjectivities in Oral History," In *Feminism and Autobiography Texts, Theories, Methods*, eds. Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield, (London; New York: Routledge, 2000); Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, 1998; Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War*, 1984.

war bride veterans' stories of migration, marriage, motherhood, and domestic life intersect with the ways in which these women "reconstruct [...] [their] wartime [military] lives."<sup>23</sup>

War bride veterans' experiences during the Second World War were the determining experiences of their lives. These women not only served in the military during the war but also met their husbands, married, migrated to Canada (many as young mothers), and then settled into their adult lives. Studying war bride veterans allows for the unique opportunity to gain an understanding of how these women negotiate with understandings of gender, national identities, and Canadian cultural memory in light of their unique and very much culturally mediated and negotiated experiences as servicewomen and war brides. This thesis will consider the connection between war bride veterans' experiences and identities as servicewomen and war brides as well as how these identities connect to, and figure in, their post-war lives. It sheds light on Canadian cultural memory regarding war brides and the Second World War. In particular, I examine the lack of acknowledgement of the extent of war bride veterans' participation in the British war effort. This thesis demonstrates that war bride veterans, as subjects, contribute to the history of women in Britain during the Second World War as their narratives can provide insight into the ways in which gender as well as an experience not previously examined by scholars in this context- migration- impact how women remember their wartime histories, view themselves as veterans, understand their national identities, and negotiate with cultural memory.

To analyze war bride veterans' memories, this thesis turns to the popular memory approach developed by the Popular Memory Group at the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. This approach theorizes the relationship

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<sup>23</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, 1998.

between cultural memory and personal memory. They view personal memory and cultural memory as mutually constituted and hegemonic.<sup>24</sup> Alistair Thomson's *ANZAC Memories* draws on the Popular Memory approach as he examines shifting Australian memory regarding the Great War and relationships between cultural memory and the private memories of Australian veterans.<sup>25</sup> This thesis is similarly interested in constructing an understanding of Canadian cultural memory regarding the Second World War and how Canada remembers the roles of women and war brides in the conflict. It contributes to scholarship focused on the connection between cultural and personal memories as it questions how war bride veterans may draw on historical social discourses regarding gender as well as cultural memory in Canada regarding the Second World War when they articulate their life histories. This thesis will also consider how war brides' private experiences of romance, marriage, migration, and motherhood shape Canadian cultural memory of the Second World War as well as war brides' personal memories. While scholars such as Thomson and Summerfield certainly examine the role of gender in cultural and private memories, this thesis expands on their work and adds an original contribution to this scholarship by questioning how cultural memories of war, understandings of gender in wartime, understandings of national identities, as well as war brides' personal experiences and memories of war, romance, marriage, migration, and settlement intersect in the war bride veterans' oral histories.

This thesis draws from scholarship that examines the significant role of families on migrant national identity,<sup>26</sup> when it questions how families may influence war bride

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<sup>24</sup> Richard Johnson and Graham Dawson, "Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method," in *Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics Volume 1*, eds. Richard Johnson, Gregor McLennan, Bill Schwarz, David Sutton (London: BFI Publishing, 1984), 211. For more on the popular memory approach see the subsequent chapter in this thesis.

<sup>25</sup> Alistair Thomson, *ANZAC Memories: Living with the Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>26</sup> A. James Hammerton and Alistair Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms Australia's Invisible Migrants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Alistair Thomson, *Moving Stories An intimate history of four women across two countries* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2011); Mary Chamberlain,



veterans' national identities. It will contribute to this scholarship by questioning the ways in which 'emotional communities'<sup>27</sup> or 'social communities' including friends, war bride clubs, and veterans groups influence these women's conveyed national identities. This analysis will consider how war bride veterans' sense of national belonging may change based on the people with whom they associate.

### **Primary Questions**

This thesis considers the following questions: What do the examined life history interviews demonstrate about how cultural understandings of gender act upon war bride veterans' memories of their wartime experiences and war bride histories? How do war bride veterans negotiate discourses of gender in shaping their subjectivity? How do these women characterize their national identities and how do understandings of gender intersect with their understanding of their nationality? What do war bride veterans' life histories reveal regarding the fluidity and stability of gender roles and identities in Second World War Britain, wartime Canada, and post-war Canada? Do certain identities and experiences give these women feelings of satisfaction with their past and their sense of self over others? How do their memories of war figure in their life histories in comparison to their experiences of romance, migration, and settlement in Canada? Do understandings of domestic femininity shape the ways in which war bride veterans remember their experiences as servicewomen? How do war bride veterans' memories of migration and settlement in Canada relate to, or complicate, their memories of their British wartime service?

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"Gender and Narratives of Migration," *History Workshop Journal* 43 (1997): <http://www.popline.org/node/527170>.

<sup>27</sup> Barbara Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107 (3) (2002): 821-845. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/532498?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/532498?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

## Thesis Structure

The first chapter in this thesis will unpack theoretical frameworks that help analyze war bride veterans' life histories, their articulated subjectivities, their relationships with memory and gender discourses, wartime discourses regarding gender, and Canadian cultural memory of the Second World War. Through this theoretical discussion, this chapter will develop a methodology for the thesis. The first objective of the chapter will be to develop a framework for understanding relationships between social discourses, personal experience, and the construction of personal subjectivity. The conversation regarding subjectivity will draw on the concepts of composure<sup>28</sup> and discomposure.<sup>29</sup> This discussion will demonstrate that subjectivity is a concept that will assist in analyzing how war bride veterans view themselves as individuals and how this perception is historically specific and may change over time or based on their audience. The second objective of the chapter will be to discuss the oral history project that is the basis of this thesis and consider the use of the life history approach<sup>30</sup> as this was the method used to interview war bride veterans. The third objective of the chapter will be to explore the popular memory approach set out above.<sup>31</sup> T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper's bottom-up and top-down memory model<sup>32</sup> will also be considered to help shed light on how people relate to broader memory discourses and how cultural memory may influence personal memory, identity, and subjectivity. Richard Johnson's cultural circuit<sup>33</sup> will be examined to construct an understanding of how cultural memory affects personal memory and

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<sup>28</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 22-23; Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 8-11.

<sup>29</sup> Summerfield, "Dis/composing the Subject," 104.

<sup>30</sup> Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History A Practical Guide Using Interviews to Uncover the Past and Preserve it for the Future Second Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Thomson, Appendix to *ANZAC Memories*, 226.

<sup>31</sup> Johnson and Dawson, "Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method," 1984.

<sup>32</sup> T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper develop their levels of discourse in "The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration Contexts Structures and Dynamics," in *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, eds. T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 17-32.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?," *Social Text* 16 (Winter 1986-1987).

understandings of the self. This chapter will also consider how intersubjectivity may have shaped the narratives articulated and identities conveyed by war bride veterans.

The historical context chapter in this thesis will examine understandings of gender during the Second World War through the consideration of archival evidence, as well as scholarship on gender, war, and identity by Summerfield,<sup>34</sup> Rose,<sup>35</sup> and Francis.<sup>36</sup> This chapter will explore the roles taken-up by women in Britain during the conflict. It will question whether certain understandings of appropriate femininities and masculinities changed during the conflict or were resistant to change. Developing an understanding regarding desired femininities in Second World War Britain and Canada especially surrounding women in the forces will provide a context for my examination of how war bride veterans remember their war service, romances, migrations, and settlements in Canada. This chapter also compares historical understandings of gender to the ways in which Canadian cultural memory acknowledges war brides and frames their role in Second World War history. The understanding of Canadian cultural memory regarding war brides developed in this chapter will be drawn on in the second part of this thesis centred on war bride veterans' oral histories as these chapters will question how Canadian cultural memory may impact or reflect how war bride veterans' remember their wartime histories.

Part two of this thesis centres on the life history interviews with war bride veterans. Each of the three chapters will centre on one war bride veteran participant and will draw on the oral histories of other war bride veterans developing an analysis of commonality as well as differences in the narratives articulated and identities conveyed. These chapters will explore contradictions in the life histories of the three war bride veterans as they

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<sup>34</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, 1998.

<sup>35</sup> Rose, *Which People's War?*, 2003.

<sup>36</sup> Francis, *The Flyer*, 2008.

negotiate their experiences, identities, and subjectivity across three dimensions – temporal (past and present), national (British and Canadian contexts and national identities), and role (military and civilian). Understandings of gender will be explored as overarching principles or discourses that help or hinder war bride veterans as they negotiate these contradictions. The three war bride veterans who are the focus of chapters three, four, and five all served in the ATS- Wendy Turner and Victoria Sparrow served on anti-aircraft gun sites and Penny MacDonald served as a cipher operator at Story's Gate in London. They were chosen as the principal subjects for this thesis as their active wartime roles allow for the opportunity to analyze how these women negotiate between the extremes of their military histories and identities in comparison to their civilian lives and identities. Also, they were chosen because they articulated three different narratives of their wartime experiences and post-war lives. These women's oral histories, provide the opportunity to analyze how these women negotiate with the three identified contradictions in their lives in three main ways: Wendy's chapter will explore how she draws from cultural discourses when negotiating her past and present, national contexts and identities, as well as military versus civilian life and identities. Victoria's chapter will examine how trauma influences how she negotiates with the three contradictions as well as how she articulates her experiences, preferred identities, and sense of self. Penny's chapter explores how the presence of her husband shapes how she negotiates with the three contradictions as well as the memories she articulates, the identities she conveys, and the sense of self she reveals in her oral history interview and in her memoir. These women had some of the most comprehensive interviews and coupled with their more active wartime roles were the best candidates for navigating and testing the primary questions of this thesis.

## Chapter One - Discourse, Experience, Personal Memory, and Subjectivity: Theory and Methodology

Utilizing my archive of war bride veterans' oral histories, the rationale of this thesis is to analyze these oral histories for the purpose of understanding relationships between personal memory, cultural memory, and subjectivity. This thesis takes particular interest in the ways in which discourses regarding appropriate masculinities and femininities in wartime and post-war Britain and Canada influenced these women's experiences. It examines how gender discourses influence war bride veterans' memories of their histories of war, marriage, migration, and settlement as well as the identities they conveyed in their life histories. It also explores the connection between historical gender discourses and Canadian cultural memory of the Second World War.

This chapter will explore the concept of experience as well as the fields of historical and feminist materialism. This discussion will develop the materialist epistemology used in my analysis through the works of E.P. Thompson,<sup>1</sup> Raymond Williams,<sup>2</sup> Penny Summerfield, and Gail Braybon.<sup>3</sup> The benefits of experience based and social-justice based research will be discussed. Discourse as a concept and poststructuralism will also be considered as frameworks to analyze history, memory, and subjectivity. A combined materialist and cultural approach will be proposed to understand how best to engage with oral histories as a resource. This discussion will draw on Penny Summerfield's approach in *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*.<sup>4</sup> Concepts useful for analyzing personal experience and memory including subjectivity, identity, and role will

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<sup>1</sup> E.P. Thompson, Preface to *The Making of the English Working Class* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968).

<sup>2</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (London: Chatto, Windus 1967).

<sup>3</sup> Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War: The British Experience* (London: Routledge, 1981); Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (London: Croom Helm, 1984); Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in the Two World Wars* (London; New York: Pandora Press, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

also be developed. Popular memory theory developed by Richard Johnson and Graham Dawson<sup>5</sup> will be examined to better understand relationships between personal memory and cultural memory. This discussion will also consider theory that furthers the popular memory approach including T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper's bottom-up and top-down memory model<sup>6</sup> and Richard Johnson's circuit principle.<sup>7</sup> The second part of this chapter will discuss the foundation of this thesis- my oral history project with war bride veterans. It will develop a methodology for examining historical evidence to gain an understanding of dominant discourses in wartime Britain and Canada. Drawing on key theoretical concepts, a methodology will be constructed to analyze war bride veterans' life history accounts.

### **Part One: Theory, Experience, Discourse, and Materialism**

E.P. Thompson explains his understanding of class in the preface to his foundational book *The Making of the English Working Class*: "I emphasize that it is a *historical* phenomenon. I do not see it as a 'structure,' nor even as a 'category', but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships."<sup>8</sup> The quotation indicates that Thompson is interested in historical research focused on events and lived experience. His materialist approach has a basis in Marxist thinking and examines experience, consciousness and the impact of larger historical events on individual experience. During the 1970s, feminist scholars conducted feminist materialist 'recovery'

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Johnson and Graham Dawson, "Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method," in *Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics Volume 1*, ed. Richard Johnson et al. (London: BFI Publishing, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper develop their levels of discourse in "The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration Contexts Structures and Dynamics," in *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, eds. T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 17-32.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?," *Social Text* 16 (Winter 1986-1987).

<sup>8</sup> See: E.P. Thompson, Preface to *The Making of the English Working Class* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), 9.

projects exploring women's lived histories through oral history.<sup>9</sup> These researchers argued that traditional positivist projects maintained a male status quo, and supported more egalitarian projects in which female scholars researched women's histories.<sup>10</sup> The works of Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield published in the 1980s sought to write women's experiences during the First and Second World Wars into historical scholarship as historians had largely centred research on male combat wartime experiences.<sup>11</sup> The premise of this thesis on war bride veterans particularly the oral history project with these women is, quoting Lucy Noakes' paraphrasing of Thompson, "[to] write [war bride veterans] as active participants in their lives, rather than passive subjects of historical forces."<sup>12</sup> Braybon and Summerfield's early works writing women back into the narrative of the World Wars provides a framework for how this thesis sets out to write war bride veterans' experiences into Canadian history of the Second World War.

Raymond Williams provides further insight into a materialist approach particularly through his discussion of how culture can be understood as a concept. In his renowned work *Culture and Society*, Williams argues that the social understanding of culture as a concept developed from political, economic, and social progress during the late eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> He states: "Where culture meant a state or habit of the mind, or the body of intellectual or moral activities, it means now, also, a whole way of life."<sup>14</sup> His understanding of culture connects personal experience to larger cultural

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<sup>9</sup> Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, introduction to *Women's Words The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, eds. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (New York; London: Routledge, 1991), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Two fundamental works in material women's history are Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley, eds. *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1976); Juliet Mitchell, *Women: the Longest Revolution Essays on Feminism, Literature and Psychoanalysis* (London: Virago, 1984).

<sup>11</sup> Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*; Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War*; Braybon and Summerfield, *Out of the Cage*.

<sup>12</sup> Lucy Noakes, "Gender War and Memory: Discourse and Experience in History," *Journal of Contemporary History* 36 (4) (2001): 665. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/3180779?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3180779?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

<sup>13</sup> Williams, Introduction to *Culture and Society* (London: Chatto, Windus 1967), xvi.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid* xviii.

movements including in art: “there is also, in the formations of the meaning of *culture*, an evident reference back to an area of personal and apparently private experience, which was notably to affect the meaning and practice of art.”<sup>15</sup> Williams clarifies his approach by stating:

[...] I feel myself committed to the study of actual language: that is to say, to the words and the sequences of words which particular men and women have used in trying to give meaning to their experience. It is true that I shall be particularly interested in the general developments of meaning in language, and these, always, are more than personal. But, as a method of enquiry, I have not chosen to list certain topics, and to assemble summaries of particular statements on them. I have, rather, with only occasional exceptions, concentrated on particular thinkers and their actual statements, and tried to understand and evaluate them. The framework of the enquiry is general, but the method, in detail, is the study of the actual individual statements and contributions.<sup>16</sup>

Based on his clarification, it is evident that Williams believes that people make sense of their experiences, and I would add subjectivity, based on the values, meanings and understandings of their culture and then they live out these understandings in their every-day life. Williams’ ‘culture as a way of life’ concept<sup>17</sup> is based on the experiences of individuals but also acknowledges the power of culture in dictating day-to-day life for individuals. His approach described above provides a model for understanding the importance of experience but he also sheds light on the importance of culture in a person’s daily life. The foundation of this thesis on war bride veterans is these women’s memories of their experiences and it will also examine how these women’s narratives relate to social discourses regarding gender and war as well as war brides. While Williams’ work provides an understanding of the importance of experience and begins to explain how people relate to the culture in which they live, this thesis requires a greater understanding of the nature

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid xix.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid xviii.



of cultural discourses, meanings, and values. This chapter turns to post-structuralism to provide this understanding.

### **Post-Structuralism**

Stuart Hall's reading of Foucault provides insight into post-structuralist understandings of discourse and how people make sense of their experiences and identities. For Hall,

Foucault considered discourse as:

a group of statements which provide a language for talking about- a way of representing the knowledge about- a particular topic at a particular historical moment. ... Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But ... since all social practices entail *meaning*, and meanings shape and influence what we do- our conduct- all practices have a discursive aspect. <sup>18</sup>

Based on Hall's reading of Foucault, I understand that cultural discourses construct the subject, identities, and experiences. According to Hall, discourse determines how we perceive, discuss, and cope with topics while excluding other ways of speaking and thinking about that topic.<sup>19</sup> Similar discourses, or ways of thinking, exist in culture and across texts. When this commonality occurs, these patterns stem from the same 'discursive formation.'<sup>20</sup> Discourse is the site in which understanding and acceptance of behavioural codes form. Foucault argues that "discourse produces the objects of knowledge"<sup>21</sup> and "nothing which is meaningful exists *outside discourse*."<sup>22</sup> According to Hall, Foucault does not negate material existence; he simply argues that there is no meaning in this material world.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation" in *Representation Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall, (London; Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003), 44.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid 45.

Post-structuralist feminists Denise Riley and Joan Wallach Scott challenge materialist feminist history in contending that scholars cannot separate women's experiences from discourse.<sup>24</sup> For Riley (like Foucault) discourse is an all-encompassing cultural ideology or production. Even the "body is a concept"<sup>25</sup> for Riley as the understanding that a woman is indeed a woman is a product of discourse.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, she argues that the subject only knows itself as a subject based on its relationship with the cultural discourses in which that person lives. Understandings of womanhood are fluid and change over time.<sup>27</sup> Although the concept of woman changes throughout history, there are some commonalities or what Riley refers to as: "points for alignment."<sup>28</sup> Based on this understanding of the supremacy and all-encompassing nature of cultural discourse, Riley and Scott also ground women's oppression in cultural discourse or ideology rather than their physical/ material differences from men because these differences themselves are culturally produced.<sup>29</sup> For Riley and Scott, it is only through examining ideological constructions and productions of gender that scholars can understand the nuances of women's oppression and traditional secondary social role.<sup>30</sup> Riley argues that it is the role of feminist scholars to recognize and unpack changes to discourses regarding gender.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Denise Riley, 'Am I That Name?' *Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History* (Houndmills: MacMillan Press, 1988), 2-5; Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," in *Feminism and History*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>25</sup> Riley, *Am I That Name?*, 104.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid 96.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid 96-98.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid 2-5 ; Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,"166.

<sup>30</sup> Denise Riley, *War in the Nursery, Theories of the Child and Mother* (London: Virago, 1983), 190-191; Joan Wallach Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," in *Feminist Approaches to Theory and Methodology: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, eds. Sharlene Hesse-Biber, Chirstina Gilmartin and Robin Lydenberg (New York: Oxford, University Press, 1999), 79.

<sup>31</sup> Riley, *Am I That Name*, 98.

As a post-structuralist feminist, Scott questions the virtues of autobiography and oral history.<sup>32</sup> She challenges material historians' belief in the "authority of experience."<sup>33</sup> Scott argues that without discourse there is no way of understanding experience: "without meaning there is no experience. Without processes of signification there is no meaning."<sup>34</sup> She contends that cultural materialist scholars use experience based research as uncontested evidence and maintains that the subject's ability to relate and understand experience is questionable; thus, the historian's role in representing those experiences is inevitably strategic and political.<sup>35</sup> Lucy Noakes argues the following regarding the post-structuralist critique of women's experience based historical research: "history and theory appeared to face one another across an unbridgeable gulf, with embattled historians building up the ramparts against the theoretical [...]."<sup>36</sup>

Post-structuralism provides insight into how experiences, memory, subjectivity, and identities are products of cultural discourse. This is an attractive idea when studying women's history of the Second World War because it explains why women had a limited capacity in the war, may not have wanted to join the services at all, and may not view their experiences as important. Perceptions of gender that connect women to the domestic sphere and men to militarism are products of cultural discourse and influence women's lived experiences. Post-structuralism provides a framework for understanding how perceptions of appropriate feminine roles, experiences, and identities are historically specific but have commonalities that are pervasive over time. This notion of fluidity connects historical and contemporary social discourses and experiences regarding women and sheds light on the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Kathleen Canning, "Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn: Historicizing Discourse and Experience," *Signs* 2 (Winter 1994).

<sup>34</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Feminism and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 163.

<sup>35</sup> Canning, "Feminist History", 374-375.

<sup>36</sup> Lucy Noakes, "Gender War and Memory," 665.

continuity as well as changing ways western society has viewed women. Post-structuralist theory will frame how this thesis approaches analysis of historical experiences, culture, as well as subjectivity and identities as it provides a foundation for how people understand themselves and their experiences.

However, focussing too much on cultural discourses and viewing everything as a product of discourse does not leave much room for the analysis of personal experiences and experiences that are different from cultural discourses. This thesis uses oral history narratives as a foundation and drawing too much from Foucault, Riley, and Scott to understand how people live their everyday experiences takes the emphasis out of personal autonomy and gives discourse too much power in every-day life. Drawing excessively on a materialist approach would also be problematic because Williams' description of culture, while it begins to shed light on the relationship between individual experience and cultural discourse, does not provide a framework for the all-encompassing nature of discourse and it lacks a framework for changing cultural discourses. A post-structural lens for analyzing war bride veterans' life histories should help to account for the fluid and multiple ways in which war brides remember and construct their experiences, as well as their fluid and multiple identities. I value the social justice basis of materialist histories by Summerfield, Braybon, and Thompson. However, post-structuralist understandings of discourse provide a more nuanced understanding of the structures that impact lived experience and identities rather than Williams' culture as a 'way of life' concept. Therefore, this thesis will combine a materialist and post-structuralist approach in order to acknowledge the importance of experience based research but to also use a post-structuralist lens to analyze oral history interviews particularly the experiences, identities, and subjectivity conveyed.

## A Combined Approach

Noakes argues that “histories of gender [...] have the potential to unite the theoretical approaches of post-structuralism with the more traditional concerns of historians.”<sup>37</sup>

Summerfield’s foundational work *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives*<sup>38</sup> provides a model for combining these approaches. Summerfield used her oral history project with women veterans and workers of the Second World War to shape her understanding of gender discourses in wartime Britain. She argues: “Women ‘speaking for themselves’ through personal testimony are using language and so deploying cultural constructions. The debate about experience and agency has hinged on the degree of freedom an individual possesses in constructing her own account of personal experience.”<sup>39</sup> Post-structuralist scholars like Riley and Scott hold that discourse or language cannot be separated from experience. For Summerfield, “personal narratives are products of a relationship between discourse and subjectivity. [...] personal testimony is intersubjective- in the sense that a narrator draws on the generalised subject available in discourse to construct the particular subject.”<sup>40</sup> Through this argument, she provides insight into the ways in which individuals use discourse to understand themselves as individuals and how they perform their subjectivity in interviews. Summerfield contends that scholars interested in studying oral history through a discursive lens are interested in how:

[...] subjectivities are formed by conjunctions of numerous differentiated discourses, some of which may be subordinate or even subversive and which may contain contradictory conceptualisations of identity. This approach, which has been applied to auto/biography rather than oral history, allows subjects some opportunity for selection or rejection of the discursive understandings of themselves and their societies available to them.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid 666.

<sup>38</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives*, 1998.

<sup>39</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives*, 11.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid 16.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid 12-13.

Drawing on Summerfield's combined approach, this thesis will explore the discourses relied on by war brides to construct their experiences, identities, and subjectivity. It acknowledges that numerous discourses are involved in constructing narratives, identities, and a sense of self but that some discourses have more prominence than others. *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives* examines "how both the discursive constructions of experiences that were available during the war and have been since, and the social interactions within the oral history interviews themselves, were being used by those interviewed to understand and explain their wartime subjectivities, and to reconstruct their wartime lives."<sup>42</sup> Summerfield's discursive and experienced based approach is a model for this thesis and the following chapter will develop an understanding of wartime discourses both in Britain and Canada that may influence war bride veterans' memories of their life histories as well as identities and subjectivity they conveyed in their interviews. Chapters centered on war bride veterans will consider how intersubjectivity particularly the notion that these women were constructing their accounts for an audience may have determined the experiences they shared, the identities they conveyed, and the subjectivity they revealed through their memories. This thesis will recognize when approaching analysis of discourse and war bride veterans' personal memories that discourses may act upon experience, memory, identities, and subjectivity but that people have some degree of choice over the discourses that influence their experiences, how they perform their identities, and understand their sense of self.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony compliments Summerfield's argument that multiple discourses are available to individuals and provides an explanation as to why some discourses are more prominent than others. He contends that the elite's beliefs, or the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid 32.

beliefs of dominant social groups, are portrayed as universal values.<sup>43</sup> The remainder of society then tends to adopt these beliefs and principles.<sup>44</sup> These values or beliefs are discourse. Dominant, hegemonic perspectives marginalize dissent and maintain and entrench consistent values and meanings in the larger social framework.<sup>45</sup> Williams discusses Gramsci's hegemony and his understanding of Gramsci further contributes to how discourse is understood in this project.<sup>46</sup> Williams argues that scholars should understand the material existence, and operation of, counter and additional hegemonies.<sup>47</sup> By counter hegemonies, Williams refers to discourses that challenge an accepted social understanding that is, itself, comprised of various dominant discourses. Williams' additional hegemonies can be understood as alternative social discourses that are not dominant. This notion of additional and counter hegemonies supports Summerfield's argument of the existence of "numerous differentiated discourses."<sup>48</sup> Hegemony, specifically the notion that certain discourses have greater prominence and influence in society over others can explain why certain experiences and identities are articulated more than others by oral history participants. As Gramsci and Williams are both materialists who base their work in the Marxist tradition, it seems that the concept of hegemony can bridge the divide between materialist approaches and cultural approaches. It demonstrates an understanding of discourse as powerful overarching principles that become normative in society but that also leave room for, through the availability of counter discourses, the notion that people can choose the discourses that become prominent. In this sense, there is a degree of choice or autonomy over the selection of specific discourses- although for

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<sup>43</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Trans. and ed. J. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 171.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 110-111.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid 113.

<sup>48</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, 12-13.

Gramsci, this notion of choice has been traditionally seized by social elites. Based on Williams' argument that discourses influence material life,<sup>49</sup> it can be understood that discourses have real impact on people's experiences, their understanding of themselves, and how they portray themselves to others. Gramsci's hegemony as well as Williams' reading of Gramsci will influence how this thesis approaches analysis of gender discourses in wartime Britain and Canada as well as gender discourses articulated in war bride veterans' life histories.

Summerfield recognizes two main discourses available to women veterans and workers- the stoic discourse and the heroic discourse.<sup>50</sup> This project will define dominant discourses used by war bride veterans using Summerfield's research as a model. Drawing on post-structuralism, this thesis will recognize the all-encompassing nature of discourse and that experience cannot necessarily be separated from discourse. Based on Summerfield's contribution to the experience/discourse debate this thesis will also acknowledge that there is some choice when people construct their subjectivity, identities, and life histories. However, choice itself can be influenced by unconscious discursive considerations due to the embedded nature of hegemonic/dominant discourses regarding appropriate gender roles, experiences, and identities. Relationships between social discourses and how people understand their lives and themselves as individuals are fluid, changing, and complex. There are multiple discourses available to individuals; but, due to the hegemonic nature of discourses (especially the dominance of some discourses over others) some experiences, identities, and understandings of self may feel more appealing than others. I will now consider how this notion of a combined cultural and experience based approach (especially the notion that people have some choice in their experiences,

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<sup>49</sup> Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 113.

<sup>50</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, 92-105.



identities, and subjectivity) influences how this thesis will approach and use subjectivity and identity as concepts.

### **Subjectivity and Identity**

James Hinton argues that

Selfhoods are constructed as much from the outside in as from the inside out. *Who we are* is determined more by *who we are with*, than it is by those apparently deep-laid personal characteristics which, on examination, turn out to be less a coherent whole than a range of often mutually incompatible potentialities. We find ourselves in practical cooperation with other people- family, friends, colleagues- and in making masks appropriate for the performance of our various roles, we make ourselves. [...] The self was always under construction, never a fixed state of being.<sup>51</sup>

Hinton's mask theory suggests that there is a consciousness behind the mask choosing the roles and identities that are performed. This notion of a figure behind the mask supports the combined materialist and cultural approach developed by Summerfield as it helps build an understanding of subjectivity as a conscious, unconscious, and changing understanding of the self. While the notion of a person behind Hinton's mask is useful and he recognizes the plural, complex, and contradictory self behind the mask, his use of the mask metaphor is problematic and could perhaps be even considered essentialist. Although his individual behind the mask is complex, changing, and contradictory, the notion of the mask suggests that Hinton's subject only performs one identity at a time. However, two components of his theory that particularly shape the understanding of subjectivity developed in this thesis are: his contention that subjectivity is fluid and his argument that people perform themselves for others. Summerfield supports Hinton's discussion of performing the self when she contends:<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> James Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives: Mass Observation and the Making of the Modern Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4-5.

<sup>52</sup> Penny Summerfield, "Concluding Thoughts: performance, the self and women's history," *Women's History Review* 22 (2) (April 2014): 351.

The metaphor of the world as a stage on which men and women perform is a fruitful one. In the hands of cultural theorists the notion of performativity cautions historians, especially taking the biographical turn, against essentialist assumptions that ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ identities are revealed through personal narratives. All such narratives, whether expressed in memoirs, diaries, letters, oral history interviews, self-portraits, legal submissions, bodily performances or (more obviously) fiction, are composed for an actual or implied audience. Composure involves creative acts of appropriation and assimilation. In devising performances historical actors, consciously and unconsciously, raid the discursive frameworks within which lived experience takes place which shift and evolve over time.<sup>53</sup>

In arguing that in performing themselves people draw on evolving and changing social discourses, Summerfield provides a framework for how people understand themselves as individuals based on the culture within which they live and how they perform their subjectivity for others based on their ongoing relationships with cultural discourse.

Dawson’s concept of composure will be used to help further clarify how people shape their sense of self based on their experiences and their relationships with cultural discourses.

For Dawson, the verb ‘to compose’ has a dual meaning.<sup>54</sup> First, individuals construct narratives and meanings about themselves; this process is a cultural, discursive activity. Secondly, Dawson holds that individuals unconsciously desire a “subjective orientation of the self within the social relations of [their] world.”<sup>55</sup> In articulating their personal memories, individuals feel that they achieve an acceptable identity and gain a sense of ‘subjective composure’ with themselves as individuals.<sup>56</sup> Dawson argues that “At the same time the telling also creates a perspective for the self within which it endeavours to make sense of the day, so that its troubling, disturbing aspect may be ‘managed’, worked through, contained, repressed.”<sup>57</sup> Dawson’s argument sheds light on the complexity of subjectivity. Based on Dawson’s research, subjectivity can be understood as how an

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 22.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid 23.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid 22.

individual understands themselves as a person. Sometimes subjectivity is a composed and satisfied self but it is also the self that must be ‘managed,’ or ‘worked through’ as experiences and performances of the self are not always satisfying and do not always facilitate a sense of composure.

Alistair Thomson also views composure as process that consists of both a notion of a satisfying self and in Dawson’s terms ‘management’ of experiences and understandings of the self that are not so satisfying. Thomson contends that individuals compose memories using cultural discourses.<sup>58</sup> Individuals compose memories “to feel relatively comfortable with our lives and identities, that give us a feeling of composure.”<sup>59</sup> He argues that how individuals make sense of their past experiences “changes over time.”<sup>60</sup> This change stems from changes in cultural discourses as understood by what Thomson refers to as ‘general publics’ and ‘particular publics’ (people’s more intimate personal social circles.) Thomson uses the example of a platoon but his ‘particular public’ could also include a person’s family and close friends.<sup>61</sup> For Thomson, people “need to compose a past that [they] can live with.”<sup>62</sup> Like Dawson, Thomson connects this need for composure to how people understand themselves as individuals:

We construct our [subjectivity] by telling stories, either to ourselves as inner stories or day-dreams, or to other people in social situations. Remembering is one of the vital ways in which we identify ourselves in storytelling. In our storytelling we identify what we think we have been, who we think we are now and what we want to become.<sup>63</sup>

Like Dawson, Thomson differentiates between the comfortable and satisfying sense of self and a more complicated understanding of subjectivity:

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<sup>58</sup> Alistair Thomson, *ANZAC Memories: Living with the Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 9-10.

[...] our public remembering and private inner stories often seek to compose a safe and necessary personal coherence out of the unresolved, risky and painful pieces of past and present lives. Yet stories rarely provide complete or satisfactory containment of threatening experiences from the past. Our attempts at composure are often not entirely successful and we are left with unresolved tension and fragmented, contradictory identities.<sup>64</sup>

Thomson's argument indicates that he perceives composure as a process and difficult to achieve. His dual framing of subjectivity is similar to Dawson's as both authors view subjectivity as an understanding of selfhood that fosters composure as well as a sense of self that must also be 'worked through' and 'managed'.<sup>65</sup> Both authors also contend that people want to have their memories and sense of self affirmed by others through 'recognition' of their memories and subjectivity.<sup>66</sup> For Thomson, recognition is necessary for 'emotional survival'<sup>67</sup> and for Dawson it is necessary for subjective composure.<sup>68</sup> Based on Thomson's framing of subjectivity, the subjectivity that people can live with evolves and individuals are constantly reworking how they perceive themselves and their pasts. Therefore, composure is a feeling that is sensitive to time, circumstance, and discourse. People feel a sense of composure or process, manage, or ignore certain experiences, memories, and senses of self based on the people that surround them, the contexts of their lives, and the cultures that they live within.

This thesis defines subjectivity as a feeling or understanding of the self as a subject. In some instances, subjectivity facilitates a sense of subjective composure (a perception of the self that an individual can 'live with').<sup>69</sup> However a person's subjectivity or sense of self is not always stable or satisfying. There are identities, experiences, and memories that are inconsistent with the sense of self that gives an individual subjective composure.

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<sup>64</sup> Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 10.

<sup>65</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 22.

<sup>66</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 23; Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 11.

<sup>67</sup> Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 11.

<sup>68</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 23.

<sup>69</sup> Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 9.

Therefore, this thesis will approach subjectivity as perceptions of the self as an individual that are complex, changing, and sometimes stable. It will examine what experiences and identities in particular seem to give war bride veterans subjective composure and what aspects of their lives and themselves that they seem to have to manage, work through, and process.

This chapter has developed an understanding of subjectivity as a dual concept: as feelings of satisfaction with the self as well as feelings regarding the self that have to be worked through. Summerfield constructs a theory in her later research that provides further insight into the second aspect of subjectivity. She argues that individuals can feel discomposure (or feel unsettled) when narratives are inconsistent with broader social discourse or if individuals do not articulate a coherent narrative that leaves them satisfied with their articulated experiences, expressed identities, and conveyed sense of self.<sup>70</sup> In this sense, discomposure can be understood as a material reaction to having experiences or feelings that do not align with discourse. For instance, Summerfield's pregnancy at the time of her interview with Greta Lewis, an ATS veteran, caused Lewis to discuss her own pregnancy and her subsequent discharge from the ATS. Lewis discussed her pregnancy and resulting discharge four times during the interview and Summerfield argues that her pregnant state at the interview reminded Lewis of her "deeply mixed feelings she had about her own pregnancy."<sup>71</sup> In this sense, Summerfield's pregnancy sparked Lewis' feelings of discomposure regarding her memories of pregnancy, her husband's desire for her to leave the ATS, and her feelings of loneliness and dissatisfaction with her domestic life as a young mother.<sup>72</sup> Summerfield argues that Lewis' second version of the story most

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<sup>70</sup> Penny Summerfield, "Dis/composing the Subject-Intersubjectivities in Oral History," in *Feminism and Autobiography Texts, Theories, Methods*, eds. Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield (London; New York: Routledge 2000),104.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid 102-104.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

conformed to the “dominant public construction of women’s role at the end of the Second World War, which was that they should exchange war work for motherhood.”<sup>73</sup> However, the fact that Lewis expressed her discomposure with these memories three times in the interview demonstrates that she could not conform outright to social expectations regarding women at the end of the war and that she had unsettled feelings regarding her transition to domestic life. Summerfield’s discomposure theory will provide a framework for analyzing instances of subjective uncertainty and war bride veterans’ unsettled feelings regarding certain memories. In *ANZAC Memories*, Thomson notes that the following indicators can be understood as evidence of an oral history participant’s discomfort with their past experiences and/or identities: laughter, and other “physical symptoms- such as nervous flicker of an eyelid or the edge of the mouth, or a more serious speech impediment [...]”<sup>74</sup>

Discomposure provides a theory to explain when war bride veterans may feel unsettled or may try to process, choose to ignore, or like Greta Lewis<sup>75</sup> may even unsuccessfully try to work through certain memories and identities during their interviews. It further develops the understanding of subjectivity used in this thesis as individuals sometimes have understandings of themselves as subjects that do not give them a sense of composure but make them feel unsettled. In this sense, subjectivity is the sense of self that we can live with but it may also include a sense of self that individuals process, work through, and try to reconcile (sometimes unsuccessfully) based on their personal experiences as well as social discourse.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid 104.

<sup>74</sup> Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 10.

<sup>75</sup> Summerfield, “Dis/composing the Subject,” 102-104.

Summerfield's discomposure concept does not provide a framework for understanding how people narrate traumatic memories and identities that are more than unsettling such as when oral history participants indicate that their subjectivity is deeply disturbed and inconsistent with dominant discourses. Judith Herman's work from the field of psychiatry provides insight into narrating trauma and shaping a sense of self through remembering traumatic pasts. Through her discussion of the parameters of studying psychological trauma, Herman reveals how she defines trauma and traumatic pasts: "To study psychological trauma is to come face to face both with human vulnerability in the natural world and with the capacity for evil in human nature. To study psychological trauma means bearing witness to horrible events."<sup>76</sup> Her book discusses victims of many forms of atrocity and what is most useful for this thesis is her research on women survivors of domestic and sexual abuse. Compared to Summerfield's discussion of Greta Lewis' discomposure, Herman's research due to its extreme subject nature goes further in examining how people respond to "horrible events"<sup>77</sup> in their lives and shape an understanding of themselves after these traumatic experiences.

Herman contends that when victims articulate their memories of trauma they "share the burden of pain"<sup>78</sup> with others. For Herman:

Sharing the traumatic experiences with others is a precondition for the restitution of a sense of a meaningful world. In this process, the survivor seeks assistance from those closest to her but also from the community. The response of the community has a powerful influence on the ultimate resolution of the trauma. Restoration of the breach between the traumatized person and the community depends first, upon public acknowledgment of the traumatic event and second, upon some form of community action. Once it is publically recognized that a person has been harmed, the community must take action to assign responsibility for the harm and repair the

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<sup>76</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery The Aftermath or Violence- from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 7.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

injury. The two responses- recognition and restitution- are necessary to rebuild the survivor's sense of order and justice.<sup>79</sup>

Herman's understanding of 'recognition' as an important part of the healing process is comparable to Thomson's argument that people need their memories and identities recognized by others in order to shape their composed sense of self and for their 'emotional survival.'<sup>80</sup> Herman argues: "Having come to terms with the traumatic past, the survivor faces the task of creating a future. She has mourned the old self that the trauma destroyed; now she must develop a new self."<sup>81</sup> I would argue that this new self is a composed self, a self that the survivor can potentially "live with"<sup>82</sup> or at least try to work through and potentially live with. Herman's use of recognition as a key concept compliments theories regarding memory and the shaping of subjectivity by Thomson, Summerfield, and Dawson previously discussed in this chapter. Herman's journey to recovery is a process and in this sense her work in trauma is consistent with Thomson's and Dawson's view that achieving composure or in Dawson's terms 'subjective composure' is a process.

It could be argued that Herman's recovery process compliments the combined materialist and cultural approach used in this thesis. People choose, or may unconsciously feel that they have to undergo, a process of recovery to come to terms with their traumatic lived histories. Coming to terms, can be understood as creating a sense of self that more closely connects to social discourses; therefore, a discursively idealized sense of self. Trauma can be viewed as disrupting an individual's life within discourse because trauma suggests that the person may have no point of reference through which to process or represent their experiences. Herman's work provides a framework for understanding how

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid 70.

<sup>80</sup> Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 10.

<sup>81</sup> Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 196.

<sup>82</sup> Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 11.



individuals may try to deal with or work through memories and identities that are particularly difficult, traumatizing, and distant from discourse.

While discomposure is the principal concept that will be used in this thesis, given some of the issues that emerged in the oral interviews with war bride veterans, it is important to have sensitivity towards experiences of both discomposure and trauma to ensure that oral history participants feel that their experiences are taken seriously and recognized by oral historians. With a similar mandate as the materialist feminist movement in the field of history discussed previously in this chapter connected to the work of Summerfield, Herman argues that her work regarding trauma stems from a feminist movement that sought to provide a space for women to articulate their experiences of trauma especially in their private lives.<sup>83</sup> Her sensitivity towards women articulating experiences of domestic trauma provides a lens through which to analyze and understand painful experiences that war bride veterans may have experienced in their lives and that may act upon the memories, identities, and subjectivity that they convey in their interviews.

The concept of subjectivity can be understood as distinct from that of identity. Identities are the categories we use to perform and shape our subjectivity. Identities are based on cultural understandings. For instance, a war bride understands her identity as a mother based on the cultural understandings in her society of what a mother should be. Identities can be fluid and in process like subjectivity. Based on this fluidity, identities like femininities and masculinities will generally be written and acknowledged as plural in this thesis to avoid claims of essentialism. William Connolly's definition of identity provides insight into how identities are relational:

An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not

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<sup>83</sup> Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 9.

coexist as differences, it would not exist in its distinctness and solidity. Entrenched in this indispensable relation is a second set of tendencies, themselves in need of exploration, to congeal established identities into fixed forms, thought and lives as if their structure expressed the true order of things. When these pressures prevail, the maintenance of one identity involves the conversion of some differences into otherness, into evil, or one of its numerous surrogates. Identity requires difference in order to be, and it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty.<sup>84</sup>

Connolly's discussion of different identities helps shed light on how an understanding of difference influences how people understand and perform masculinities and femininities. It also provides insight into how national identity might be perceived as differentiated national loyalties and senses of belonging. However, sameness also influences identities. People form communities based on an understanding of commonality; common beliefs, interests and identities (for instance war bride clubs).

As discussed, an identity refers to the discursive categories through which we perform and understand ourselves. The notion of a material role is closely associated with this concept of identity. If identity is about the discursive, then the concept of role performs a similar function in reference to the material. A material role refers to one's lived experience which may or may not coincide with one's understanding of the self. For example, a war bride who performed an active military role in the war (for example as an anti-air craft telespotter) may not choose, or have chosen, to identify with this experience. Thus, while she took on an active military role she may not view herself in this light or be socially recognized as such. The extent to which this experience is part of her subjectivity remains unacknowledged or conflicted. On a related note, this thesis interprets a social role as a socially defined and recognized material position. For instance, the social role of a mother reflects social recognition of the material experiences of motherhood (giving birth, breastfeeding etc.) regardless of whether someone chooses to define herself as a mother or

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<sup>84</sup> William Connolly, *Identity and Difference Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox Expanded Edition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 64.

to frequently act on that identity. Alternatively, one can identify as a mother without having performed any of these acts. Finally, it should be noted that material and social roles frequently overlap with our subjectivity.

The way in which this chapter has explored subjectivity and identity is based on the combined materialist and cultural approach. The understanding that subjectivity is the self that individuals can accept as well as the self that they need to work through (sometimes unsuccessfully) suggests that there may be some choice in constructing subjectivity. However, people may also not realize why certain experiences and subjectivity facilitate feelings of composure and discomposure. The experiences and identities available to people that contribute to subjectivity are dictated and shaped by social discourse. The combined approach developed by Summerfield and evident in Thomson and Dawson's composure and subjective composure concepts help frame the combined workings of experience and discourse on subjectivity. The theories discussed have provided insight into how people shape an understanding of themselves as individuals. However, this thesis needs a theory to help navigate how personal memory and cultural memories act upon subjectivity.

### **The Popular Memory Approach**

The popular memory approach, developed by the Popular Memory Group at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies is "[...] concerned with the relation between [...] public discourses in their contemporary state of play and the more privatized sense of the past which is generated in lived culture."<sup>85</sup> Popular memory has a basis in materialism and social justice research. In their work on popular memory theory, Richard Johnson and Graham Dawson argue that such a basis is important when studying memory. The

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<sup>85</sup> Johnson and Dawson, "Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method," 211.

following excerpt points to this social basis while also illustrating the abstract cultural relationships that popular memory research explores:

The formation of a popular memory that is socialist, feminist, and anti-racist is of peculiar importance today, both for general and for particular reasons. Generally, as Gramsci argued, a sense of history must be one element in a strong popular socialist culture. It is one means by which an organic social group acquires a knowledge of the larger context of its collective struggles, and becomes capable of a wider transformative role in the society. Most important of all, perhaps, it is the means by which we may be self-conscious about the formation of our own common-sense beliefs, those that we appropriate from our immediate social and cultural milieu. These beliefs have a history and are also produced in determinate processes. The point is to recover their ‘inventory’, not in the manner of the folklorists who want to preserve quaint ways for modernity, but in order that, their origin and tendency known, they may be *consciously* adopted, rejected or modified. In this way a popular historiography, especially a history of the commonest forms of consciousness, is a necessary aspect of the struggle for a better world.<sup>86</sup>

Johnson and Dawson advocate that scholarship should thoroughly analyze experience to better understand how people interact with the social world and are social beings.<sup>87</sup>

For Johnson and Dawson, public representations of memory are the “public ‘theatre’ of history, a public stage and a public audience for the enacting of dramas concerning ‘our’ history, or heritage, the story, traditions and legacy of ‘the British People’”<sup>88</sup> Private or personal memory is “[...] knowledge of the past and present [that] is also produced in the course of every-day life. [...] It might be recorded in certain intimate cultural forms; letters, diaries, photograph albums and collections of things with past associations.”<sup>89</sup> Johnson and Dawson view these forms of memory as ‘*relational*’.<sup>90</sup> “Private memories cannot, in concrete studies, be readily unscrambled from the effects of

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid 214.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid 234.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid 207.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid 210.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid 211.

dominant historical discourses. It is often these that supply the very terms by which a private history is thought through.”<sup>91</sup> For Johnson and Dawson, ‘dominant memory’:

[...] points to the power and pervasiveness of historical representations, their connections with dominant institutions and the part they play in winning consent and building alliances in the process of formal politics. [...] [However] not all the historical representations that win access to the public field are ‘dominant.’<sup>92</sup>

They argue that there are alternative memories that challenge more pervasive forms of memory and that dominant memory is shaped through struggles with competing discourses.<sup>93</sup> Through this struggle: “Certain representations achieve centrality and luxuriate grandly; others are marginalized or excluded or reworked.”<sup>94</sup> They argue that these memory discourses are often the memory discourses that are closely consistent with existing social discourses.<sup>95</sup>

Johnson and Dawson’s framing of personal memory, public memory, popular memory, and dominant memory complements how this thesis approaches experience, discourse, and hegemony developed earlier in this chapter. Their understanding of personal memory relates to the post-structuralist interest in the subject and how people understand, negotiate, and frame themselves as individuals (as well as their experiences) based on cultural discourses. For Johnson and Dawson, like Gramsci, multiple discourses exist but some discourses become dominant over others. They argue that the prominence of certain memory discourses relates to how these discourses connect to existing social discourses. Their popular memory framework connects personal, public memory, and dominant memory and in this sense is interested in the same concerns as Summerfield’s combined materialist and cultural based approach. Johnson and Dawson develop their own combined

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid 207.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid 207.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid 208.

approach. They argue that oral histories should be approached using a structural reading that centres on what life history interviews reveal about the social relationships and events that people experience. Johnson and Dawson hold that popular memory projects should also pursue cultural readings centred on how people construct themselves as subjects based on available cultural discourses.<sup>96</sup>

Johnson and Dawson's popular memory approach also examines "the past-present relationship."<sup>97</sup> They argue that

Oral history testimony [...] is profoundly influenced by discourses and experiences in the present. That is the standpoint from which oral accounts (and formal histories) are constructed. Memory is therefore itself a profoundly complicated construction and a very active process. In memory past events, in their own complexity, are worked and reworked. Of course, there are also continuities and people do relive *certain* pasts imaginarily, often with peculiar vividness. This may be especially the case for those (e.g. the elderly) who have been forced into a marginal position in the economic, cultural and social life of a society, and fearful of absolute oblivion, have little to lose but their memories.<sup>98</sup>

Their understanding of the relationship between the past and present in life histories connects to the concept of composure coined by Dawson in *Soldier Heroes*<sup>99</sup> and composure as an ongoing process discussed by Thomson in *ANZAC Memories*.<sup>100</sup> The notion that people 'rework' their memories suggests that they do so to satisfy their contemporary understanding of themselves, their contemporary preferred identities, and their contemporary relationship and understanding of cultural discourses or in this case cultural memories. Studying a society's cultural memory or in Johnson and Dawson's terms 'popular memory', changing relationships between popular memory and personal memory, and the changing connection between popular memory discourses and personal

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid 234-240.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid 240.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid 243.

<sup>99</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 22.

<sup>100</sup> Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 8-10.

subjectivity allows this thesis to maintain a combined materialist and cultural epistemology.

Due to its combined approach through its interest in personal memory, subjectivity, and cultural memory, popular memory theory developed by Johnson and Dawson provides the theoretical basis for analysis of war bride veterans' life histories, dominant memory discourses regarding the Second World War, and how social discourses impact personal subjectivity. However, the bottom-up and top-down model developed by T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper provides insight into various stages of discourse and in so doing provides a more precise framework to examine the connection between personal memory, subjectivity, and cultural memory. The following section will outline their theory:

### **The Bottom-Up and Top-Down Model: The Bottom-Up Framework**

Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper's work on war memory further develops the popular memory approach. Although analyzed separately in this section for clarity, the bottom-up and top-down frameworks are part of the same memory process.<sup>101</sup> The author's bottom-up model follows the movement of memory from personal memory to shared memory, cultural memory, official memory, and transnational memory.<sup>102</sup> In their theory, individuals who personally experience a conflict are the first to develop memories of war. Individuals form their memories by drawing on available cultural concepts that are important to them, their families, and their wider cultural experiences.<sup>103</sup> For instance, a war bride has memories of her experiences in Britain during the war, her romance with a

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<sup>101</sup> T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper develop their levels of discourse in "The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration Contexts Structures and Dynamics," in *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, eds. T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 17-32.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid 17.

<sup>103</sup> For instance, many interviewed war bride veterans, portrayed their military service as the means through which they met their Canadian husbands.

Canadian soldier, and her migration to Canada. Personal memories such as these successfully transform into larger shared memory scripts when groups of people with similar experiences formulate a shared identity and language. For example, war bride groups formed in Canada first to support settling war brides in the years after migration and second as social groups especially when their children had grown.<sup>104</sup> Arguably, war brides' common experiences influenced these women to form a movement that lobbied the Federal Government of Canada to declare 2006 the 'year of the war bride' after the Government declared 2005 the 'year of the veteran.' For Ashplant, Dawson and Roper this lobbying narrative is understood as a 'sectional memory.'<sup>105</sup> If these memory narratives are inconsistent with official memory scripts and understandings, the transformation of individual memories to shared memories is difficult.<sup>106</sup> Advocacy for acceptable shared memory frames may result in the memory moving from more isolated settings into the wider cultural consciousness, the next stage of their memory model. Cultural media such as films, books, and music convey the sectional discourse to wider audiences and motivate more official commemorations.<sup>107</sup> For instance, popular books regarding war brides and films regarding war brides shape a cultural understanding of war brides' histories.

For Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, official memory is the next stage in which a memory script may progress if it is consistent with official memory discourses. They define official memory as "dominant or hegemonic narratives which underpin and help to organize the remembrance and commemoration of war at the level of the nation state."<sup>108</sup> To create an official narrative of a recent conflict, states simultaneously construct and

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<sup>104</sup> Eswyn Lyster, *Most Excellent Citizens Canada's War Brides of World War II* (Victoria: Trafford, 2009), 179-186.

<sup>105</sup> Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper "The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration," 19.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid 21.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid 22.



maintain a national language, image, and way of thinking about conflicts by drawing on existing narratives of past wars. Dawson defines his concept, ‘national imaginary’ as “a political unconscious filled with resonant imaginative figures and scenarios from the national past.”<sup>109</sup> Official memory also exists within this cultural consciousness. To maintain and support the hegemonic power of a dominant memory discourses, cultural and official memories rely on personal memories that are consistent with dominant understandings of the event and with broader cultural beliefs.<sup>110</sup> This is how the personal memories of individuals who experienced a war, if consistent with official memory, progress from personal to official memory and the national imaginary.

The initiative to have 2006 declared the ‘year of the war bride’ by the Canadian Government ultimately failed. However, the Provincial Governments of New Brunswick, Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island declared 2006 ‘the year of the war bride’ and Saskatchewan declared November 2006 the ‘month of the war bride.’<sup>111</sup> None of the three remaining provinces- Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Québec- nor the three territories- the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut- recognized war brides in 2006. Perhaps war brides as historical figures gained more recognition at the Provincial level instead of the Federal level because war brides’ contribution to the war effort was viewed as more feminine, familial, and domestic and were; thus, considered less important than the wartime role of Canada’s military veterans. Although the Provincial level of government can be considered part of Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper’s official level of memory, the lack of success of the 2006 ‘year of the war bride’ movement at the Federal level demonstrates how memories that are not consistent

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> “Frequently asked Questions” The Canadian War Brides.  
<http://www.canadianwarbrides.com/faq.asp#question4>

with dominant memory discourses do not necessarily or easily progress through the stages of discourse developed by Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper.

Transnationalism acts as the final potential space of their bottom-up model.<sup>112</sup> For instance, the notion that the Second World War was a ‘just war’ in which democratic nations prevailed over totalitarianism is a prevailing concept in both Britain and Canada.<sup>113</sup> Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper examine the framing of the Second World War internationally based on political Cold War mentalities. However, in their transnational analysis they fail to rigorously trace, or explore, the presence of individual memory in the transnational memory frame. The theory loses its personal basis in their description of transnational memory.

### **The Top-Down Model**

Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper’s top-down model traces the potential movement of official remembering to official agencies, social agencies, ‘fictive kinships,’ and family-kinships. For Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, nation states utilize public institutions to construct and maintain dominant memory. This manipulation of memory may originate within memory institutions such as war graves commissions, museums, and research facilities.<sup>114</sup> To maintain memories that support the status-quo and dominant understandings of national identity, states marginalize and repress challenging alternative sectional/shared memories and individual memories.<sup>115</sup> Kristin Ann Hass argues that it is rare to have a single, unified, dominant memory in contemporary democratic societies as these societies support many varying beliefs.<sup>116</sup> Her argument provides an explanation for the many marginal groups

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<sup>112</sup> Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper “The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration,” 24.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid 61.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid 25.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Kristin Ann Hass, *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam War Veterans Memorial* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 10-20.

that have opted to, and have succeeded in, garnering official commemoration for their involvement in specific conflicts.

According to the Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper agencies within society such as religious and educational institutions and official veterans' groups choose to challenge or adopt dominant narratives articulated by the state.<sup>117</sup> The next potential space in which a memory may be articulated is based on Jay Winter's 'fictive kinship'<sup>118</sup> concept.

According to Winter fictive kinships are:

[...] 'fictive kin', or 'adoptive kin', or 'functional kin', as opposed to those linked by blood bonds of marriage. [...] In them, agents of remembrance have formed families of remembrance. They do more than merely describe the space of individual reflection, homage, and sorrow. That is why they act in concert. [...] Fictive kin are small-scale agents. That is why I prefer the term 'remembrance' to describe their activity. Their work is liminal. It occupies the space between individual memory and the national theatre of collective memory choreographed by social and political leaders. They flourish at a point between the isolated individual and the anonymous state; a juncture almost certainly closer to the individual than the state.<sup>119</sup>

Small war bride groups as well as larger Provincial war bride associations can be considered 'fictive kinship' or a 'family of remembrance.' Informal groups and the family "bring together individuals and mediate between them and more formal institutions of state and civil society."<sup>120</sup> The final level of the theory is the familial level. Families often participate in public acts of recognition educating subsequent generations about a particular war, and potentially conceal memories that do not fit with dominant narratives. However, the family may also be a site of resistance for alternative memories as families maintain an understanding of events that fail to align with dominant memory.<sup>121</sup> War

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<sup>117</sup> Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, "The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration," 25-26.

<sup>118</sup> Jay Winter develops this term in his chapter "Forms of Kinship and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Great War," in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid 40-41.

<sup>120</sup> Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, "The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration," 25.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

brides' families may be involved in commemorative activities regarding war brides. For instance, the families of some war brides have conveyed their war bride's story to popular historians who include these histories in their works regarding war brides.<sup>122</sup>

While Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper's theory focuses on the potential procession of memory discourses and the spaces in which these discourses can proceed, it also provides insight into how general social discourses root in personal, material experience and can then proceed through various layers of larger social consciousness. The levels in the theory illustrate how discourse moves beyond cultural representations and becomes institutionalized in official, transnational, and social agencies. The memory framework also furthers Williams' point regarding the active nature of hegemonic discourses.<sup>123</sup> Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper's theory accounts for the material origins of discourse rooted in personal experience and the very material influences of discourse in lived experience, while also providing a framework to trace the movement of memory through multiple abstract, discursive sites. Their memory framework shapes how I understand the workings of personal memory and popular memory discourses. The bottom-up and top-down model shapes the methodology used in this thesis for analyzing how war bride veterans' memories may progress into wider discursive memory spaces and, in turn, impact their memories of their personal experiences, as well as how they convey their identities, and indicate their particular sense of self in their life history interviews.

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<sup>122</sup> See: Melynda Jarratt, *Captured Heart's New Brunswick's War Brides* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Publications, 2008); Melynda Jarratt, *War Brides The Stories of Women Who Left Everything Behind to Follow the Men They Loved* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009); Lyster, *Most Excellent Citizens*, 2009; Helen (Hall) Shewchuk, *If Kisses Were Roses a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute to War Brides* (Sudbury: Journal Printing, 1996).

<sup>123</sup> Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 113.

## The Cultural Circuit

Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper argue that “[...] families and kinship networks play a crucial role in connecting and then transmitting the overlapping memories of individuals.”<sup>124</sup> As they do not include a final level focused on personal memory in their model, Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper’s theory does not examine how memory discourses examined at the various levels in their model in turn, influence people’s understanding of their past experiences, the identities they convey, and their subjectivity. Additionally, their model does not adequately acknowledge the procession of individual memory into other levels of discourse. To thoroughly analyze war bride veterans’ narratives and their relationship with social discourses regarding gender, I propose a method of analysis that uses the levels of discourse developed by Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper but modifies their theory to ensure the thorough analysis of personal memory and identities in discourse. It is useful to visualize personal memory and identities as weaving through the levels of discourse developed by Ashplant, Dawson and Roper (especially when personal memory is consistent with discourse). This weaving is not so clear when personal memory is inconsistent with discourse.

Richard Johnson’s cultural circuit model helps to address the gap in Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper’s theory particularly regarding how memory discourses impact personal memory and subjectivity.<sup>125</sup> Johnson perceives the different stages of the circuit as separate, but interrelated processes.<sup>126</sup> He begins his circuit with private or localized forms of lived culture or experience. For him, the meaning of an individual’s experiences comes from the expression of those experiences in group contexts.<sup>127</sup> In this sense, the

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<sup>124</sup> Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, “The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration,” 29.

<sup>125</sup> Richard Johnson, “What is Cultural Studies Anyway?”; Graham Dawson’s reading of Johnson’s theory influences how this project approaches the cultural circuit. See: *Soldier Heroes*, 24-26.

<sup>126</sup> Johnson, “What is Cultural Studies Anyway?”, 46.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid* 50.

meaning of a war bride's life history account comes out of the context of shared cultural values, beliefs, and experiences. War brides, their friends, and their families understand elements of the war bride story in the context of war brides' private or localized experiences, such as in the home. Perhaps this localized basis is why most interviewees marginalized their war service in favour of their domestic experiences as war brides, wives, homemakers, and mothers. These are experiences to which the people around them can most relate as their 'local forms.' War brides' Canadian friends and family (besides their husbands) did not generally share the same experiences of war that war brides experienced in Britain. With the death of their Canadian veteran husbands who were stationed in Britain for at least some of the war, the context of war brides' wartime service is not as strong as war brides' context as war brides, wives, mothers, and grandmothers. Although some war bride participants are part of local war bride groups, not all of the war brides who participate in these groups were part of the services. Therefore, war bride clubs do not necessarily support a localized understanding of war brides' war service.

Following this more personal level, Johnson argues that discourses move to a 'general public' or 'national public.' Johnson contends "cultural production often involves public-ation, the making public of private forms."<sup>128</sup> Once this representation is produced, it is separated from the moment of time in which it was produced.<sup>129</sup> For instance, a caption that described a photograph in the May 24, 1946 *Crossfield Chronicle* reports the arrival of the first reported blind war bride.<sup>130</sup> According to the report, the war bride lost her sight due to her close proximity to an explosion caused by a V-1 rocket.<sup>131</sup> The photograph taken in the home that her Canadian veteran husband built while he waited her

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid 52.

<sup>129</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 25.

<sup>130</sup> "Canada's First Blind War Bride," *Crossfield Chronicle*, May 24, 1946, page 3, <http://peel.library.uabliberta.ca/newspapers/CFC/1946/05/24/AR00317>.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

arrival in Napanee, Ontario captures the smiling war bride serving tea to her smiling husband. The photograph underlines the love between the husband and wife and reinforces their romantic identities. The caption informs readers “the courageous wife does her own cooking.”<sup>132</sup> In so doing, the article praises the war bride for her proficiency as a homemaker and her articulation of her domestic identities as a homemaker and wife despite lacking her sight. The caption and photograph reinforces the war bride’s domestic identities and her husband’s identity as a provider.

In Johnson’s terms, after the *Crossfield Chronicle* publishes this story, the experiences and discourses embedded in it and even the purposes of the report, become:

[...] distanced both in space and time from the moment of its production. In the process of public-ation- the ‘making public’ of cultural products-they become detached from their immediate context and may achieve a wider, more general distribution than that of more ‘limited, local, modest’ forms.<sup>133</sup>

To reach the consciousness of a larger audience, the process requires media technology including print media, television, internet, etc. Between the production and the consumption of public forms of the original private moment, the original moment becomes more generalized but more visual, and powerful. These representations are often depicted based on private, personal forms.<sup>134</sup> The newspaper photograph and caption centre on the private, domestic, and romantic experiences of the couple. In Johnson’s discursive process, the war bride, or someone who knows a war bride reads this story and internalizes the private experience of the discussed individuals. Johnson uses the example of a magazine for girls when he describes this circuit.<sup>135</sup> He states that the magazine:

Picks up and represents some elements of the private cultures of femininity by which young girls live their lives. It instantaneously, renders these elements open to public evaluation-as, for example, ‘girls’ stuff’, ‘silly’ or ‘trivial’. It also

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 25.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Johnson, “What is Cultural Studies Anyway?”, 52.

generalizes these elements within the scope of the particular readership, creating a little public of its own. The magazine is then a raw material for thousands of girl-readers who make their own *re*-appropriations of the elements first borrowed from their lived culture and forms of subjectivity.<sup>136</sup>

Based on Johnson's circuit, the framing of appropriate womanhood and manhood in the newspaper story particularly the juxtaposed experiences and identities of war brides as homemakers and wives and their husbands as breadwinners and providers influences readers to articulate such identities, relationships and experiences in their own lives. Johnson's circuit provides a framework for understanding how war brides' private moments move from private contexts to cultural consciousness that, in turn, influence war brides' perceptions of their experiences. It also explains why certain aspects of war brides' lived histories are more actively articulated than others in popular culture and in war bride veterans' oral history accounts.

Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper's model and Johnson's theory provides insight into the selection of certain memory discourses. Connecting these theories to discussions in subjectivity, composure, and discomposure discussed earlier in this chapter, memories and identities that flow through a cultural circuit at the levels of discourse developed by Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper may give people composure when a circuit is completed. However, when experiences and identities may not be recognized at other levels of discourse people may feel a sense of discomposure or even trauma as their experiences and identities are more distant from the social norm. The notion that memories and subjectivity are in process suggests that individuals seek composure (a satisfying sense of self) through reworking their memories and identities. In this sense, they are undergoing a negotiation with their pasts, identities, and subjectivity in light of their present experiences, identities, and subjectivity. Part one of this chapter has discussed the theoretical models and concepts

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.



that shape the approach developed in this thesis regarding experience, discourse, subjectivity, identity, cultural memory, and personal memory. Part two will discuss the methodology used in this thesis.

### **Part Two: Developing a Methodology for my Oral History Project with War Bride Veterans**

The oral history project that is the basis of this thesis offers a new lens for examining key questions in the fields of gender history, memory studies, and migration studies. For this study, eighteen oral history interviews were conducted using a SONY Handycam digital video camera. Most of these interviews took place during the summer of 2010 with one interview conducted in April 2011. The interviews were in the Canadian provinces of Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. I interviewed eight veterans of the ATS, seven from the WAAF, two from the Wrens, and two from the Land Army.<sup>137</sup> To locate potential participants, a letter of inquiry as well as an oral history project poster were sent to each Anglican Diocese in Canada. The letter and poster outlined the project and invited women who served in the British auxiliaries during the Second World War who came to Canada as war brides to participate in the project. An advertisement was also posted in the Canadian Legion Magazine. The Anglican Diocese inquiry proved the most successful. As individuals became more aware of the project, war brides veterans' families, friends, and war brides themselves contacted me suggesting additional participants. Through this word of mouth campaign, I secured participants from other Christian denominations other than Anglicanism. Due to the advanced age of research participants, oral history interviews were completed at the beginning the project. This research received ethical approval from the ethics board at the University of Brighton in May 2010.

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<sup>137</sup> For an explanation of the arithmetic: one participant served in the Land Army and later in the Wrens.

The life history approach was the primary approach employed in oral history interviews with war bride veterans. Alistair Thomson's influential work *Anzac Memories*:<sup>138</sup> and Donald A. Ritchie's *Doing Oral History*<sup>139</sup> were key in shaping the methodology employed for this project. Ritchie's work also provided essential insight pertaining to the organization of oral history projects. For Ritchie, the life history approach facilitates "full scale autobiographical accounts that allow interviewees to relate their entire life, from childhood to present. [...] Life histories give the interviewee enough time to relate what both the interviewer seeks and the interviewee wants to tell."<sup>140</sup> For this methodology, the researcher poses general questions based on significant phases in the interviewee's life. Such a method allows interviewees to convey broad autobiographical narratives related to the major themes in their lives. This project uses the life history approach as it allows for more open and flowing interviews than a traditional question and answer based interview format. This methodology is informal and led to friendly and open interview relationships with war bride veterans. This project provides an original contribution to oral history research through effectively conducting life history interviews with elderly female participants, by demonstrating challenges that can arise in life history interviews when others are present and wish to provide input, and also the complexity of intersubjective relationships when interviewees are discussing particularly traumatising experiences. The thesis also demonstrates how the life history method, due to the flowing and conversational nature of the interview, allows for rich analysis and understanding of a research participants' feelings, memories, relationships with social discourses, identities,

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<sup>138</sup> Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 1994.

<sup>139</sup> Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History A Practical Guide Using Interviews to Uncover the Past and Preserve it for the Future Second Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>140</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 40.

and subjectivities when using the concepts of composure, discomposure, silences in memory, and the cultural circuit.

During interviews with war bride veterans, I posed broad questions centred on the thematic phases of the interviewee's life history. Thomson states that he began his interviews with ANZAC veterans by posing the question: "How did you start off in life?"<sup>141</sup> Following his example, participants were first questioned about their date of birth and place of birth to create a comfortable and non-intimidating interview dynamic. Following this inquiry, I asked the following broad question:

- Could you please describe your early life: your family, home, and experiences?

Like Thomson,<sup>142</sup> I posed questions when necessary and tried to avoid interfering with participants' narratives. The following questions guided the interview:

- Could you please discuss your experiences and feelings during the outbreak of war?
- Could you please discuss your reasons for entering the British Women's Auxiliary Forces and the specific service that you joined?
- Could you please discuss your role, duties, and experiences in the British Women's Auxiliary Forces?
- Could you please describe your meeting, courtship, and marriage to a Canadian serviceman?
- Could you please discuss your feelings about coming to Canada, your journey, and your first impressions of your new country?
- Could you please describe your experiences settling in your new country and your post war years?
- Did you ever return to Britain? If so, could you describe your experiences returning to Britain?

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<sup>141</sup> Thomson, "Appendix", 226.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

- Are you involved with a veterans' or war brides' association? If so, could you please describe when you joined, why you joined, and your involvement?
- Do you believe that the British Women's Auxiliary Services are remembered in Britain and Canada?
- What would you like future generations to know about your wartime experiences?

I eventually revised the second last query asking subsequent participants whether they believe that war bride veterans have been 'recognized' for their service, as the term 'remembered' caused confusion and disrupted the flow of initial interviews. This revision helped to facilitate a greater understanding of the question but did not necessarily facilitate coherent answers and this thesis will explore the potential reasoning for their responses.

### **Developing a Method for Analysis**

Chapter two will focus on war bride veterans' wartime experiences. This chapter will examine the role of women in the Second World War in Britain and Canada, the deployment of Canadian servicemen in Britain, the marriage process for war brides and their Canadian servicemen, as well as war brides' migration and settlement in Canada. It finds inspiration in early feminist historical research by Summerfield and Braybon<sup>143</sup> as it writes war bride veterans' wartime experiences of military service, love, marriage, motherhood, migration, and settlement into the history of women in Britain during the Second World War as well as the history of war brides. This chapter will consider multiple femininities and masculinities available to men and women in the war. However, using Gramsci's hegemony concept<sup>144</sup> will help to determine if certain discourses regarding gender dominate and have greater impact on everyday life than others. Chapter two will take a combined materialist and culture epistemology examining history through a post-

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<sup>143</sup> Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, 1981; Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War*, 1984; Braybon and Summerfield, *Out of the Cage*, 1987.

<sup>144</sup> Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 171.

structuralist lens that holds that experiences, identities, and subjectivity are navigated and understood through cultural discourses particularly dominant cultural discourses. This chapter provides an original contribution to historical research regarding women and war as it sheds light on war bride veterans' experiences during the Second World War and Canadian cultural memory regarding war brides. It demonstrates the fluidity, complexity, and evolution of gender roles and identities across time and place.

In the three chapters centred on the life experiences of war bride veterans, Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper's memory model combined with Johnson's cultural circuit will provide a framework for analyzing war bride veterans' life histories and their relationships with cultural discourses. The first part of each chapter will analyze a specific war bride veteran's narrative and discuss the primary themes, memories, and identities she conveys. This analysis will draw on the concepts of composure and discomposure discussed earlier in this chapter and Luisa Passerini's concept of silences in memory. Passerini argues that silences are not always detrimental to research as they can "nourish a story and establish a communication to be patiently saved in periods of darkness, until it is able to come to light in a new enriched form."<sup>145</sup> She contends that historians must listen to silence to understand the relationships between silence, oblivion, articulation, and recollection.<sup>146</sup> Passerini holds that "we must look for relationships between traces, or between traces and their absences; and we must attempt interpretations which make possible the creation of new associations."<sup>147</sup> Based on Thomson's discussion regarding laughter and other potential nervous signals of discomfort,<sup>148</sup> analysis of war bride veterans' facial expressions and movements will provide insight into the experiences and

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<sup>145</sup> Passerini, "Memories Between Silence and Oblivion", 238.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid 249.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid 240.

<sup>148</sup> Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 10.

identities that give these women the greatest sense of subjective composure and discomposure.

The following discussion articulates the model for analyzing history developed and used in this thesis: All three chapters on war bride veterans will identify the primary themes, experiences, and identities put forth by the war bride veteran based on the extent to which they emphasize specific aspects of their pasts and specific identities related to these experiences. Composure and discomposure in relation to specific stories and articulated identities will be evaluated by examining the confidence of the narrative through tone of voice, prevalence of the narrative over others, silent indicators such as facial expression and movement, and by examining how their memories are supported by, or complicate, displayed photographs and home décor. These discussions will also consider alternative experiences and identities that are also articulated by the war bride veteran. Drawing on the discussion in this chapter on discourse, experience, and hegemony, chapters centred on war bride veterans will examine how these women articulate their experiences consistently with dominant discourses but also how their narratives may also suggest the existence of alternative discourses and memories. Utilizing the understanding of composure discussed in this chapter, analysis of war bride veterans' accounts will demonstrate the ongoing processing these women may undergo related to certain experiences and identities, as well as how certain experiences and identities more readily facilitate subjective composure. Analysis will also examine how war bride veterans articulate feelings of discomposure or even trauma regarding certain memories and identities and how they in turn try to process, or even ignore, these more displeasing aspects of their life histories and identities. More specifically, the chapters on war bride veterans' life histories will especially analyze these women's identities as girlfriends, brides, war bride migrants, settlers, homemakers, mothers, grandmothers, servicewomen, veterans, Britons, and Canadians. These are the

identities most articulated in the interviews and provide the greatest insight into how war brides negotiate their histories of military service in light of their experiences as war brides.

This thesis evaluates how war bride veterans articulate their national identities. It is a transnational project in the sense that it focuses on the migrations of war bride veterans and evaluates how they portray their national identities. C.A. Bayley, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed discuss transnational history in the December 2006 edition of the *American Historical Review*.<sup>149</sup> Their discussion indicates that transnational history takes from many disciplines as an interdisciplinary field.<sup>150</sup> This project takes a transnational approach in the sense that it examines war bride veterans' personal memories of migration and settlement (as well as assesses their national identities) based on theories of gender history, personal memory, cultural memory, migration oral history, subjectivity, and identity. It uses the term 'transnational' in reference to the multi-national focus of this thesis.<sup>151</sup> When using national or nationalism as a concepts, I draw from Graham Dawson's soldier hero concept particularly his understanding that historically specific nationalist discourses or discourses regarding nationhood shape a gendered perspective of citizenship and patriotism.<sup>152</sup> This thesis will examine how war bride veterans portray their national identities especially how

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<sup>149</sup> C.A. Bayley et al., "American Historical Review Conversation on Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111 (5) (December 2006).

<sup>150</sup> Ibid 1449.

<sup>151</sup> In her article "Contextualization in Cross-National Comparative Research", Linda Hantrais argues that "The many definitions of cross-national comparative research have in common their concern to observe social phenomena across nations, to develop robust explanations of similarities and differences, and to attempt to assess their consequences." Page 93. This thesis will examine the cross-national experience of the Second World War in Britain and Canada particularly how these societies viewed women's appropriate wartime roles as well as war brides. In chapters focused on war bride veterans, this thesis will examine how cross-national gender discourses impact how these women remember their military service compared to their war bride experiences. It will also examine how cross-national understandings of gender and citizenship impact how these women portray their national identities.

<sup>152</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 12.

their conveyed national identities relate to their identities as war brides and veterans. War bride veteran chapters will use the model of analysis discussed above using composure, discomposure, silences in memory, and trauma when assessing how war bride veterans portray their national identities. These chapters will consider whether their tone of voice and body language support these women's discussions of their national identities. Of particular use for assessing war bride veterans' national identities is the work of Alistair Thomson and A. James Hammerton as well as Mary Chamberlain as these scholars argue that families influence migrant's national identities.<sup>153</sup> Family, migration, and settlement are very much part of the war bride story and chapters on war bride veterans will examine how these women's family lives and gender influence their national identities.

The first two oral history chapters will compare the experiences and identities articulated by war bride veteran interviewees to the ways in which they represent their past and identities in their homes through photographs and wall art. In the 1980s and 1990s, historians including Marianne Hirsch and Annette Kuhn published research that assessed personal photographs to understand connections between photographs, cultural understandings of gender, class, and race, as well as personal memory, identity, and subjectivity.<sup>154</sup> This project draws on the core understanding of these studies (the existence of embedded social discourses/meanings in personal photographs) to understand what war bride veterans' photographs reveal about connections between personal identities, memory,

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<sup>153</sup> A. James Hammerton and Alistair Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms Australia's Invisible Migrants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Alistair Thomson, *Moving Stories An intimate history of four women across two countries* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2011); Mary Chamberlain, "Gender and Narratives of Migration," *History Workshop Journal* 43(1997): <http://www.popline.org/node/527170>.

<sup>154</sup> Julia Hirsch, *Family Photographs: Content, Meaning and Effect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Memory* (Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1997); Marianne Hirsch, *The Family Gaze* (London: University Press of New England, 1999); Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets Acts of Memory and Imaginations* (London; New York: Verso, 1995).



and larger cultural understandings regarding appropriate femininities and masculinities.<sup>155</sup> Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson argue that “oral history and photography intersect at important epistemic points: evidence, memory, and storytelling.”<sup>156</sup> Martha Langford contends that people use family photographs to portray a specific “version” of the family.<sup>157</sup> Alistair Thomson clarifies: “Families were encouraged to take and display photos of family rituals and events, and thus emphasize the success of the nuclear family. Family photos were expected to represent happy families and contented parents and especially mothers.”<sup>158</sup> Patricia Holland argues that during ceremonial events people draw on a set of rules or social understandings for producing photographs.<sup>159</sup> Both war bride veterans who are the subjects of chapters four and five respectively devoted interview time to discussing their wedding photographs. Based on Holland’s argument regarding ritual and family photographs, this thesis takes the position that wedding photographs represent the actual union of the couple. They also signal underlining social meanings connected to the act of marriage such as the performance of specific gender roles and identities as well as heteronormativity. Thomson and Holland’s works help navigate social meaning in war bride veterans’ photographs. However, analysis centred on these photographs will also explore the ways in which the embedded meanings in war bride veterans’ photographs connect to the identities and subjectivities they portrayed in their interviews.

Using photographs as a prompt in an oral history interview may seem like an unsystematic use of photographs as Freund and Thomson contend in *Oral History and*

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<sup>155</sup> For a detailed historiography of photography in historical research, particularly autobiographical research, see: Penny Tinkler, *Using Photographs in Social and Historical Research* (Los Angeles; London; New Delhi; Singapore; Washington DC: Sage, 2013).

<sup>156</sup> Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson, “Introduction: Oral History and Photography,” in *Oral History and Photography*, eds. Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 2.

<sup>157</sup> Alistair Thomson, “Family Photographs and Migrant Memories,” in *Oral History and Photography*, eds. Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 171.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> See: Alexander Freund with Angela Thiessen, “Mary Brockmeyer’s Wedding Picture,” in *Oral History and Photography*, eds. Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 38.

*Photography*.<sup>160</sup> I argue that using photographs in life history research draws on the conversational nature of life history methodology. Analysis of these photographs on their own, as well as the participant's engagement with, or narrative centred on, the photographs sheds light on how they understand their experiences connected to the photographs, as well as their understanding of their past selves. Penny Tinkler provides insight into how photographs facilitate feelings of composure and discomposure with identities and personal memory:

Photos sometimes bolster the process of memory composure in that their content seems consistent with the interviewee's recollections and can be used as visual evidence of them, or they support a particular version of the past that the interviewee is comfortable with. Sometimes photos that bear little obvious relation to the interviewee's account can also facilitate narrative. [...] But the process for composing memories is not always successful and can result in 'discomposure.' Memory responses that contradict the photo evidence can make it difficult or impossible for an interviewee to recount a story, as where photos of smiling people generate memories of hardship. Discomposure can also occur when a photo elicits a memory reaction, as the often intense emotional/sensory recollections can be difficult to interpret and organize into a coherent and comfortable account. The interviewee may also resist this processing. Discomposed by the photographic encounter, the interviewee may be rendered speechless or left struggling to find the right words to convey his or her recollections. As well as hindering storytelling, discomposure can also result in physical disengagement from photos, refusal to look or touch.<sup>161</sup>

In using the concepts of composure and discomposure when analyzing interview narratives regarding photographs, Tinkler develops a methodology for analyzing photographs and oral history narratives surrounding photographs. In applying the concepts of composure and discomposure to analyzing war bride veterans' narratives regarding photographs, chapters three and four will demonstrate how this analysis provides insight into the experiences and identities war bride veterans wish to convey, how they may or may not gain a sense of subjective composure from these experiences and identities, and how

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<sup>160</sup> Freund and Thomson, "Introduction," 4.

<sup>161</sup> Penny Tinkler, *Using Photographs in Social and Historical Research* (London: Sage, 2013), 187-188.

cultural understandings regarding gender influence their life histories, identities, and subjectivities.

Based on Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper's memory model following analysis of the primary war bride veteran's narrative, chapters centred on oral histories compare the life history of the primary war bride veteran with the narratives and identities of other participants. This analysis provides insight into the ways in which shared experiences of romance, marriage, migration, domestic life, motherhood, aging, as well as wartime service and experiences as veterans impact war bride veterans' narratives and identities. Following this examination, the chapters consider how the themes, experiences, and identities expressed in the examined war bride veterans' narratives figure in cultural memory.

War brides have received some official recognition through the declarations of 2006 as the 'year of the war bride' in some Canadian provinces and some of the war bride veteran chapters will examine the campaign for the declarations as well as the events surrounding the declarations. War bride chapters may also examine the war bride's account in connection to the fictive kinship level and the family level of Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper's theory. Not all war brides discussed their family, involvement in the Legion, or participation in war bride clubs so chapters use Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper's levels of discourse based on the war bride veteran's discussion. Based on Johnson's cultural circuit concept, all chapters on war bride veterans conclude with a discussion of how themes identified as weaving through levels of discourse then figure in war bride veterans' personal memory and identities. Through this methodology, this thesis maintains a commitment to exploring the relationship between experience and discourse, to a material based cultural approach that is interested in the construction of subjectivity and identity, and to the popular memory approach.

In using the concepts of composure, discomposure, silences in memory, bottom-up and top-down model as well the cultural circuit this thesis creates a model for conducting and analyzing oral history research. It contributes to Dawson, Thomson, Summerfield, Passerini, Ashplant, Roper, and Johnson's work because it creates a methodology using their theories. This thesis demonstrates how these concepts can be practically used to understand women veterans' relationships with their military and civilian roles, their past and present, their national identities and gender discourses. War bride veterans are a particularly interesting case study because these women remain very much connected to their wartime past due to their migration and war bride status. For war bride veterans, the war determined their marriage to Canadian soldier, their migration, and their post-war lives. This thesis provides insight into how the life history oral history method and the methodology developed and implemented in this thesis can be used when examining how elderly women in particular negotiate with gender, national identity, shifting roles, past and present, and their ongoing sense of self in relating their memories of war.

### **Intersubjectivity**

As a theory, intersubjectivity provides insight into the narratives constructed by war bride veterans and the identities they conveyed. In this context, intersubjectivity refers to the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee and the process through which their interacting subjectivities influence the resulting oral history narrative. Reflecting on interview dynamics and the ways in which the relationship between the interviewee and interviewer may have impacted the outcome or nature of the oral history narrative is important for oral history projects as it provides a deeper understanding of the influence of the researcher on their project. It also calls into consideration the ways in which dominant discursive understandings and beliefs, as well as material experiences, simultaneously influence both the interviewee and interviewer's perspectives and behaviour during the

interview as well as the resulting interview content. Oral historians including Alistair Thomson,<sup>162</sup> Penny Summerfield,<sup>163</sup> Juliette Pattinson,<sup>164</sup> Valerie Yow,<sup>165</sup> and Elena Tajima Creef<sup>166</sup> influence the understanding of intersubjectivity employed in this thesis as well as my analysis of my intersubjective relationships with participants.

Summerfield, Pattinson, and Thomson consider how understandings regarding gender influenced the interview dynamic, relationship, and content of their interview projects. Summerfield famously argued that her heavily pregnant body influenced one of her interviewees, Greta Lewis, to at several points during the interview voice her own experiences with pregnancy and motherhood.<sup>167</sup> Pattinson argues that scholarly focus on gender intersubjectivity has been lacking and that while gender intersubjectivity certainly influences interview content, some narratives are more resilient and are not impacted by gendered intersubjectivity.<sup>168</sup>

In the case of my research, the friendly intersubjective relationships that developed between my interviewees and me were based on the open nature of the life history approach, my friendly and outgoing nature, my gender identities or femininities, my small stature, my shared experiences with my own romantic partner, my travel to areas in the United Kingdom where war brides lived or were stationed prior to their Canadian migration, as well as my travel to or residence in Canadian locations where war bride veterans lived or travelled. As well as the above connections, this section on

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<sup>162</sup> Thomson, Appendix to *Anzac Memories Living with the Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 230.

<sup>163</sup> Summerfield, "Dis/composing the Subject", 105.

<sup>164</sup> Pattinson, "'The Thing that Made me Hesitate'", (2009).

<sup>165</sup> Valerie Yow, "'Do I like them too much?' Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice Versa," in *The Oral History Reader Second Edition*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London; New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>166</sup> Elena Tajima, Creef, "Discovering My Mother as the Other in the Saturday Evening Post," *Qualitative Inquiry* (2000).

<sup>167</sup> Summerfield, "Dis/composing the Subject", 105.

<sup>168</sup> Pattinson, "'The Thing that Made me Hesitate'", (2009).

intersubjectivity will also consider how age difference may have contributed to, but also may have complicated, the friendly intersubjective relationships that developed between my interviewees and me and may have influenced the narrative produced.

Despite the connection between the interviewees and myself, one's experiences, culture, and society are historically situated. Although I may have an understanding and comprehensive knowledge of war brides' experiences, and the culture and society to which they relate, my experiences, my culture, my society, and my generation differ greatly from the experiences and discourses of war bride veterans. In many interviews, war bride veterans remarked about the differences between my generation and their generation, particularly regarding the role of women in society. Many interviewees, including Gwendolyn Barry whose story is considered in chapter five, lament the heightened expectations put on women today particularly the expectation that they balance a career with marriage and motherhood. Gwendolyn indicated that women of her generation had a much easier existence as they were not expected to balance a career with family commitments. Gwendolyn and many other war bride veterans also disagree with women's more active contemporary capacity in the military. They tend to argue that their role in the Second World War was far more appropriate as they retained their femininities and they perceive contemporary servicewomen as losing their feminine identities through their active service and more masculine uniforms.<sup>169</sup> Despite generational differences between interviewees and me, we constructed a friendly and productive interview relationship.

In his Appendix to his pivotal work *ANZAC Memories*, Alistair Thomson considers how his personal appearance, age, and gender influenced the ways in which Great War ANZAC veterans recounted their life histories. While he was a young graduate student at

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

the time of his interview project, Thomson states that he portrayed himself as an academic authority despite his youth.<sup>170</sup> I similarly portrayed myself as a mature and scholarly figure in my introductory statements sent to Anglican Diocese and in my confirmation letter to my interviewees. However, my youthful voice revealed in telephone conversations with my participants, as well as my small stature, evident upon arriving to my interviews, challenged this mature academic identity that I sought to promote. Yet, my relaxed approach and my un-intimidating appearance promoted a valuable intersubjective relationship that facilitated open, detailed, informative, and fascinating interviews.

Thomson argues that his age at the time of the interview reminded his participants of their wartime experiences as they were of a similar age during their service in the Great War, the focus of Thomson's oral history project.<sup>171</sup> At the time of my interviews, I was approximately the same age as my war bride veteran participants when they served in the British war effort and came to Canada as war brides. Valerie Yow discusses the concept of 'transference' in her article on intersubjectivity. She states that "transference usually operates on the unconscious level, but it does not have to remain an unconscious influence. Transferring past feelings onto a person in a present situation can go on in any interpersonal encounter, including the oral history interview."<sup>172</sup> Transference regarding age and gender, in particular my identity as a young woman in a romantic partnership, played an important role in my intersubjective relationship with my interviewees and possibly influenced the tone and themes discussed in these women's life histories. War brides' courtships with their Canadian husbands were pivotal experiences in their personal lives as these romantic experiences precipitated, and facilitated, these women's experiences of marriage, motherhood, and migration to Canada. Our common identities as

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<sup>170</sup> Thomson, Appendix, 230.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Yow, " 'Do I like them too much?' ", 65.

young female romantic partners may have influenced the resulting narrative of these interviews. I was quite open about my romantic status and domestic partnership when asked by my interviewees. As most of my interviews occurred far from my home, and I was too young at the time to legally rent a vehicle, my partner drove me to many of my interviews and even met several of my interview participants including all three war bride veterans whose interviews form the core of this thesis and the women whose interviews are used in shared memory sections.

Participants who had happy relationships may have felt more inclined to share their romantic stories due to my own identity as a significant other in a committed and loving relationship. My romantic experiences also influenced my sympathetic and compassionate response to Victoria's remembrance of her precarious relationship with her husband as I understood that her experiences were so different from my own.

Alistair Thomson insightfully considers how aspects of his own migration experience influenced the intersubjective relationship he shared with the four women participants discussed in his recent work *Moving Stories*. For instance, he recalls that he and participant Joan Pickett bonded over their individual returns to their lands of birth following their prolonged migrations.<sup>173</sup> While I am not a migrant, through my research I have travelled to parts of Britain where some war bride veteran participants lived, or were stationed, prior to their migration to Canada. We discussed these common locations during the interview and this discussion may have influenced the ways in which the war bride veterans articulated their experiences and represented their past homes in Britain. For instance one interviewed war bride veteran, Patricia, lived in Brighton during the war and met her Canadian husband at a dance at a Brighton seaside hotel. My knowledge of

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<sup>173</sup> Thomson, *Moving Stories*, 8.



Brighton revealed in the interview may have influenced Patricia to emphasize her location, particularly Brighton's seaside nightlife and prominent sites such as the Pavilion Palace when remembering her history in Brighton.

Common understandings regarding locations in Canada also influenced the intersubjective relationships that developed between myself and my interviewees, as well as the interview narrative produced. This is especially evident when considering my interview relationship with my war bride veteran participant, Gwendolyn. When Gwendolyn first migrated to Canada she settled in the small Northern Ontario town of Cochrane. This town is geographically close to the city of Timmins, Ontario where my father grew up and where I visited with my paternal grandmother during my childhood. Gwendolyn and I constructed a bond regarding our shared wariness of the harsh Northern Ontario wilderness and climate. We particularly enjoyed recalling our shared fear of black bears. As a person from Southern Ontario which does not share the same climate as the northern part of the province, I was a sympathetic and knowing listener when Gwendolyn recalled her difficult experiences adjusting to her new life in Northern Ontario, especially the harsh winters. Perhaps her candour regarding her difficult adjustment stems from our friendly intersubjective relationship that developed through our shared sense of Northern Ontario.

The significance of class was not particularly important in the interviews. Most of the women interviewed can be considered part of the middle class (or lower middle class) and all discussed in this thesis lived relatively comfortably in their own homes. Discussions of class occurred in some interviews when discussing choice of service, role in the military, and weddings. Almost all of the women indicated that they came from modest backgrounds in Britain and that their husbands worked hard (as did they in the home and sometimes in the public sphere once children had matured) to create a comfortable home.

An intersubjective relationship based on class developed to some extent between myself and the interviewees. I believe that they recognized my own middle class background. However, our rapport stemmed not so much from class but my own experience as young woman in a heterosexual relationship. Gender discourses not class discourses were the dominant identifying scripts that influenced narratives articulated and the identities conveyed by war bride veterans.

It is important to consider a new term to characterize the intersubjective relationships between the researcher and oral history project participants. Although it is fundamental to have a relatively equal and collaborative relationship with interview participants, it is also important that interviewers 'manage' interviews to ensure that interviewees remain relatively on topic. This is not to suggest that interviewers should boldly interfere in the life histories of their respondents, but that they should casually direct the conversation to consider themes important to their projects. In this sense, 'manage' is a more appropriate term than the word 'control.' I did not seek to control interviews with war bride veterans as such a methodology would contradict the flowing and conversational basis of the life history approach. My role as a feminist scholar and my interest in how gender impacted these women's experiences, memories, identities, and subjectivity influenced the questions that I asked particularly in relation to war bride veterans' experiences in the services as well as their histories as war brides. I would ask my participants about these specific experiences especially when their narrative strayed far from the parameters of my thesis.

Management is important because failure to sufficiently manage the interview hinders the quality of the interviews produced. Often the presence of people other than the interviewer and interviewee at the interview interferes with the interviewer's management of the interview. For instance, Elena Tajima Creef attempted to conduct research in group

interview sessions with Japanese war brides in the United States. As Creef is the daughter of a Japanese war bride, her participants perceived her as a community member rather than an outsider academic. Her perceived identity as a group insider challenged her researcher position as her interviewees were more preoccupied with her personal life than sharing their reflections of their post-war migrations to the United States.<sup>174</sup> I encountered a few challenges in managing interviews when others were present. For instance, when I conducted an interview with one war bride veteran many members of her family attended the interview so they too could listen to and record her life story. The number of family members at the interview was overwhelming and their tendency to try to control the subject of the interview made it extremely challenging for me to manage the interview and for the war bride veteran to candidly and independently articulate her own feelings, memories, and an independent narrative. However, this was a rather isolated experience. Despite my friendly relationship with my interviewees, and understandings of our similar experiences as young women in relationships, as well as our shared understanding of specific locations in Britain and Canada, the presence of the video camera, interview release form, and the question sheet served to reinforce the academic nature of the interview. In so doing, during most of my interviews I struck a balance between retaining my academic identity and my ability to manage the interviews, while also maintaining a friendly relationship with my interviewees. The final chapter of this thesis will explore how the presence of a war bride veteran's husband complimented her interview and also complicated her retelling of her experiences and her assertion of herself as an independent subject.

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<sup>174</sup> Creef, "Discovering My Mother," 446.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

This chapter argued that a combined materialist and cultural approach to scholarship would allow for a focus on war bride veterans' every-day experiences while also examining how cultural discourses impacted their experiences, personal memories, identities, and subjectivity. It developed the understanding of subjectivity that will be used in this thesis arguing that subjectivity will be considered the sense of self. Sometimes this understanding of the self fosters feelings of satisfaction and composure. However, sometimes people are not satisfied with their sense of self and they try to work through or manage certain experiences. Discomposure, as a concept, provides a conceptual lens to analyze and understand this process. However, sometimes a person's subjectivity is deeply disturbed due to traumatic experiences. This chapter drew on trauma theory by Judith Herman to understand how people who have experienced trauma also experience a process of recovery as they rework their traumatic life experiences. This concept of reworking connected to the understanding of subjectivity as a process was developed in this chapter. Identity as concept was considered and it was argued that identities are the social categories through which people shape their understanding of themselves or subjectivities. Material roles are the ways in which people perform their identities. This chapter discussed popular memory as an approach to studying memory that compliments the combined materialist and cultural approach of this thesis. It was argued that the popular memory school's use of Gramsci's hegemony provides insight into why certain memory discourses gain more prominence over others and have greater effect on lived experiences than other memory discourses. Gramsci's hegemony theory also sheds light on the existence of alternative memories or discourses. The bottom-up and top-down memory model by Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper as well as the cultural circuit by Johnson were presented as theories that shape how this thesis will analyze war bride veterans' memories in relation to

dominant social and memory discourses. Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper's model allows for the examination of how certain memories move through levels of discourse and, based on Johnson's circuit theory, then impact personal memory, identities, and subjectivity. This chapter also presented concepts of composure, discomposure, and silences in memory as helpful for navigating and making sense of war bride veterans' life histories. The oral history model developed in this chapter and employed in chapters centred on the life histories of war bride veterans will demonstrate how when combined as an analytical model concepts of composure, discomposure, silences in memory, trauma, subjectivity, and identity can be used to understand personal memory and how larger discourses of gender, national identity, and cultural memory intersect in oral histories of elderly migrant veterans. Intersubjectivity was also considered especially my role as an interviewer- my interest in the workings of gender in society, personal memory, and subjectivity as well as how my outgoing and friendly personality influenced mostly flowing and open interviews. This chapter developed an epistemology and methodology for this thesis. The next chapter will construct an understanding of the discourses related to desired femininities and masculinities in wartime Britain that most influenced war bride veterans' wartime experiences, identities, and subjectivity.



## **Chapter Two - War Brides: The Historical Context**

This chapter will examine the wider historical contexts for war bride veterans' life experiences during and immediately following the Second World War. It will investigate the relationship between change and stability during the Second World War in Britain, and to a lesser extent Canada, related to gender relationships, representations of gender, social positions based on gender, and gender identities. The chapter will question what impact the war had on understandings of gender by examining the roles performed by women in the British auxiliary services, the involvement of Canadian women in the Canadian Military, and social responses to relationships between Canadian servicemen and British women by the Canadian Armed Forces, the British press, and the Canadian press. This chapter will draw on the body of work examining constructions of masculinities and femininities in wartime, such as those developed by Francis, Noakes, Rose, and Summerfield. This research will provide insight into the degree of fluidity of masculinities and femininities in wartime Britain and Canada. In order to consider this research, the chapter will also examine a range of wartime and post-war primary sources. This chapter will also investigate historical evidence related to the relationships between Canadian servicemen and British women during the Second World War and war brides' migrations to Canada. Canadian academe has not rigorously examined the experiences of war brides or war bride veterans<sup>1</sup> and this chapter provides a starting point for exploring war bride veterans' diverse wartime experiences as both servicewomen and war brides. The chapter will conclude by developing an understanding of Canadian cultural memory regarding war

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<sup>1</sup> An exception is Jonathan F. Vance's discussion of the regulations instituted to deter hasty marriages between Canadian servicemen and British women in *Maple Leaf Empire Canada, Britain, and the Two World Wars* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2012), 186-187.

brides and will connect the underlining tone of this memory to wartime dominant discourses regarding gender.

### **Part One: Servicewomen in Britain during the Second World War**

The role of women in Second World War Britain has been widely studied; in particular through the works of Gerard DeGroot, Lucy Noakes, Juliette Pattinson, Corinna Peniston-Bird, and Penny Summerfield.<sup>2</sup> Their research demonstrates that women's participation in society expanded through their military and industrial service. However, they largely argue that dominant ideas about gender did not change greatly and the more active military work adopted by women complicated social understandings regarding appropriate feminine wartime jobs, appropriate feminine experiences and identities, and women's supportive social role in the war effort. This chapter will evaluate their conclusion and will contribute

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<sup>2</sup> Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in the Two World Wars* (London; New York: Pandora Press, 1987); Gerard J. DeGroot, "'Whose Finger on the Trigger?' Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries and the Female Combat Taboo," *War in History* 4:4 (1997); Gerard J. DeGroot, Lipstick on her Nipples, Cordite in her Hair: Sex and Romance among British Servicewomen in the Second World War," in *A Soldier and a Woman Sexual Integration in the Military*, eds. Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2000); Lucy Noakes, *Women in the British Army War and the Gentle Sex 1904-1948* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006); Juliette Pattinson, *Behind Enemy Lines Gender, Passing and the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2007); Juliette Pattinson, "'The Thing that Made Me Hesitate' Re-examining Gender Intersubjectivities in Interviews with British Secret War Veterans," *Women's History Review* 20 (2) (2011); Corinna Peniston-Bird and Penny Summerfield, *Contesting Home Defence Men, Women and the Home Guard in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Of Hockey Sticks and Sten Guns: British Auxiliaries and their weapons in the Second World War," *Women's History Magazine* (76) (Autumn 2014); Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Penny Summerfield, "'She Wants a Gun not a Dishcloth!' Gender, Service and Citizenship in Britain in the Second World War," in *A Soldier and a Woman Sexual Integration in the Military*, eds. Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2000); Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (London: Croom Helm, 1984). For further reading see: Ana Carden-Coyne, ed. *Gender and Conflict since 1914 Historical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (New York: Houndmills, 2012); Gerard DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird, eds. *A Soldier and a Woman Sexual Integration in the Military* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2000); Nicole Ann Dombrowski, ed. *Women and War in the Twentieth Century Enlisting With or Without Consent* (New York; London: Routledge, 1999); Antonia Lant, *Blackout: Reinventing Women for Wartime British Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Harold Smith, *Britain in the Second World War A Social History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); Dorothy Sheridan, "Ambivalent Memories: Women and the 1939-45 War in Britain," *Oral History* 8 (1) *Popular Memory* (Spring 1990): [http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179138?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179138?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents); Tessa Stone, "Creating a (Gendered) Military Identity? The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War," in *Women's History Review* 8 (4) (1999).



to these studies of women and war by examining how the history surrounding war brides' courtships, marriages, and migrations provides insight into whether wartime gender roles and identities were resistant to change or were to some extent fluid.

On September 27, 1938, the War Office announced the creation of a women's army cohort - the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS).<sup>3</sup> The ATS initially had a limited role as it primarily employed personnel as cooks, clerical workers, storekeepers, drivers, and orderlies. The role of the ATS expanded during the war due to the need for men in combat duties. In April 1941, the ATS received equal status to the male army meaning that the ATS became regulated by the Army Act, and its officers received commissions like male officers.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the war, ATS personnel performed one hundred and forty-one jobs including active and dangerous duties on anti-aircraft gun sites.<sup>5</sup> ATS personnel specifically volunteered for these more dangerous positions.<sup>6</sup> Lucy Noakes argues that these positions were especially popular amongst ATS personnel, with fifty percent of new recruits choosing air defence duties.<sup>78</sup>

In July 1938, women's air force companies formed in the ATS and on June 28, 1939, the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) formed, incorporating the ATS airwomen.<sup>9</sup> The Air Ministry sent instructions on August 28, 1939 that authorized the assignment of WAAF personnel as cooks, mess staff, plotters, teleprinter operators, and telephonists. Like the ATS, the role of the WAAF expanded during the war and WAAF's

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<sup>3</sup> National Archives, Air 10/5546, *The Women's Auxiliary Air Force*, page 3. And National Army Museum, 1997-10-15, *Book of ATS*, Ministry of Defence, page 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 10.

<sup>5</sup> National Army Museum, 9710-150, *ATS Jobs Analysis*, preface.

<sup>6</sup> Hansard *HC Deb 02 December 1941 vol 376.1037*.

<sup>7</sup> Lucy Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, 119.

<sup>8</sup> For an examination of women's supportive role as plotters and aimers and the impact of their anti-aircraft service on personal identity and gender relations see: Gerard DeGroot "I Love the scent of cordite in your hair," in *History* 82 (265) (January 1997).

<sup>9</sup> The British Library, 088059915, *The Women's Auxiliary Air Force*, page 1.

served in eighty positions including as radar operators, wireless operators, and WAAF police.<sup>10</sup> According to a history of the WAAF in the National Archives, “the W.A.A.F. was 16 per cent of the total strength of the R.A.F at the height of the struggle, and 22 per cent of [...] the RAF in home commands.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1939, The Royal Navy re-inaugurated the Women’s Royal Naval Service (known as Wrens) for the purposes of releasing men for more active naval service at sea.<sup>12</sup> Initially, the cohort designated personnel as either general or specialized according to the qualifications of the individual Wren.<sup>13</sup> Specialized Wrens had clerical positions while general naval women served as messengers, stewards, and storekeepers.<sup>14</sup> During the war, the capacity of the Wrens expanded and they served in more active jobs including as plotters, welders, carpenters, and mechanics.<sup>15</sup>

Servicewomen’s gender defined the extent of their involvement in the conflict. Press portrayals of servicewomen (such as press coverage of the ATS that will be examined in this chapter) emphasized these women’s supportive, yet important, contribution. However, women’s participation in the conflict complicated understandings of femininities, masculinities, and citizenship. Dawson’s *Soldier Heroes* explores how historically specific nationalist discourses or discourses regarding nationhood construct a gendered understanding of citizenship and patriotism:

[...] the essential being of the nation is at once grounded upon and helps to underpin supposedly ‘natural’ divisions of gender, in which womanhood and manhood are reduced to their fundamental, almost archetypal, functions of mother and soldier respectively.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> TNA, AIR. 10/5546 *The Women’s Auxiliary Air Force*, preface, page V.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> “Salute to the Senior Service W.R.N.S.,” *Vogue*, December 1940 edition.

<sup>13</sup> “W.R.N.S. Conditions of Service,” *The Times*, May 20, 1939,

<http://infotrac.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.uwo.ca>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Vera Lynn, *Unsung Heroines: The Women Who Won the War* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1990), 66.

<sup>16</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 12.

The need for women in the military complicated social and cultural understandings of appropriate social and material roles for men and women in wartime. As I have argued previously, individuals perform and draw on multiple identities in constructing themselves as subjects.<sup>17</sup> During the Second World War, British women faced social pressure to maintain feminine identities such as feminine purity and feminine attractiveness in response to the material military roles they performed and the masculine identities connected to these wartime jobs. Rose argues:

[...] representations of wartime womanhood underscored the expectations that women should preserve a conventional feminine persona and continue to cultivate the desire for marriage and motherhood. But at the same time, they were to contribute heroically to the war effort in factories, on the land, in the services, or in civil defence. They should participate, yes, but not become transformed by that participation. As numerous scholars have noted, such contributions were to be made ‘for the duration’ only. Women were to do their wartime jobs, engage in acts of heroism, and be considered by others and consider themselves to be crucial to the war effort, all without changing their feminine [identities].<sup>18</sup>

The wartime controversy surrounding the ATS’ uniform demonstrates the complications of balancing feminine identities with martial identities. The ATS’ original uniform garnered a reputation as too masculine, dowdy, and bulky. The uniform designed by the cohort’s original leader Helen Gwynne-Vaughan included: “a serge khaki tunic, buttoning to the right like the male fashion, and mid-calf skirt, worn with thick khaki stockings and low-heeled brown shoes.”<sup>19</sup> The first initiative announced by subsequent Commander-in-Chief of the ATS, Jean Knox, when replacing Gwynne-Vaughan on July 21, 1941 was a new uniform for the cohort designed by Knox. Noakes argues that Gwynne-Vaughan had a more masculine, militaristic reputation while Knox had a more feminine reputation.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps a less essentialist assessment is that Knox was more

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<sup>17</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Rose, *Which People’s War?*, 123.

<sup>19</sup> Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, 107-108.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid* 110.

successful at combining her military position and military identities with her femininities. The new uniform reflected her more balanced and acceptable articulation of her combined military and feminine identities. According to a *Western Daily Press* article “The ATS Uniform to be Smarter” the new uniform included “square shoulders, neat cuffs and a detachable belt. The old bell-skirt has been replaced by a tailored model. [...] In six months she hopes that the problems of the ATS will be completely solved.”<sup>21</sup> In this sense, it seems that the new uniform would demonstrate women’s military identities and designation but would also present a more attractive and feminine appearance. The extent to which the ATS’ appearance, more specifically, their perceived masculine militaristic appearance and identity, was a concern for wartime British society is reflected by the new uniform design being Knox’s first announcement.<sup>22</sup> Her action demonstrates that despite their contribution to the conflict (albeit not as active combatants), wartime Britain expected that women blend their new roles with more socially acceptable appropriate feminine identities, especially through their personal appearance. However, expressions of women’s femininities had limitations.

For women in wartime Britain, maintaining appropriate feminine identities was complicated. Rose argues:

[...] being physically attractive and focusing on self-adornments were necessary preoccupations for women even in wartime. Such deployments of glamour contributed to the construction of what I will call ‘sexualized’ femininity. Sexualized femininity was a crucial component in the construction of gender difference, under threat by the movement of women away from their families and into work and service that previously had been the preserve of men, even if those movements were ‘just for the duration.’ The stress on glamour, however, emphasized caring for the self by attending to one’s body- a vision which, at least on its face, contrasted with the demand for selflessness and stoicism. Pushed too

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<sup>21</sup> “The A.T.S. Uniform to be Smarter,” *Western Daily Press*, July 22, 1941, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000513/19410722/045/0004?browse=false>  
The reference to the ‘problems of the ATS’ connects to the cohort’s poor recruitment numbers largely due to the unfeminine, promiscuous, and militaristic reputation of the force.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

vigorously, the vision of the glamorous woman conflicted with the impetus to austerity.<sup>23</sup>

I would add that in the perspective of the British wartime public, Rose's glamorous woman also pushed the boundaries of appropriate feminine sexuality.<sup>24</sup> "A.T.S. At Work Cooks and Clerks for the Army" in the October 11, 1939 edition of *The Times* demonstrates the social pressures put upon servicewomen to balance their military roles and identities with their feminine purity, attractiveness, and domesticity while not overly portraying their femininities:

They have no restrictions on make-up, but it is expected that only the amount necessary for presenting a good appearance will be used. There were no bright red finger nails to be seen and no excessive use of rouge or lipstick. The regular hours they keep (they go to bed early) and the hard work they do and the good food are in themselves aids to clear complexions and good health. [...] They do not fraternize with the men save on such occasions as hockey matches.<sup>25</sup>

In reporting ATS personnel's responsible behaviour, diligence, attractiveness, and regulated sexuality through their isolation from men, the article supports Rose's argument that despite their service, British society desired women retain a connection to the domestic sphere and their future experiences and identities as wives and mothers.<sup>26</sup> This article highlights the nature of these preferred domestic femininities suggesting that women's controlled sexuality evident through their virginity before marriage was of particular concern. The article is evidence of the press reassuring the British public that women's military role and identities as servicewomen could blend with women's hardworking

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<sup>23</sup> Rose, *Which People's War?*, 145.

<sup>24</sup> Noakes puts forth a similar argument regarding the boundaries of glamour when discussing poster designs for the ATS in *Women in the British Army*, 111-112; Susan Gubar discusses wartime portrayals of erotic women as threats to nationhood in Britain, Finland, and the United States in "This is my rifle, this is my gun' World War II and the Blitz on Women," in *Behind the Lines Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 240; DeGroot argues that rumours about promiscuity were greatly exaggerated and that women interviewed for his research generally portrayed the ATS as having a sexually restrained atmosphere in "Lipstick on her Nipples, Cordite in her Hair," 100-118.

<sup>25</sup> "A.T.S. At Work Cooks and Clerks for the Army," *The Times*, October 11, 1941, page 11, <http://infotrac.galegroup.com.proxy2.lib.uwo.ca:2048/itw/infomark/663/620/28042060w1>

<sup>26</sup> Rose *Which People's War?*, 145.

character, purity, virtue, and attractiveness and characterizes an idealized servicewoman identity through combining these identities.

Despite such attempts at reassuring the British public that women in uniform successfully contributed to the war effort while retaining their purity and attractiveness, Mass Observation studies centred on the women's services demonstrate that women and men both expressed concern with the women's services.<sup>27</sup> The ATS, the most contentious and active of the women's forces, is the focus of a Mass Observation survey of forty-four servicemen. When asked "whether they would like their wives to join the A.T.S."<sup>28</sup> the servicemen responded as follows: thirty-six percent said that they "would stop her", thirty-two percent responded "certainly not", sixteen percent "wouldn't like it", eight percent "wouldn't hate it", and four percent "wouldn't mind."<sup>29</sup> When asked for an explanation of their response: forty-four percent thought the service "Immoral, dirty", twenty-eight said that their wife joining the forces would "Break up home; enough of one in the Army", eight percent stated that they "Don't believe in women in the services", eight percent indicated that they disliked "regimentation", and four percent stated that they just "didn't like it."<sup>30</sup> When asked about their approval of their wives or girlfriends joining the other services,<sup>31</sup> fifty-two percent stated "no other", twenty-four percent favoured the "WRNS", eighteen percent chose the "VAD", four percent favoured the "WAAF", and two percent thought "any" other force besides the ATS would do.<sup>32</sup> These comments demonstrate anxiety towards servicewomen transgressing appropriate feminine experiences and some wartime cultural resistance towards fluid models of gender.

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<sup>27</sup> Mass Observation Online, *A.T.S. Campaign*; Mass Observation Online, *A.T.S.*

<sup>28</sup> Mass Observation Online, *A.T.S.*, 22.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

In *Manful Assertions*, Tosh and Roper argue that studies of femininity require a study of the “the structures of domination.”<sup>33</sup> A more nuanced understanding of wartime masculinities helps situate relational identities available to women in wartime Britain.<sup>34</sup> Returning to Rose’s characterization of acceptable temperate masculinity in wartime Britain, Rose argues that such understandings of masculinity emerged in Britain in the 1930s in contrast to the perceived hyper-masculine German other.<sup>35</sup> She contends that to successfully assert a temperate masculinity, the man still required a military uniform but other, ‘softer,’ aspects of the individual’s identity such as his compassion and his love for his family (potentially less masculine traits) were also socially acceptable.<sup>36</sup> Rose characterizes masculinity as authoritative but hegemonic meaning that alternative masculinities also existed and were performed. She identifies two forms of masculinity: temperate and soldier-hero.<sup>37</sup> Rose frames masculinities as multiple, complex, fluid, and potentially in combination as individuals can perform temperate and martial masculinities in different ways, or have different relationships to these masculinities, based on their personal experiences.<sup>38</sup> For instance, she argues that “lacking a military uniform, working men stressed the heroic features of their masculinity. They drew upon both a language of military battle and a language of working-class manhood in their self-representations.”<sup>39</sup> Rose’s framing of masculinity allows for an understanding of the complex and changing relationships individuals can have with discourse, as well as multiple ways masculinity could be articulated in wartime Britain.

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<sup>33</sup> Roper and Tosh, introduction to *Manful Assertions in Britain since 1800* (London; Routledge, 1991), 2.

<sup>34</sup> For a more detailed discussion of masculinity studies and interpretations of masculinity see: Martin Francis, “The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity,” *The Historical Journal* 45 (3) (September 2002): 637-652.

<sup>35</sup> Rose, *Which People’s War?*, 195-196.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 192.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 195.

Also useful for understanding masculinities during the Second World War as well as relationships between the genders is Martin Francis' work *The Flyer* in which he argues that "male and female experiences during the war were not polarized and antithetical, but were complementary and interrelated."<sup>40</sup> Francis characterizes airmen's various ambiguous identities:

The flyer could be imagined as a classless meritocrat, a tribune of the people's war, or he could be envisaged as an anti-democratic superman, rendered omnipotent by his ability to literally ascend above the rest of humanity. He could be an emblem of scientific modernity or a reincarnation of the chivalric heroes of a medieval past. The airman might seek emotional solace in either the boisterous camaraderie of the mess or in the comforting arms of a WAAF lover. It was possible for him to be both a ruthless killer in the air, and a loving husband and father on the ground. The flyer could represent the breezy innocence of youth or the jaded cynicism of a manhood forged on the anvil of war. If he was unfortunate enough to be severely wounded, the airman might be lionized as a manly hero, or just as likely to find himself emasculated by responses of pity or revulsion.<sup>41</sup>

The previously examined Mass Observation study provides insight into how some servicemen negotiated with understandings of proper masculine and feminine roles and identities in light of women's participation in the armed forces. The respondents opposed the ATS and the women's services, in general, due to the perceived sexuality of these forces. This understanding of promiscuity was closely connected to the ATS' employment of working-class women who were viewed by some in the upper classes as less respectable.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, prejudice against the ATS also stemmed from the classed identities the women brought into the service. The servicemen's responses demonstrate their perceived privileged and controlling position as 'head' of their families when they assert that they would "stop"<sup>43</sup> their wives from joining the women's services. The study also reveals some social anxiety on the part of the men that the war effort indeed required

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<sup>40</sup> Francis, *The Flyer*, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid 12.

<sup>42</sup> Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, 121.

<sup>43</sup> Mass Observation Online, *A.T.S.*, 22.



the service of the ATS, and regarding subsequent gender relationships following the conflict.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps they feared that women's military participation in the conflict, particularly the personal involvement of women family members, would complicate their gender roles within the family especially the masculine dominance and control that they suggest in their responses that they possess within their family relationships. It seems that men's controlling familial role was not as strong as these soldiers suggested in their reply that they "would stop" their wives from joining the ATS. Their answers demonstrate the anxieties and instabilities of public and private gender roles during the war. The soldiers' responses suggest that some men were resistant to changes to mid-century gender models and opportunities for men and women. In this sense, the study supports Rose's and Francis' characterization of multiple masculinities evident during the Second World War. It also demonstrates the complicated, multiple, and conflicting identities that comprise the soldier hero identity. The qualities of "aggression, strength, courage, and endurance"<sup>45</sup> can also be viewed as negative characteristics. The servicemen's strong reaction also suggests the potential fragility of the soldiers' masculinities and identities as soldiers. Perhaps these individuals viewed women's participation in the war and their female partner's potential participation, in particular, as an affront to their masculine soldier identities and their ability as soldiers to defend family and country. These men may also have felt rather insecure within their own partnerships and worried that their wives or girlfriends would have affairs or leave their relationships.<sup>46</sup> Their anxiety may have stemmed from women's exposure to a new life away from the home as well as the rather promiscuous reputation of the ATS evident in the fact that forty-four percent of the respondents thought the force

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<sup>44</sup> Alan Allport examines the complicated and sometimes strained post-war relationships between former servicemen and their female relatives that resulted from their combined wartime experiences in *Demobbed Coming Home After the Second World War* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 50-107.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Allport demonstrates the prevalence of adulterous relationships during the war and social anxieties regarding affairs in *Demobbed*, 81-106.

“immoral” or “dirty.” The study also reveals some support (although certainly marginal) for women joining the ATS, as well as the other services.

A richer, more nuanced understanding of wartime masculinities clarifies how servicewomen fit into the larger wartime cultural climate of the ‘people’s war’ (the notion that all Britons united and contributed to the defence of the nation). Certainly, as war bride veteran Evie contends, “it took all kinds [...] to make the army.”<sup>47</sup> Rose complicates the idea of the people’s war arguing that not all Britons so neatly fit into the idea of a unified British people.<sup>48</sup> The restrictions to women’s service, particularly the fact that women could not serve in active combat positions nor receive arms training like male military personnel complicates the understanding of a united defence. An individual’s role in the war, as Rose demonstrates, depended on the individual’s sex, age, pre-war employment, education, religion, and wartime assignment. It is clear that many Britons felt domestic identities were most appropriate for women when the auxiliaries introduced housewifery and mothercraft courses in the later years of the war. Press coverage of these courses celebrated a return to distinct gender spheres.<sup>49</sup> These courses demonstrate that many viewed women’s experiences and identities as wives and mothers as women’s ‘natural’ identities. Of course, the domestic roles and experiences promoted to women through these courses and wider media were likely experiences only available to middle or upper-class women.<sup>50</sup> This suggests the frailty and ambiguity of idealized femininities and that performing the role of the homemaker was not an all-encompassing experience. Despite the multiple experiences and feminine identities available to women during the war, it is

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<sup>47</sup> Evelyn Brooke, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 20, 2010, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia.

<sup>48</sup> Rose, *Which People’s War?* 21.

<sup>49</sup> For instance: “Mothercraft Classes for WAAF,” *Aberdeen Journal*, February 8, 1944, page 2, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000578/19440208/033/0002?browse=false>

<sup>50</sup> For more on the experiences of English working class women see: Selina Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England 1918-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University of Press, 2005).

evident that idealized femininities still connected women to the domestic sphere and, based on their reproductive biology, limited their experiences and identities.

### **Part Two: Canadians in the War, Canadians in Britain, War Bride Marriages, and Migration**

Canada declared war on Germany on September 10, 1939 and during the month of September over 58 000 Canadians volunteered for the services.<sup>51</sup> More than one million Canadians served during the Second World War and more than 45 000 died in the conflict.<sup>52</sup> Members of the First Canadian Infantry Division arrived in Scotland on December 17, 1939. The Second Canadian Infantry Division arrived during the summer and fall of 1940 and the Third Canadian Infantry Division arrived in 1941.<sup>53</sup> Five Canadian divisions served in Britain during the Second World War, and by VE-Day 368 263 Canadian army men and women served in Britain and 1 767 were on-route to Britain when hostilities in Europe ceased.<sup>54</sup> During this same period, 93 844 airmen and women served in the RCAF overseas and it is believed that a force of 94 000 “[was] there for long periods.”<sup>55</sup> Thousands of Canadians also served in the Royal Air Force. By the end of hostilities in Europe, 20 354 navy personnel were in the UK or serving in European waters and it is believed that 30 000 Canadian navy personnel served in Britain over the course of the war. In total, 494 000 Canadians served in Britain during the Second World War.<sup>56</sup> Most Canadian units concentrated in the south of England especially around Aldershot.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> “Canada at Britain’s Side 1939-1942,” Canadian War Museum  
[http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/chrono/1931britains\\_side\\_e.shtml](http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/chrono/1931britains_side_e.shtml)

<sup>52</sup> Second World War 1939-1945, Veterans Affairs Canada,  
<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/second-world-war>

<sup>53</sup> The First Canadian Army Canada and the Second World War, Veterans Affairs Canada,  
<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/second-world-war/canada-and-the-second-world-war/canarm>

<sup>54</sup> Stacey and Wilson, Preface to *The Half Million*, xi.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Stacey and Wilson, *The Half Million*, 4.

The war shaped and complicated Canadian understandings of feminine and masculine roles and identities. After learning that the British Air Force planned to send British WAAFS to serve in Canadian air training facilities, in the summer of 1941 the Canadian Government responded by introducing the Canadian women's army and air force.<sup>58</sup> The following summer, the Canadian Government authorized the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service.<sup>59</sup> "An Enquiry into the Attitude of the Canadian Civilian Public towards the Women's Armed Forces" sheds light on how Canadians viewed women in the services. The survey conducted in 1943 with 7 283 respondents led to the conclusion that only seven percent of respondents thought that the appropriate "wartime role for women was to be in the military."<sup>60</sup> Instead, respondents believed that "the need for women in war industry was twice as great as the need for women in the armed forces."<sup>61</sup> The report noted that the public viewed a military role for women as "unladylike."<sup>62</sup> It also stated that women wanted to remain in civilian life due to its familiarity and the "comforts" apparent in the domestic sphere, as well as the "comforts" offered by civilian employment.<sup>63</sup> Similar to responses by British servicemen in the Mass Observation report on the ATS,<sup>64</sup> the Canadian study reported that Canadian servicemen particularly took issue with women in the services and encouraged their female contacts to avoid military service.<sup>65</sup>

Canada's wartime experience was not as perilous and violent as Britain's since Canada was further geographically from the conflict. Oral history project participants

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<sup>58</sup> Department of National Defence Directorate of History, 156.013 (D1) C.P. Stacey Sketch History of CWAC 1941/1945 from Draft of Official History, page 2.

<sup>59</sup> Department of National Defence Directorate of History, AHQ Report N68, Manpower Problems of the Women's Services During the Second World War, page 5.

<sup>60</sup> Department of National Defence Directorate of History, 156.009 D10 Report on Public Opinion Re: CWAC, page 7.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Mass Observation Online, *A.T.S.*, page 22.

<sup>65</sup> Department of National Defence Directorate of History, 156.009 D10 Report on Public Opinion Re: CWAC page 7.

including Gwendolyn Berry argue that Canadians continually fail to understand the extent of the British wartime experience as Canada did not face the same perils of bombing, the same rigid blackout conditions, or strict rationing.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, the necessity for women in a military capacity was not as readily clear to the Canadian public as it was to British society. Barry recalled negative Canadian perspectives about women's involvement in the military.<sup>67</sup> In wartime Canada men joined the Armed Forces, trained at bases in Canada, and were then deployed overseas. The separation of the conflict from the home front supported the maintenance of more distinct gender identities and roles in the war.

However, broader understandings of gender and more varied experiences for women and men are evident when examining the Canadian wartime experience. The public opinion report on women in the forces sheds light on Canadians' tolerance, to a certain extent, of women working in industry and the civilian workforce. At first glance, the Canadian wartime experience can be viewed as facilitating a divided wartime experience based on gender. However, it is evident that understandings of masculine and feminine roles in war still had fluidity and women had more complex and contributory social and material roles in wartime Canada. In total, 21 624<sup>68</sup> women served in the CWAC during the war, comprising 2.8 percent of the total Canadian army by the end of hostilities in Europe.<sup>69</sup> At its peak population, the Canadian WAAF had 15 147 in all ranks. During the conflict, the Canadian WAAF had a total of 17 017.<sup>70</sup> 6 781 Canadians served in the Wrens.<sup>71</sup> However, the slow organization of the forces, the low support for women in the

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<sup>66</sup> Gwendolyn Barry, interviewed by Lauren Auger August 11, 2010, Huntsville, Ontario.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Department of National Defence Directorate of History, AHQ Report N68, "Manpower Problems of the Women's Services During the Second World War, page 23 & Department of National Defence Directorate of History, 156.012D2, Maj. M. Davis, Brief History of CWAC, page 1.

<sup>69</sup> Department of National Defence Directorate of History, 156.013 (D1) C.P. Stacey Sketch History of CWAC 1941/1945 from draft of Official History, page 3.

<sup>70</sup> Department of National Defence Directorate of History, AHQ Report N68, "Manpower Problems of the Women's Services During the Second World War, page 23.

<sup>71</sup> Department of National Defence Directorate of History, AHQ Report N68, "Manpower Problems of the

military identified in 1943, and the small scale of the women's forces suggests that many viewed women's contribution to the war effort based on understandings of gender that connected idealized femininities to domesticity and idealized masculinities to militarism. More rigid feminine identities and a more limited wartime social and actual roles for women could be more aptly maintained in the Canadian context compared to the British wartime experience due to the distance of the conflict and less need for women in a military capacity.

The experiences of Canadian men during the war also complicated understandings of masculinities and femininities. Canadian men, including servicemen, also had experiences consistent with, and reflective of, Rose's temperate masculinity.<sup>72</sup> Not all men served in the military and within the military not all men served in an active capacity. Based on Rose's temperate masculine figure, Canadian servicemen also embodied other 'softer' identities; for instance, they were fathers, husbands, boyfriends etc. These 'softer' identities are also fluid, multiple, and blend with other aspects of manhood. Canadian servicemen's relationships and marriages with British women demonstrate that Canadian servicemen performed multiple masculinities in their service and personal lives.

Returning to Canadian servicemen in Britain during the war, according to Stacey and Wilson, the first marriage between a British woman and Canadian soldier took place in Aldershot on January 28, 1940.<sup>73</sup> News of an engagement between a Canadian serviceman and a British woman appeared as early as the December 27, 1939 edition of *The Evening Telegraph*, merely ten days after the Canadians arrived in Scotland.<sup>74</sup> Two days after the

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Women's Services During the Second World War, page 23.

<sup>72</sup> Rose, *Which People's War?*, 195-196.

<sup>73</sup> Stacey and Wilson, *The Half Million*, 136. & Jarratt, Preface, 15.

<sup>74</sup> "Notable Scottish Engagement," *The Evening Telegraph*, December 27, 1939, page 3, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/000of0563/19391227/063/0003?browse=false>

first reported union between a British woman and Canadian soldier, The February 1, 1940 edition of the *Hull Daily Mail* reported a January 31, 1940 wedding of a Canadian pilot serving in the RAF and a British woman.<sup>75</sup>

In 1940, Canadian Military Headquarters recorded 1 222 marriages between Canadian servicemen and British women.<sup>76</sup> To discourage hasty marriages, Canadian Army Command decreed in November 1940 that servicemen would require a commanding officer's permission for marriage. Under Overseas RO 1262: "permission to marry will be required by Officers and Warrant Officers, under the age of 20 years, and by all N.C.O's and men."<sup>77</sup> By October 1942, Canadian Command added further guidelines. A sample application form that dates after the 1942 reforms found at Library and Archives Canada demonstrates that the required application included a form completed by the soldier as well as supplementary documentation including a certificate confirming that the applying soldier had passed a medical exam for venereal disease and a Wasserman blood test for syphilis.<sup>78</sup> Confirmation from a third party of the moral character of the intended bride was also necessary.<sup>79</sup> If less than nineteen years of age, the applicant required written permission from his parent or guardian. If his fiancée was under the age of twenty-one, the form also required the written consent of her parent or guardian.<sup>80</sup> Should either party under the specified age not have permission from their parent or guardian, the application required a written statement documenting this failure along with a recommendation by the

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<sup>75</sup> "Romance of the Air," *Hull Daily News*, February 1, 1940, page 5, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000324/19400201/030/0005?browse=false> These marriages reflected the culture of romance discussed by Claire Langhamer and her argument regarding the development of subjectivity through romantic experiences and romantic identities discussed in *The English in Love The English In-Love; The Intimate Story of An Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 24. Her work provides a theoretical foundation for exploring the relationships between Canadian servicemen and British women and will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>76</sup> Library Archives Canada RG 24 CMHQ volume 12 444 File 6/Births/1

<sup>77</sup> LAC CMHQ RG 24 Vol. 12497 File 6/MARRY/1

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

commanding officer.<sup>81</sup> In order to avoid bigamous marriages, which were of particular concern to Canadian Command, one change to the form in 1942 centred on questions concerning the soldier's romantic history.<sup>82</sup>

The commanding officer also interviewed the applying grooms ensuring the accuracy of the form and related documentation. Based on the more rigorous October 1942 requirements, during the interview the commanding officer ensured the groom's awareness of his "financial implications."<sup>83</sup> These responsibilities included the required retention of two hundred dollars from his pay in ten dollar monthly increments funding transportation to Canada for the soldier and any dependents.<sup>84</sup> The commanding officer ensured the soldier's financial stability and determined whether attempts had been made to provide a dependent's allowance for any children of a common-law union. Based on Canadian Command's concern regarding the number of marriages, the commanding officer also warned the applicant of the permanency of marriage.<sup>85</sup> According to Stacey and Wilson, the commanding officer responsible for evaluating the marriage application was most often the unit Chaplain and that "one [interviewed Chaplain] estimated that half his time was spent in [...] marriage counselling."<sup>86</sup> If the application was successful, the commanding officer issued a certificate to the applying soldier. The certificate noted the date after which the couple could marry, as a two-month waiting period followed the acceptance of the application.<sup>87</sup> According to a Canadian Military Headquarters Memo from October 29, 1943: "The waiting period has resulted in many projected marriages failing to materialize,

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Stacey and Wilson, *The Half Million*, 136.

<sup>83</sup> LAC, CMHQ RG 24 Vol. 12497 File 6/MARRY/1/2

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Stacey and Wilson, *The Half Million*, 138.

<sup>87</sup> Library Archives Canada, CMHQ RG 24 Vol. 12497 File 6/MARRY/1/2



indicating that had permission had been granted immediately when it was asked for, the chances of a successful marriage were most remote.”<sup>88</sup>

At the beginning of the war, the RCAF banned officers from marrying prior to their attainment of the rank of flight-lieutenant unless they could prove additional income. The RCAF command lifted this ban in January 1941 with the following restrictions: the officer had to have served for at least six months and had the permission of his commanding officer.<sup>89</sup> The Navy had no apparent restrictions regarding marriage.

Known marriages between Canadian soldiers and women from Great Britain by December 31, 1946 amounted to 44 886 with 21 385 children born from these unions by that same date.<sup>90</sup> Eighty percent of war brides married men from the army and 85.5 percent of the total children that resulted from war bride unions were born to army fathers. Eighteen percent of war brides married Canadian airmen and 13.1 percent of the total offspring between war brides and Canadian servicemen came from these unions. Only two percent of war brides married navy men and only 1.4 percent of the total war bride offspring resulted from these unions.<sup>91</sup> In total, 47 783 marriages had taken place by December 31, 1946 between Canadian servicemen serving outside of Canada and foreign women and 21 950 children born from these unions.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> “Wedding Ban Lifted,” *Derby Daily Telegraph*, January 4, 1941, page 3.  
[http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000521/19410104/030/0002?browse=false&\\_=1448371859156](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000521/19410104/030/0002?browse=false&_=1448371859156)

<sup>90</sup> LAC, File HQ650-124-33, *History of the Directorate of Repatriation*, page 34; Also cited in Jarratt, Appendix, 269.

<sup>91</sup> LAC, File HQ650-124-33, *History of the Directorate of Repatriation*, page 34; Also cited in Jarratt, Appendix, 270.

<sup>92</sup> LAC, File HQ650-124-33, page 34; Also cited in Jarratt, Appendix, 269.

## Organizing the Migration

On June 15, 1942 an Order-in-Council declared the Canadian Government's responsibility for the migration of war brides and their dependents.<sup>93</sup> Although initially supported by the funds drawn from servicemen's pay, by October 1943 public funds financed the migration of war brides and the two hundred dollars returned to servicemen for 'housekeeping' following discharge.<sup>94</sup> The transportation of war brides to Canada began due to German bombings, rationing, and challenges finding accommodation in wartime Britain. The Canadian Government perceived the migration of war brides as unburdening British society of a sizable population of civilians.<sup>95</sup> In 1944, after being under the authority of other Governmental departments, the Government transferred responsibility for coordinating the migration to the Department of National Defence.<sup>96</sup> The Canada Wives Bureau was then established in Britain under the supervision of Canadian Military Head Quarters.<sup>97</sup> The Wives Bureau had two sections; Movement Control- Repatriation Section and Welfare Section. Movement Control, headquartered in Sackville House in London dealt with the actual migration including:

[...] checking eligibility, clearing with Immigration as to entrance permit, preparation of all necessary forms, establishing priority of travel through Passage Priority Committee (Canada House) issuance of passports and visas (if required) provision of railway and ship travel warrants and meals and berth tickets both in U.K. or Canada [...] issuance of instructions to dependents as to the time and place of assembly, and baggage questions.<sup>98</sup>

The Department of National Defence determined priority for reasons such as pregnancy and extreme cases including widows of Canadian servicemen.<sup>99</sup> The Canadian Wives Bureau served war brides individually dealing with their personal migration problems as

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<sup>93</sup> LAC, File 2964- D40, DND Memo Re: Transfer of Dependents.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> LAC, File HQ650-124-33 History of the Directorate of Repatriation, page 26.

<sup>96</sup> LAC, File HQ650-124-33 History of the Directorate of Repatriation, page 27.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid 28.

<sup>98</sup> LAC, File 2964- D40 DND Memo Re: Transfer of Dependents.

<sup>99</sup> LAC, File HQ650-124-33 History of the Directorate of Repatriation, page 33.

well as provided education to war brides regarding their new country. In addition, it also organized war bride clubs that also offered education on Canadian life. Unofficial clubs also formed. Most war brides and their dependents migrated to Canada during the end or after the conflict with 56 561 of the 64 446 total population migrating between April 1945 and March 1948.<sup>100</sup> As of September 1946, the Department of Immigration took over the administration of the migration.<sup>101</sup>

### **The Process**

War brides applied for migration with the Commissioner for Emigration at Sackville House London. Servicemen or their families could also apply on behalf of the war bride with the Director of Immigration in Ottawa.<sup>102</sup> If the war bride's husband remained overseas, Canadian Immigration interviewed his family for the purposes of determining whether they could house and support the war bride until her husband's return.<sup>103</sup> Once approved, the migration could begin with little notice during wartime, based on the availability of ships. War brides travelling during wartime could not reveal their ports of departure, or ship names, to family members due to fears of compromising the voyage. Some oral history participants recalled the secrecy of their voyages and their fears of U-Boat attacks despite the fact most war brides who came to Canada during the war migrated between April 1944 and March 1945<sup>104</sup> after the greatest threat for U-Boat attacks was strongly, or completely, diminished.<sup>105</sup><sup>106</sup> Beatrice, a war bride veteran interviewed for this

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<sup>100</sup> LAC, Amicus No. 747083 Report of the Department of Mines and Resources.

<sup>101</sup> LAC, File HQ650-124-33 History of the Directorate of Repatriation, page 29.

<sup>102</sup> LAC, File HQ650-124-33 Welcome to War Brides, page 5.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> LAC, Amicus No. 747083 Report of the Department of Mines and Resources. Also cited in Jarratt, *War Brides*, 270.

<sup>105</sup> Timothy J. Runyan and Jan M. Copes argue the Allied Navies were especially ineffective from preventing U-Boat attacks in 1941-1942. However, by the end of the war the Allies had destroyed most German submarines. Timothy J. Runyan and Jan M. Copes eds. Preface to *To Die Gallantly The Battle of the Atlantic* (Boulder; San Francisco; Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), xiii-xiv.

<sup>106</sup> Statics from Nathan Miller's Appendix to *War at Sea a Naval History of World War II* (New York: Scribner, 1995) 534, support Runyan and Copes' argument: In 1942, (the year Canada began transporting

project, recalled how she prepared herself and her infant son Mitchell for a swift evacuation during their March 1944 crossing:

[...] I used to sleep on the bottom and Mitchell used to sleep between my ankles and I never got undressed and my handbag on the ground beside me. So I mean if I had fallen in the water I've got to hang on to Mitchell, I can't swim, I've got to hang on to Mitchell and I can't let go of my handbag because I've got [...] my identity in it, you know. So I was trying to keep my papers in the hand bag, keep at close hand all the time and fully dressed and Mitchell between my ankles all the time.<sup>107</sup>

However, despite these kinds of fears, no war bride transport ship sank over the course of the conflict. Prior to the journey, war brides collected at a determined meeting point and stayed in hostels in London. They then travelled by rail to the specific port often Liverpool or Southampton.<sup>108</sup> War brides also sailed from Glasgow. War brides migrating during the war sailed on converted troopships and the accommodation offered was far from comfortable. War brides migrating after the war<sup>109</sup> often sailed on converted cruise liners and spoke of the favourable conditions and abundance of food. On arrival at Pier 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia war brides proceeded through Canadian customs and then travelled by rail to the stations nearest to their final destination.<sup>110</sup> The Red Cross notified Canadian families of the arrival of their war bride.<sup>111</sup>

## Citizenship

Once a woman married a Canadian soldier, she gained Canadian citizenship and any children born after the union had Canadian citizenship. According to the Canadian

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war brides to Canada) 1 664 Allied ships were sunk in the Atlantic Ocean and U-Boats sunk 1 160 of these ships. In 1943, 597 Allied ships were sunk in the Atlantic. 377 of these ships were destroyed by U-Boats. In 1944, 205 Allied ships were sunk in the Atlantic with 132 of these ships sunk by U-Boats. In 1945, 105 Allied ships were sunk in the Atlantic with 56 of these ships being sunk by U-Boats.

<sup>107</sup> Beatrice Cartier, interviewed by Lauren Auger June 23, 2010, Montréal, Québec.

<sup>108</sup> Jarratt. *War Brides*, 26.

<sup>109</sup> Based on the Report "Statistics Referable to Dependents in UK" as of Dec 31, 1945, 30 957 army men's dependents remained in the UK and 11 985 had migrated to Canada. RG 24 Vol 13 270 Directorate of Repatriation December Folder 4 Drawer 17.

<sup>110</sup> LAC HG650-124-33, Welcome to War Brides, page 6.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

Citizenship Act of 1947, for children born outside of Canada to Canadian servicemen fathers, nationality only passed to children by the servicemen fathers if the fathers were married to the children's mother before their birth. Thousands of children of war brides and Canadian servicemen were unaware that they lacked Canadian citizenship. When they registered for passports or reached retirement age and applied for their old age pension they discovered that although they had lived in Canada for the majority of, or even all of their lives, some even serving their country in the Armed Forces or political office, they lacked official Canadian citizenship.<sup>112</sup> The most recent advancement in the 'Lost Canadian' saga came on February 6, 2014 with the announcement of Bill C-24. According to the *Calgary Herald*:

Bill C-24, the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act, purports to restore citizenship for those born before 1947 when Canada didn't have a Citizenship Act and were thus considered British subjects, as well as their first generation children who were born outside Canada and often only learned they weren't Canadian when they tried to get a passport.<sup>113</sup>

Examining the process instituted for war brides' marriages and migrations demonstrates that during and immediately following the Second World War, the Canadian Government instituted particular definitions of gender, citizenship, and national identity based on underlying social discourses regarding gender and sexuality. The Canadian Army's policy that potential war brides under the age of twenty-one must obtain permission from their parents for their marriages while Canadian servicemen only required similar permission until the age of nineteen suggests that young women had less authority over their life choices than servicemen. The understanding that the Canadian Government relieved Britain of a sizeable population during the conflict by transporting war brides to

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<sup>112</sup> War bride Eswyn Lyster and Melynda Jarratt write about Lost Canadians in their works on war brides *Most Excellent Citizens Canada's War Brides of World War II* (Victoria: Trafford, 2009); *War Brides*, 2009.

<sup>113</sup> "Lost Canadian Provisions in Citizenship Bill Fall Short: Critics," *Calgary Herald*, February 7, 2014. <http://www.calgaryherald.com/news/canada/Lost+Canadian+provisions+citizenship+bill+fall+short+critics/9483692/story.html>

Canada is interesting given the fact that most war brides arrived in Canada after March 1945. In this sense, the migration was less about removing war brides and their children from harm than about different rights to citizenship for men and women. Although thousands of war brides remained in Britain due to the dissolution of their relationships, or with their Canadian husbands, most war brides came to Canada following their marriages to Canadian servicemen.<sup>114</sup> Once married, British war brides lost their British citizenship and became Canadian citizens. It is telling that Canadian soldiers did not similarly lose their citizenship upon marriage. It is clear that the Canadian Government viewed men as having more right to citizenship than women. Women gained citizenship in Canada through their relationships to men as daughters or wives. Men too gained their citizenship based on familial connection to their fathers. However, at this time only men passed citizenship on to their children and only if married to the mother of their children.

The requirement of marriage for fathers passing citizenship to their children is telling of underlining discourses regarding sexuality, gender, and citizenship. Such regulations indicate how the state employed laws of citizenship for controlling sexuality and particularly sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Although potentially meant as a punishment for both Canadian men and foreign women for the birth of children outside of marriage, ultimately war fiancées or girlfriends and their children identified by their British citizenship suffered the consequences of sex outside of marriage. Discourses regarding gender and citizenship that impacted war brides' lived experiences reflect Graham Dawson's argument that understandings of nationhood are grounded in, and perpetuate, discourses regarding gender that connect women to their 'natural' role as mothers and men

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<sup>114</sup> As of December 31, 1946, 5 559 Canadian servicemen had been demobilized in the UK and 3 961 war brides had indicated to Canadian authorities that they did not wish to migrate to Canada. See Appendix. Library Archives Canada, RG24-C-1-File85361-3 Microfilms C5220 Found on *Héritage* [Heritage.Canadiana.ca/view/oocihmilac\\_reel\)c5220/41?r=0&5=5](https://Heritage.Canadiana.ca/view/oocihmilac_reel)c5220/41?r=0&5=5)

to their ‘natural’ role as soldiers.<sup>115</sup> However, one may question whether motherhood singularly underpins this “essential being of the nation”?<sup>116</sup> It may be more accurate that women’s identities as married mothers who, at least preferably, entered into these marriages prior to sexual intercourse and pregnancy underlines “the essential being of the nation.”<sup>117</sup> War brides’ married identities facilitated their migrations to Canada and Canadian citizenship. Subsequently, as two chapters in this thesis centred on war bride veterans’ life histories will demonstrate, war brides’ experiences as both wives and mothers framed their Canadian identities.

### **Part Three: Constructions of Gender and Media Responses Regarding War Brides’ Migrations**

Portrayals of marriages between British women and Canadian servicemen in the British wartime press presented these weddings as a natural, romantic, and an exciting result of the turmoil of the conflict. Claire Langhamer argues that in mid-century Britain love became seen as having the ability to “transform [...] the self” through shaping personal identity.<sup>118</sup> She argues that cultural representations and the media helped individuals shape understandings of themselves in-love. In the post-war age, love was viewed as being the basis “for a better social order.”<sup>119</sup> Her arguments connect to understandings of how larger social discourses operate on individual experience, identities, and subjectivity.

Representations and discussions regarding love in the media presented appropriate roles for men and women in romantic relationships, identities they should perform within these relationships (such as the supportive woman and active soldier husband), and how through their romantic relationships and articulation of romantic identities they should feel a sense

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<sup>115</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 12.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Langhamer, *The English In-Love*, 24.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid 28.

of an independent self.<sup>120</sup> The wartime articles demonstrate that people did not always agree with cultural discourses regarding love and that these discourses themselves were fluid, complicated, and not necessarily consistent. These tendencies support Langhamer's argument regarding the disruptive nature of love in wartime and how these relationships also influenced shifts in relationships between genders.<sup>121</sup> Langhamer's argument regarding the importance of love in wartime and post-war society demonstrates how the war bride phenomenon (their courtships, marriages, migrations, and settlements) was part of this larger disruptive cultural movement in which love held an important role in sustaining individuals during the chaos of war and helped them develop a unique sense of self in opposition to, and despite of, the collective nature of the war.

Pat Thane argues that the years between 1930 and 1950 were "the golden age, indeed the only age, of the near universal, stable, long-lasting marriage, often considered the normality from which we have since departed."<sup>122</sup> Thane contends that after 1945, the birth rate increased, the average age when an individual married lowered, life expectancy increased, and divorce was challenging to arrange.<sup>123</sup> Alan Allport's argument that the romantic atmosphere in wartime Britain was not always reflective of positive and happy relationships given the vast increase in divorces in the years immediately following the war complicates Thane's understanding of the 'golden age' of marriage. Allport contends that in 1945, 15 600 divorces occurred. In 1947, 60 300 divorces are on record.<sup>124</sup> Langhamer's

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid 15-18.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid 9.

<sup>122</sup> Pat Thane, "Family Life and 'Normality' in Post-war British Culture," in *Life after Death, Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*, eds. Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 198; Also cited in: Claire Langhamer, "The Meaning of Home in Post-War Britain," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40 (2) (2005): 351.

<sup>123</sup> Pat Thane, "Family Fortunes," *History Today* 60 (12) (December 2010): page 34.

<sup>124</sup> Alan Allport, *Demobbed Coming Home After the Second World War* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 87-88.



work on love in mid-century Britain clarifies how individuals perceived marriage in mid-century Britain. She views the 1940s and 1950s as a complicated period for marriage:

[...] higher expectations bred greater disappointments. Increasingly it seemed that being a good wage-earner or a good housekeeper was no longer enough to fulfill the marriage contract, but the sustainability of love-based lifelong commitment was the subject of anxiety even as it apparently triumphed as a model.<sup>125</sup>

Given the increased number of divorces in the post-war years, not all wartime marriages were successful, compatible, or happy. However Langhamer's argument regarding the "love-based lifelong commitment"<sup>126</sup> provides insight into how war brides may have approached their marriages to Canadian soldiers. Certainly the expectation that war brides would migrate to Canada and the challenges and cost of transcontinental travel after the war, supports the understanding that war brides entered into these unions believing that their marriages were life-long commitments. Of the eighteen women who participated in this project, only one divorced her Canadian veteran husband. In total, the number of war bride marriages that ended in divorce is unknown.<sup>127</sup> Melynda Jarratt, author and proponent of the war bride community, argues that most war bride marriages were successful and that despite the challenges war brides experienced in their marriages and migrations "[...] if your husband treated you well, and you were in-love, nothing else really mattered."<sup>128</sup> The following discussion sheds further light on how wartime Britain perceived romance and wartime marriages between British women and Canadian servicemen.

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<sup>125</sup> Langhamer, *The English In-Love*, 187-188.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid 188.

<sup>127</sup> 544 war brides who divorced their Canadian veteran husband and who wished to migrate to Canada were recorded in the History of the Directorate of Repatriation. 3 961 war brides were recorded as not wanting to migrate to Canada. The Directorate of Repatriation listed that these women included war brides whose husbands were demobilized in Britain. Although not explicitly stated, this number could also include war brides who had divorced their Canadian husbands. Library Archives Canada, RG24-C-1-File85361-3 Microfilms C5220 Found on *Héritage*

Heritage.Canadiana.ca/view/oocihmilac\_reel)c5220/41?r=0&5=5

<sup>128</sup> Jarratt, *War Brides*, 30.

A January 30, 1940 *Evening Telegraph* article “Mars and Cupid Get Together- Canadian Soldier’s Lady of the Rose” stated: “A war brings many things in its wake, and one of the most prominent of these is romance.”<sup>129</sup> The article recalled love stories from the Great War and framed these love stories as a product of war and implied that the contemporary war would have similar romantic results.<sup>130</sup> A British Naval Chaplain wrote an article for the May 4, 1941 edition of the Glasgow paper *The Sunday Post*<sup>131</sup> outlining the advice he provided to couples about marriage drawing on his remembrance of transnational marriages during the Great War:

In the last war men came to this country from all parts of the Empire just as they are doing to-day, Canadians, New Zealanders, Australians. Some of them came here on leave from France, met girls, and married them on their next leave. I know of at least ten cases. Eight of them turned out happy marriages. The girls were granted free passage with their husbands after the armistice, and set up homes under other skies. The husbands in the other two cases did not come back from the war. Two young widows were left. Both of them married again, however, a couple of years later. It is a fact that most war widows married again. They were willing to forfeit pensions to do so. Quite a good advertisement for marriage.<sup>132</sup>

Like the article from the *Evening Telegraph*, the Chaplain’s article indicates that love is a common wartime experience. Through his discussion of contemporary couples, as well as normalizing relationships with foreign troops, the Chaplain reinforces the institution of marriage and celebrates the articulation of both men and women’s domestic identities.

The British press also documented the marriages of Canadian soldiers and British women. In analyzing archives of British newspapers through the British Library, it is evident that the British press generally used three discourses when characterizing and discussing Canadian soldiers: they portrayed them as proficient soldiers contributing to the

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<sup>129</sup> “Mars and Cupid Get Together- Canadian Soldier’s Lady of the Rose,” *Evening Telegraph*, January 30, 1940, page 5,

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000563/19400130/084/0005?browse=false>

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> “Come on What do you Really Think of Him?,” *The Evening Standard* May 4, 1941, page 9,

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000566/19410504/064/0009?browse=false>

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

war effort,<sup>133</sup> as romantic figures courting and marrying British women,<sup>134</sup> and as menaces to British society.<sup>135</sup> The negative presentation of Canadian soldiers largely stemmed from the strained initial relationship between Canadian troops and the British population. As Stacey and Wilson, as well as Jonathan F. Vance have noted, the First Canadian Division were volunteers, many of whom had no prior military experience and had largely been unemployed for most of their potential wage earning years due to the Great Depression.<sup>136</sup> Canadian troops lacked discipline while waiting for the beginning of real hostilities with Germany and gained a reputation for frequenting British pubs. Britain had more lenient liquor laws than the wartime Canadian provinces and the Canadian servicemen took advantage of the eased access to liquor, apparently annoying the local population in the process.<sup>137</sup> Another issue straining relations between Canadians and Britons in Southern England was the fact that the Aldershot barracks had no central heating and Canadian soldiers stole park benches and bus stop seats for firewood.<sup>138</sup> The sometimes difficult relationship between Canadian servicemen and the British population is evident in wartime press coverage in the south of Britain regarding crimes committed by Canadian soldiers. For instance: “Canadian hit British Policeman – One Month’s Prison For Assault” in the March 4, 1940 edition of the *Gloucestershire Echo* told the account of a police officer who

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<sup>133</sup> The Canadian Army’s battle prowess is recounted in “Canadians Smashed Inland,” *The Gloucestershire Echo*, June 7, 1944, page 1,

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000320/19440607/011/0001?browse=false>

<sup>134</sup> A portrayal of Canadian servicemen as romantic figures is put forth in “15 Girls a Day Marry Canadians,” *The Gloucestershire Echo*, October 28, 1944, page 1,

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000320/19441028/021/0001>

<sup>135</sup> The following article depicts Canadians as threatening to the British public: “Canadian Hit Policeman- One Month’s Prison For Assault,” *Gloucestershire Echo*, March 4, 1940, page 1,

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000320/19400304/022/0001?browse=false>

<sup>136</sup> Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire*, 149.

<sup>137</sup> Stacey and Wilson, *The Half Million*, 34-46; Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire*, 176.

<sup>138</sup> Stacey and Wilson, *The Half Million*, 36; Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire*, 176.

when defending himself from assault from a single Canadian Private was surrounded by a group of twenty Canadians.<sup>139</sup>

According to Vance, the “influx of newcomers [American service personnel] - overpaid, over - sexed and over here, as the locals irreverently observed - would push Canadians and Britons closer together by highlighting their similarities after two years during which their differences seemed more apparent with every passing month.”<sup>140</sup> The catastrophic raid at Dieppe where Canadians bore the brunt of poor Allied planning also changed the relationship between Britons and Canadians. Vance argues: “No longer were they undisciplined colonials whose first priority was enjoying themselves.”<sup>141</sup> In response to the tragedy, Canadian troops remaining in Britain became more disciplined with vengeance for their fallen, injured, and captured brothers and the hope of a future successful invasion of occupied Europe in-mind.<sup>142</sup> Given the previously discussed disruptive behaviour of Canadian troops, it would seem that relations between British civilians and Canadian soldiers, with the exception of romantic relationships between Canadian servicemen and British women, became more formalized surrounding military protocol.

There is evidence as the war went on of more frequent press coverage of weddings between Canadian soldiers and British women. This increased press coverage is logical given the rising number of marriages that took place over the course of the war between Canadians and British women. The October 28, 1944 *Gloucester Echo* reported that “15 Girls a Day Marry Canadians.”<sup>143</sup> The article stated that up to May 1944, Canadians

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<sup>139</sup> “Canadian Hit Policeman- One Month’s Prison For Assault,” *Gloucestershire Echo*, March 4, 1940, page 1.

<sup>140</sup> Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire*, 181.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid* 189.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid* 190.

<sup>143</sup> “15 Girls a Day Marry Canadians,” *The Gloucestershire Echo* October 28, 1944, page 1, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000320/19441028/021/0001>

married British girls at a rate of 600 or 700 per month.<sup>144</sup> Canadian military headquarter statistics record 870 marriages in May 1944 and 870 in June 1944.<sup>145</sup>

The British press also warned about the legality of civil marriages with men from Québec.<sup>146</sup> An article in the *Western Daily Press* stated that a French Canadian soldier had boasted in a canteen that he would marry a local girl and then have the marriage annulled based on Québec Provincial Civil Law.<sup>147</sup> This story featured prominently in British papers during the summer of 1942.<sup>148</sup> Documents related to the negative press coverage found in Library Archives Canada demonstrate that the marriages were, in fact, recognized in Québec and that the negative press concerned representatives of the Canadian Government in Britain. One such article aptly titled “A Timely Warning” demonstrates that the British public, to some extent, worried about the number of marriages taking place between Canadian servicemen and British women.<sup>149</sup> It is telling that the discussed soldier was French Canadian. The British public likely viewed French Canadians more suspiciously due to their different cultural background. Given that 4 160 war bride marriages took place in 1942<sup>150</sup>, it is evident that British women entered relationships with Canadian servicemen, including French Canadians, and married their Canadian sweethearts despite public warnings. In this sense, these war bride marriages also represent a resistance and even a challenge to cultural concerns regarding Canadians, as well as a means for women to articulate their personal and sexual autonomy. Therefore, war bride marriages support

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<sup>144</sup> (Ibid).

<sup>145</sup> LAC RG 24 CMHQ volume 12 444 File 6/Births/1

<sup>146</sup> “A Timely Warning,” *Western Daily Press*, August 28, 1942, page 3, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000513/19420828/049/0003?browse=false>

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> LAC, CMHQ RG 24 Vol. 12497 File 6/MARRY/1

<sup>149</sup> “A Timely Warning,” *Western Daily Press*, August 28, 1942, page 3, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000513/19420828/049/0003?browse=false>

<sup>150</sup> Stacey and Wilson, *The Half Million*, 138.

Langhamer's argument regarding love as disruptive to wartime society and potentially changing social conventions and beliefs concerning gender.<sup>151</sup>

More vocal expressions of social anxiety regarding relationships between British women and Canadian servicemen and the resulting migration of most of these women to Canada came in 1945 and 1946; the years when the majority of war brides migrated to Canada. It is logical that this anxiety was much more prevalent when most war brides left Britain and after the end of hostilities when Britain no longer required Canadian support to win the war. Most project participants discuss the upheaval experienced within their own families due to their migration and many frame their migration as a traumatic and dramatic episode in their life histories. The extent to which war brides migrated to Canada compared to the lower number of Canadian servicemen demobilized in Britain<sup>152</sup> suggests a particular understanding regarding gender and rights to citizenship. War bride veterans interviewed for this project provided other reasons for their relocation such as fear of wartime bombings and upheaval, as well as post-war economic difficulties in Britain especially housing shortages and ongoing rationing. However, many interviewees indicated that they, their husbands, and their British families viewed war brides' migrations as the 'natural' result of their marriage to a Canadian soldier. This belief regarding the 'naturalness' of war brides' migrations indicates the prevalence amongst the wartime generation of understandings that men have a greater right to citizenship and national identity and that view women as having more fluid national identities based on their marital status. The anxiety expressed in the British press often represented war brides and their husbands through understandings of gender connecting women to domesticity and men to heroic militarism. However, the articles also demonstrate an awareness of more

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<sup>151</sup> Langhamer, *The English In Love*, 9.

<sup>152</sup> Library Archives Canada, RG24-C-1-File85361-3 Microfilms C5220 Found on *Héritage* [Heritage.Canadiana.ca/view/oocihmilac\\_reel\)c5220/41?r=0&5=5](https://Heritage.Canadiana.ca/view/oocihmilac_reel)c5220/41?r=0&5=5)

nuanced experiences and identities that shaped war brides' realities. These articles at times provide insight into the struggles, complications, and criticism men and women experienced when performing masculine and feminine identities during the tumultuous Second World War and immediate post-war period.

For instance, a December 1946 letter to Lewes Councillor W.H. Penfold from a local war bride living in Canada asked for funding for unhappy war brides' return journeys to Britain. The letter published in the *Express Herald* detailed the supposed horrors experienced by British war brides in Canada. According to the letter, Canadians referred to war brides from Sussex as "English Sluts." The debate that followed in the December 13 edition of the paper demonstrates how both sides of the debate drew on understandings of gender that idealize femininity in connection to women's marriage, motherhood, and a characteristic yet discussed in this chapter - their apparent naiveté. These letters presented men as rightfully authoritative within relationships but in discussing the hardships experienced by war brides in their new homes, they also complicated the actions of war brides' husbands and the identity of the authoritative husband. One grandmother described Canada as primitive, implied that Canadian soldiers were not necessarily good husbands, and that war brides had not fully analyzed their migration decision: "The conditions out there are very different than what the girls have been used to at home. My grand-daughter lives miles from any village, not even the tradesmen call. I think the majority of the girls are sorry now they married Canadians of whom they knew little about."<sup>153</sup> A mother wrote more explicitly about her daughter being misled by a Canadian. The son-in-law had indicated during the couple's courtship that he led a rather "posh"<sup>154</sup> life in Canada but, in fact, lived on a settlement. She argued: "to call our English girls sluts [...] is an insult to

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<sup>153</sup> "Frank Criticism on Both Sides," *Sussex Agricultural Express*, December 13, 1946, page 1, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000656/19461213/002/0001?browse=false>

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

British mothers who worked hard during the war under bombing and shelling.”<sup>155</sup> The author presented war brides as having little agency and as naïve. She implied that the war disrupted her supervision of her daughter’s behaviour and choices (again supporting Langhamer’s argument regarding love as a disruptive social force).<sup>156</sup> Without her mother’s influence, the mother implied that her daughter did not have the capacity to make informed life choices. She indicated that her argument for funding the return voyage of war brides stemmed from the fact (in her opinion) that the war complicated, limited, and challenged mothers’ ability to adequately protect their daughters from nefarious young men, especially foreign men, because of the mothers’ important war work. Both letters to the editor presented Canadians and Canada negatively and in opposition to a British standard. In portraying Canadians and Canada in such a manner, these letters also demonstrate that war bride marriages and migrations facilitated some Colonial tensions.

Those who opposed a fundraising committee for the return of war brides also drew on specific understandings of femininities and proper feminine characteristics and behaviours in their arguments. One respondent wrote:

During the war I had several of these girls stay at my home. Nearly all of them were lazy, all they did was to lie in bed until dinner-time and all they thought about was dressing up and going out and going on a pub crawl. I can understand the people of Canada not wanting these girls, and neither do we want them back [...] They chose to marry Canadians because of the big allowance and the good time the Canadians gave them.<sup>157</sup>

This respondent’s particular portrayal of war brides reflects the concurrent criticism of women in the ATS. According to Rose, “Sexually expressive women and girls were a danger to the virtuous nation. Such women displayed what might be termed ‘libidinal femininity.’ Libidinal women were an ‘internal other’ against which the nation was

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Langhamer, *The English In Love*, 9.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.



defining itself. [...]”<sup>158</sup> Like Rose’s ‘libidinal’ women, according to the letter’s author, war brides appeared obsessed with their appearance, money, enjoyment of pub life, and sexual encounters with Canadian soldiers. The respondent framed these women as undesirable British citizens due to their behaviour and even suggested that these women deserved their unhappiness in Canada because they married unruly Colonials who frequented pubs rather than more temperate British soldiers.<sup>159</sup> Another writer, this time a war bride, drew on wifely and motherly responsibilities in her argument against the committee: “The idea of starting a fund or club to enable these young women to shelve their responsibilities in Canada and return home is ridiculous.”<sup>160</sup> According to this war bride, war brides’ motherhood and duties as wives in Canada trumped their unhappiness regardless of their personal situation.

A former Canadian serviceman wrote a letter printed in the July 18, 1947 edition of the *Kent and Sussex Courier* that criticized war brides’ parents for writing to their daughters regarding their difficult experiences adjusting to the separation. He argued that until the arrival of these letters, war brides happily enjoyed the benefits of life in Canada

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<sup>158</sup> Rose, *Which People’s War?*, 92.

<sup>159</sup> The wartime film *A Canterbury Tale*, You Tube, Directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, (Powell and Pressburger, 1944), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXQqzeiTYDo> provides a lesson for viewers regarding relationships between British women and American servicemen. It encourages that young people remain with the significant other that they had prior to their wartime commitments. It presents itself as a cautionary tale of punishment for British women in particular, due to Mr. Colpepper’s assaults on British women who dated American servicemen. Colpepper pours glue on women’s hair whilst they are out with Americans. Targeting women’s hair suggests that Colpepper’s action was an assault on glamorous femininity expressed through women’s hairstyles whilst on dates. Although the film only depicts relationships between British women and American men, criticism towards British women who dated Canadian soldiers evident in the British press shares a similar tone especially concerning the perceived transgressions of women in dating foreigners. The wartime short film *Listen to Britain*, You Tube, Directed by Humphrey Jennings and Stewart McAllister, (Crown Film Unit, 1942), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6h8pHumy7NE> depicts Canadians as part of the ‘music’ or climate of the British wartime experience. However anxiety expressed towards relationships between British women and foreign servicemen evident in *A Canterbury Tale* and the British press demonstrates that despite foreign troops being perceived as part of the war effort that some in wartime British society viewed relationships between these troops and British women as disruptive. Anxiety towards these relationships reveals a more fractured wartime Britain, as well as concerns regarding appropriate wartime femininities for British women.

<sup>160</sup> “Frank Criticism on Both Sides,” *Sussex Agricultural Express*, December 13, 1946, page 1, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000656/19461213/002/0001?browse=>

including “three square meals a day.”<sup>161</sup> The author doubted these women would receive such nourishment in Britain. He defended the reputation of war brides as they were the “best girls England had, and all our boys who married them believe the same, or they would not have gone to the length of buying them homes, providing them with the most expensive furnishings [...] and a good sum of money in the bank.”<sup>162</sup> Although the author praised British war brides, he also questioned what motivated war brides into these marriages. He reported that he and other Canadian veterans believed that during the war, war brides and their parents thought that their Canadian soldier would be killed in the conflict. Therefore, British parents encouraged their daughters into marriages with Canadian servicemen for the sole purpose of collecting the Canadian’s handsome army pension. He also critiqued British society in general, recalling that whilst stationed in Britain, he and other Canadians witnessed the decline of British culture based on the apparent tendency of young British women and their parents enjoying pub life together. He implied that these women were better off in Canada isolated from the lures of what he perceived as a deplorable pub culture. For British parents who promised their Canadian son-in-law assistance with finding jobs in England, the former serviceman contended that these parents overlooked the difficulty the Canadian veteran would experience adjusting to a new culture particularly apparently substandard British food. He concluded with the following statement: “No wonder some of our best boys who married English girls say their lives are hell because of these girls’ parents and their silly letter-writing. Please give this wide publicity, and it may help some silly parents to stop worrying their daughters.”<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> “Army Brides’ Broken Homes Stop Silly Letter Writing,” *Kent and Sussex Courier*, July 18, 1947, page 3, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000483/19470718/107/0003?browse=false>

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

This letter provides insight into the fact that war brides did not have standardized marriage, maternal, migration, and settlement experiences. Based on their individual contexts, there were also numerous gendered identities articulated by, and available to, war brides and their veteran husbands. Although he began by positively describing war brides, the letter's author also portrayed them as superficial, immoral, and controlled by their parents. He indicated that war brides' husbands and not their parents should control war brides' lives. This letter demonstrates perceptions about social control and regulating women's sexuality as the husband views himself and not his in-laws as responsible for the control and regulation of his wife's sexuality. The author does not recognize the challenges war brides may have experienced leaving their families and adjusting to a new culture; particularly to new controllers of, regulations towards, and expectations regarding their sexuality. Conversely, he notes migration challenges when arguing that British in-laws should not expect that former Canadian servicemen experience a similar cultural adjustment by settling in England. He critiqued war brides for being dutiful daughters and echoes criticism of women during the war for not successfully balancing various femininities in this case, their identities as daughters and wives, as well as their identities as British Canadians.

This letter criticizes the Sussex community for their immoral behaviour and taunts British men, implying that Canadian men absconded with the "best" British women due to their service in Britain. In this sense, the author indicates that war bride marriages and migrations challenged British men's masculinities. Although he does not argue that Canadians were better on the battlefield, he suggests that British women perceived Canadians as better husbands and providers compared to the British alternative. He suggests that Canadian men were morally superior to war brides' British families as they supposedly better controlled their women's behaviour and public consumption of alcohol.

The author aims for an exceedingly positive portrayal of Canadian servicemen as military heroes who aptly perform their masculine role as providers. However his condescending tone, insensitivity towards the difficulties experienced by war brides and their families due to their separation, comments about the apparent motivation behind war brides' marriages, reference to the decline of British culture, and framing British war brides as Canadian servicemen's deserved prizes of war indicates the fragility and multiplicity of Canadian masculinities and heroic martial identities. It suggests the author may have had his own feelings of insecurity particularly regarding his wife's difficult transition to Canadian life and her longing for familiarity and family. In turn, the author also may have felt insecure about his own masculine identities. This letter suggests the author experienced difficulties negotiating between his military past and soldier identities in comparison to his civilian present and husband identities. It could also be reflective of wider Canadian feelings of inadequacy based on Canada's Colonial identity. In this sense, the letter demonstrates multiple identities and experiences with which war bride veterans may have negotiated and the difficulty individuals may have had in successfully navigating these identities and experiences in the context of their changing experiences from war to peacetime.

War brides' marriages and migrations can also be viewed as an empowering experience for women as many of these women demonstrate personal autonomy over their experiences, their behaviour, and their self-perception. British parents and grandparents voice their disapproval in the British press of the perceived mistreatment of war brides in Canada but they also suggest anxiety over their lack of control over their war bride's decisions and sexuality. This concern is similar to the anxiety analyzed in the Mass Observation study with servicemen.<sup>164</sup> It has been argued previously in this chapter that the study indicated that servicemen were concerned that women's military participation would

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<sup>164</sup> Mass Observation Online, *A.T.S.*, 22.

complicate or change post-war familial gender relationships especially masculine control over women in the private sphere.<sup>165</sup> Returning to public responses to war brides, letter writers who opposed the funding of return voyages for war brides implied that war brides should reap what they sowed though marrying Canadians and migrating to Canada. The Canadian veteran who wrote in the *Kent and Sussex Courier* also expressed anxiety towards war brides' potentially unregulated and autonomous behaviour and sexuality expressed through their romantic courtships, marriages, and migrations. For British society, war brides may have represented the independence women could gain due to their involvement in the war effort especially through separation from family, more active role in the conflict through military service, and exposure to men. The anxious feelings and more hostile perceptions towards war brides examined in the British press can be interpreted as anxiety or hostility to the social upheaval<sup>166</sup> and the necessary negotiation with gender and gender relationships motivated by the turmoil of the war.

Claire Langhamer argues that in the case of the British post-war experience, it is too simplistic to view the post-war years as a return to domesticity as "home-centredness was never a uniform experience."<sup>167</sup> However, using social surveys including Mass Observation studies examining personal memory of the 1950s, Langhamer argues that home life although discussed by male respondents was not the dominant theme in men's memories.<sup>168</sup> Conversely she argues that female respondents had "dominant memories more explicitly rooted within the home, such as the intricacies of domestic labor, the routines of family life and the aesthetics of the 1950s."<sup>169</sup> Based on Langhamer's work, it

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<sup>165</sup> Lucy Noakes argues regarding parental control: "government policy was out of step with public opinion in its view of young women as independent." *Women in the British Army*, 113.

<sup>166</sup> Langhamer, *The English In Love*, 9.

<sup>167</sup> Langhamer, "The Meanings of Home in Post-war Britain," 361.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid 362.

is evident that for women who could not afford outside domestic assistance, the labour intensive nature of housework in the 1950s despite advances in technology required that women actively perform a homemaker role. Langhamer indicates that women were also the primary caregivers of children.<sup>170</sup> While she portrays men as involved in domestic chores and caring for children, she argues that in the 1950s men and women still had separate gender-based roles within the home.<sup>171</sup> While a variety of experiences and identities were available to war brides and their husbands in post-war era, certain domestic experiences and identities were preferred over others. The subsequent chapter in this thesis that centres on the life history of war bride veteran Wendy explores how her post-war experiences as a rural housewife figure prominently in her narrative.

Articles in the Canadian press recognize the multiple identities and experiences available to war brides and their veteran husbands but demonstrate that as in Britain, women were more connected to the home and family and their identities as housewives and mothers. Canadian newspaper articles portray war brides as positive figures due to their articulation of femininity through their marriage and motherhood.<sup>172</sup> War brides who did not have such an easy adjustment to their domestic life faced criticism and one article in particular portrayed the war bride as a failed wife: “Bride Dislikes Canada and Everything in it”<sup>173</sup> criticized war bride Mrs. A. Dent of Timmins, Ontario for not successfully performing her role as a rural northern Ontario housewife. Mrs. Dent came from British Guiana, accustomed to servants and a tropical climate. She informed *The Globe and Mail* that she planned to wait for the return of her husband from his overseas

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid 356-360.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid 356-357.

<sup>172</sup> “Welcome the War Bride,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 8, 1944, <http://collections.civilisations/warclips/objects/common/wemedia.php?irn=5028677>

<sup>173</sup> “Bride Dislikes Canada and Everything in it,” *The Globe and Mail*, March 28, 1946, <http://collections.civilisations/warclips/objects/common/wemedia.php?irn=5028769>

service before ultimately returning without him to British Guiana. She explained: “the cold isn’t the only thing I don’t like. I don’t like the houses. I don’t like the food and I don’t like the work of housekeeping here. I just don’t like it and I don’t intend to stay.”<sup>174</sup> The reporter found particular offense in Dent’s plan for an independent life without her husband and asked Dent: “What does your husband think about this? [...] What about your marriage?”<sup>175</sup> Through these questions, the article demonstrates ideas regarding the supposed supremacy of marriage, the authoritative role of the husband within the marriage, and women’s supposed duty to effectively perform the role and identities of a supportive housewife. Despite her rejection of her role and identity as a housewife, Mrs. Dent insisted that she did not wish for a divorce indicating that while she rejected her housewife role and identity, she adhered to certain societal pressures regarding marriage.

Another article in *The Globe and Mail* criticized Canadian women for not controlling their feelings when they criticized servicemen and war brides for their marriages:

There actually seem to be people in Canada who feel that there is something sinister and unnatural in the circumstance that if you expose a normal Canadian youth to several million normal females of his own race for two or three years at a stretch, he is apt to up and marry one of them. This is undoubtedly a minority viewpoint but unhappily it is a minority of women, and nothing known to science can sound so righteous and unanimous as three women losing an argument.<sup>176</sup>

The article characterized women as petty and susceptible to their emotions. It further criticized the unreasonable behaviour of Canadian women: “For this rudimentary feminine psychology to become operative, there does not need to be a deserted ‘other woman’ in the background. Where no specific ‘wrong’ is visible, the more militant oppositionists can still

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ralph Allen, “War Cupid Defended- British Brides of Canadian Servicemen Merit Hand of Friendliness,” *Globe and Mail*, April 7, 1944, page 13, <http://collections.civilisations/warclips/objects/common/wemedia.php?irn=5028678>

see a rebuff to Canadian womanhood in general.”<sup>177</sup> The article indicates that these women articulated negative, uniquely feminine characteristics. While it was the supposed threat to Canadian women’s femininities that sparked opposition to war brides, the article implies that Canadian women should accept the situation and continue acting in an appropriately demure, and compliant, feminine manner. The article does not portray women as autonomous agents in Canadian society or in romantic partnerships. It was the serviceman’s decision to marry a British woman and the article contended that despite the fact that Canadian women could lose their own chance for marriage, or could have been abandoned by their Canadian servicemen, it was men’s decision to make and women were to abide by and respect this decision. Articles examined in the British and Canada press express similar anxieties about women not conforming to understandings of femininities that connect appropriate feminine behaviour to the domestic sphere and supportive social and personal roles. The upheaval of the war and women’s more active social and material role in the conflict in both Britain and Canada influenced anxiety regarding social control and regulation over women’s behaviour especially their sexuality and autonomy.

### **Canadian Cultural Memory Regarding War Brides**

War brides interviewed for this project who also participate in war bride clubs recall that they began participating in these groups after their children had grown and left the family home.<sup>178</sup> Despite these war bride groups, war brides were absent from Canadian cultural memory regarding the Second World War until the 1990s when cultural interest in the Second World War increased with the fiftieth anniversaries of significant wartime events. During this period of cultural commemoration of the Second World War, war brides became the subjects of popular oral histories that emphasized the romantic aspect of the

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.



war bride story. Helen (Hall) Shewchuck's 1996 book honouring the fiftieth anniversary of the year that most war brides migrated to Canada underlines a romantic understanding of the war bride phenomenon (their marriages, migrations, and settlements). The romantic undertones of the book parallel the title: *If Kisses Were Roses a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute to War Brides*.<sup>179</sup> The title of Ben Wicks' earlier book: *Promise You'll Take Care of My Daughter- The Remarkable War Brides of World War II*<sup>180</sup> acknowledges war brides as note-worthy historical figures and an important part of Canadian Second World War history. However, the title also emphasizes a traditional understanding of gender roles. Canadian servicemen are asked to take care of war brides due to war brides' femininities. In so doing, Wicks portrays a patriarchal relationship between war brides and their husbands, as well as a controlling relationship between war brides and their parents. War brides have very little agency in this title. Wicks' title reflects the debate in the Sussex press that took place in 1946 and 1947 in which some British family members left behind by war brides lamented their loss of control over their daughters' lives and a Canadian husband emphasized his patriarchal role in his marriage as he controlled his wife's social life and her public alcohol consumption.<sup>181</sup>

The campaign promoting the declaration of 2006 as the 'year of the war bride' recognized war brides as important figures in Canadian history and emphasized that their significance stemmed from their romantic relationships with Canadian servicemen and veterans and their roles as mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers of Canadians.

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<sup>179</sup> Helen (Hall) Shewchuk, *If Kisses Were Roses a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute to War Brides* (Sudbury: Journal Printing, 1996).

<sup>180</sup> Ben Wicks, *Promise You'll Take Care of My Daughter- The Remarkable War Brides of World War II* (Don Mills: Stoddart, 1992).

<sup>181</sup> "Frank Criticism on Both Sides, page 1,

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000656/19461213/002/0001?browse=false>; "Army Brides' Broken Homes Stop Silly Letter Writing," *Kent and Sussex Courier*, July 18, 1947, page 3, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000483/19470718/107/0003?browse=false>

Melynda Jarratt, a pivotal figure in the campaign for the declarations, implored the Canadian Government that war brides receive acknowledgement because:

[...] Canadian veterans are rightly proud of their War Bride wives and the one million Canadians- including War Bride children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren who have a War Bride in their family tree are also proud of their connection to these women, who in turn, are inextricably linked to the men who, through their service overseas met, fell in love and married their War Brides during the war. [...]<sup>182</sup>

Jarratt's statement recognizes war brides for their feminine identities as romantic brides and wives as well as mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers. Other aspects of war brides' experiences for instance their difficult migrations, struggles to settle in Canada, potentially difficult marriages to war veterans, inability to have children, lack of desire to have children, and accomplishments outside of the home are not mentioned in the romanticized call for recognition. War brides' husbands are given positions of particular agency in the quotation because they are the individuals, according to Jarratt, who 'fell in love and married.'<sup>183</sup> She attributes no such position of agency or decision-making power to war brides. While Jarratt recognizes the husbands of war brides as veterans, she fails to consider that these women may be veterans themselves and worthy of recognition for their contribution to the Allied war effort.

Celebrations surrounding the eventual provincial declarations of the 'year of the war bride' (declared in the provinces of New Brunswick, Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) and the 'month of the war bride'<sup>184</sup> (in Saskatchewan) also emphasized war bride veterans' romantic identities and motherly identities. On November 6, 2006 war brides, their surviving husbands, and their families

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<sup>182</sup> Melynda Jarratt, "'Year of the War Bride' Canadian War Brides 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1946-2006 Discussion Document" November 10, 2005, <http://www.CanadianWarBrides.com>.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> "Frequently asked Questions," The Canadian War Brides, <http://www.canadianwarbrides.com/faq.asp#question4>

retraced the rail journey that war brides travelled when they first arrived in Canada. Events on November 8, 2006 were held at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21- the landing site for war bride ships. A vow renewal ceremony was the premier commemorative event held at Pier 21 with eighteen couples renewing their vows.<sup>185</sup> According to a Pier 21 newsletter:

With each bride on the arm of a member of the naval Honour Guard, the City of Lakes Barbershop Chorus began to sing Irving Berlin's *Always*. All eyes turned to the back of the Hall as one by one the war brides walked slowly down the aisle and up to their husbands. The service was poignant and beautiful. Of the five hundred-plus guests I suspect that only a very small number made it through the entire service without choking up. The celebration of these couples, all of whom had been married at least sixty years, brought most of us to tears.<sup>186</sup>

Pier 21's newsletter covering the event furthers a romantic understanding of war brides reporting that one war bride spent the morning before the ceremony shopping for a garter belt.<sup>187</sup> The ceremony and the Pier 21 record of the ceremony put forth the conception that war brides' success as a migrant group stems from their successful partnerships with heroic Canadian veterans.

A photograph<sup>188</sup> displayed in a Pier 21 newsletter documenting the event captures the couples standing as a group in-front of the museum's Andrea and Charles Bronfman In-Transit Theatre. The outside of the theatre resembles the deck and rails of a ship.<sup>189</sup> The smiling war brides and their veteran husbands all wear poppies and some hold paper banners with poppies. The display of poppies connects war brides to the wartime era and it also reinforces their husbands' identities as veterans. The participating husbands all wear military decorations. The war brides wear feminine dresses or skirts and blouses. The attire

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<sup>185</sup> Carrie-Ann Smith, "Pier 21's Welcome Back War Brides Event" (Newsletter, Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 2006,1.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid 2-3.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Steve Kaiser, Photograph 1, 2006, From Carrie-Ann Smith, "Pier 21's Welcome Back War Brides Event" (Newsletter, Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 2006, 1.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

of the war brides and their veteran husbands instills an understanding of their juxtaposed gender identities. War brides retain their attractive femininity and their husbands articulate their masculine soldier/veteran identities through wearing their military decorations. Though some of the war brides appear to wear brooches, these accessories do not appear to be military medals. The ceremony and the juxtaposed attire of the participants reinforces the understanding that war brides should receive recognition as important figures in Canadian Second World War history due to their connection -by marriage- to Canadian Second World War veterans.<sup>190</sup> Having a vow renewal ceremony as a concluding event honouring war brides not only singularly recognizes war brides for their feminine bridal identity, but also serves the purpose of recognizing war brides' husbands for their role as servicemen during the Second World War. Failure to hold a concluding event that solely recognizes war brides demonstrates that these women's importance stems from their connections to Canadian veterans. The recognition of Canadian veterans overshadows the acknowledgement of war brides and indicates that masculine participation in war is seen as more important than the potential military service of war brides and certainly more significant than their migrations and experiences in the domestic sphere as wives and mothers.

Pier 21's newsletter on the November 2006 war bride celebrations informs readers that war brides' children attended the recreated train journey and vow renewal ceremony.<sup>191</sup> By highlighting the participation of the descendants of war brides, the newsletter underscores the understanding that these women are also receiving recognition

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<sup>190</sup> War brides' difficult migration and settlement experiences have been acknowledged in the public sphere. For instance, the Canadian history textbook Don Quinlan et al. *The Canadian Challenge* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2008), 204, teaches readers about the emotional impact of migration on war brides and their British families, as well as the fact that some war brides never adjusted to Canadian life. Despite this recognition, these more challenging aspects of war brides' histories were not part of the campaign for acknowledgment nor the November 2006 celebrations at Pier 21.

<sup>191</sup> Carrie-Ann Smith, "Pier 21's Welcome Back War Brides Event" (Newsletter, Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 2006, 1.

for their role as mothers and grandmothers. Acknowledging war brides for these feminine roles connects to Jarratt's argument that war brides' descendants are these women's greatest legacy.<sup>192</sup> Their migrations are also recognized through the train journey. However, war brides' romantic identities and particularly their connection to Canadian veterans are at the centre of the 'year of the war bride' celebrations.

The 2006 'year of the war bride' followed the 2005 'year of the veteran.' These commemorative events signaled a desire to vocally recognize this generation before they pass away. While it seems logical that Canadian cultural memory focuses on Canada's involvement in the war especially the service of war brides' Canadian husbands, it is interesting that in the spirit of recognition, war brides' independent experiences in war zones including their service in the military does not feature in the 2006 'year of the war bride' activities. They only receive recognition for a portion of their wartime experience—their war bride experience. This limited recognition indicates how women serving in a military capacity does not fit with the cultural narrative regarding war brides that so actively frames the role of Canadian soldiers in the war effort.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter examined the contexts of war bride veterans' experiences during and immediately following the Second World War. It demonstrated that during the war, women and men both faced challenges and criticism when negotiating personal experiences and identities with social expectations regarding appropriate material roles and identities in wartime. Due to the necessary involvement of women in a military capacity and their increasingly active military responsibilities such as their service on anti-aircraft gun sites,

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<sup>192</sup> Melynda Jarratt, "'Year of the War Bride' Canadian War Brides 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1946-2006 Discussion Document" November 10, 2005, <http://www.CanadianWarBrides.com>.

women's role in the armed forces complicated understandings of appropriate womanhood and manhood, representations of women and men in wartime society, as well as personal identities for women and men. In response to their war service, women were encouraged through cultural media such as newspaper articles to maintain attractive and 'pure' feminine identities that would overshadow their war work and military identities. As the sources analyzed here demonstrated, there were limitations to appropriate feminine identities as women were discouraged from over-emphasizing their femininities, particularly via wearing some forms of make-up, as many in wartime Britain felt uncomfortable with women presenting strong, uncontrolled, and unregulated sexual identities. In the context of women's necessary involvement in the war effort, Canadian women also experienced this negotiation between perceived appropriate and inappropriate feminine identities. Despite this negotiation, Canadian women's social role faced less upheaval as Canada did not experience war to the same extent as the British population.

Wartime regulations for war bride marriages, understandings of gendered rights to citizenship underpinning Canadian citizenship laws, and the fact that the majority of war brides migrated to Canada instead of remaining in Britain demonstrates the extent to which the Canadian Government controlled and regulated the personal decisions and sexualities of war brides. The contexts in which war bride veterans lived and cultural representations and responses to war brides demonstrated in the British and Canadian press indicate the fluidity and range of gender identities performed in wartime (for instance the naïve war bride, the war bride victim, and the uncontrolled war bride). However, both the Canadian and British press failed to recognize war brides' potential veteran identities in accounts of their marriages, migrations, and settlements. Despite this omission, the range of identities available complicates an understanding of the supposed stability of wartime gender identities. Nonetheless, it is evident that femininities that reflected women's supportive

social role and controlled sexualities as both single and married women particularly influenced the experiences available to war bride veterans and the identities that were socially acceptable for women in wartime and post-war Britain and Canada.

This chapter examined how understandings of gender that connect femininities to domesticity became visible through Canadian cultural memory regarding war brides in the context of the campaign to have 2006 declared the ‘year of the war bride’ and celebrations in November 2006 honouring war brides at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. War brides receive recognition as a significant migrant group based on their perceived romantic identities particularly their connection to Canadian veterans as well as their maternal identities. However, it was their connection to Canadian veterans that underscored the celebrations. Other aspects of their wartime experiences including their potential war service were absent from the campaign as well as the celebrations.

This chapter contributes to the history of women in Second World War Britain by adding into this narrative the experiences of women who served in the British auxiliaries who came to Canada as war brides. It also discussed the stationing of Canadian soldiers in Britain, adding to historical knowledge of the transnational nature of the war effort and the British war experience. The role of Canadian women during the war demonstrates the urgency and necessity of the war effort in Britain as Britain needed women occupying more active wartime roles while Canada did not require such an active involvement of women. The focus on love in this chapter augments Langhamer’s work in particular as it expands on the notion that love was a disruptive force during the Second World War.<sup>193</sup> As has been demonstrated in the chapter, love between Canadian servicemen and British women challenged understandings of appropriate femininities and of parental control over

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<sup>193</sup> Langhamer, *The English In Love*, 9.

women's bodies and experiences. British women pursued and decided on their marriages to Canadian soldiers despite warnings in the wartime British press of the behaviour of some Canadians and questions regarding the supposed legality of marriages with French Canadians. These women were actors in deciding the course of their life path. It also explored how although these women chose their fates that their migration was not necessarily a personal choice but an expectation based on married women's rights to citizenship. This focus on nationality and wartime love expands on Langhamer's work and shows how wartime love affairs disrupted women's personal lives and also their rights to citizenship, the citizenship of their children, and where they resided for their adult lives. The experiences of war bride veterans shed light on the complicated, fluid, and contradictory expectations directed towards women in wartime Britain (and Canada) due to their gender and how these social expectations determined war bride veterans' wartime experiences including their military service, their personal relationships, migrations, citizenship, and post-war domestic life. This chapter also expands on Langhamer's research in examining the commemoration of wartime love between Canadian soldiers and war brides in Canadian cultural memory. It demonstrated how social expectations regarding the roles of men and women in wartime impacts the ways in which war brides are recognized and commemorated in Canadian cultural memory particularly the gendered nature of this commemoration. This chapter contributes to scholarship by demonstrating how the disruptive nature of wartime love and the romantic aspect of war brides' histories overshadows other aspects of their wartime experiences in Canadian cultural memory including their potential wartime service.



### Chapter Three - Wendy the War Bride and Uncertain Veteran

*We, my girlfriend and I were going to an afternoon dance [...] to another town just outside Loughton. And uh met these two air force sergeants who asked us where this dance was. [chuckles] So we said, 'Follow us.' And then we ended up staying with them all afternoon and then, after that, that was history.<sup>1</sup>*

Born on July 18, 1923, the second of six daughters, Wendy Turner lived in the village of Knowle in Warwickshire, between the industrial cities of Birmingham and Coventry. After her secondary level education and employment in an office operating a computer system during the early years of the Second World War, Wendy served in the ATS from March 1942 to July 1945 as a telespotter on an anti-aircraft gun site. During her service, while walking to an afternoon dance, Wendy met her Canadian airman husband. Following Ed's return from his deployment in India, the couple married on June 26, 1945. Wendy migrated to the Canadian province of Nova Scotia on the war bride ship the *RMS Aquitania* arriving in Halifax on March 2, 1946. Wendy and Ed went on to have six sons and a daughter and eventually settled in the small town of Middleton in the Annapolis Valley region of Nova Scotia. Wendy remained at home as a housewife and mother and recalled during her interview some of the challenges she encountered in adjusting to her domestic life. In her later years, Wendy participates in a local war bride club and served as the Vice-President of the Nova Scotia War Bride Association.

This chapter is the first of three case studies which will examine war bride veterans' experiences, memories, and subjectivities in relation to public, shared, familial and, in chapter four, fictive kinship memories. The purpose of these inquiries is to understand how war bride veterans' experiences, memories, identities, and subjectivities can be read in connection to cultural discourses regarding appropriate femininities and Canadian cultural memory regarding the Second World War. These chapters will

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<sup>1</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

investigate how war bride veterans negotiate with the contradictions in their lives between past and present, British and Canadian contexts and identities, as well as military versus civilian roles. The three chapters will each examine these concerns using a specific lens for analysis. As the first case study Wendy's chapter will evaluate, based on her narrative as well as photographs on display in her home, the extent to which her memories and subjectivity can be read in connection to dominant gender discourses during the Second World War and Canadian popular memory regarding war brides. Victoria's chapter will examine how trauma impacts her memories and sense of self. It will also examine how her narrative may be read as an exception to social discourses regarding appropriate gender roles. Penny's chapter will also evaluate her narrative in comparison to dominant gender discourses and dominant Canadian memory regarding war brides. It will also examine how intersubjectivity both in her interview and in her writing affect the memories and subjectivity she conveys as well as her relationship to dominant gender and memory discourses.

This chapter on Wendy will evaluate the extent to which dominant wartime understandings regarding gender and dominant Canadian memory regarding war brides relate to her conveyed personal memory and subjectivity. It will examine how she negotiates her experiences serving on an ATS gun site in connection to her experiences of romance, marriage, migration, settlement, homemaking, and motherhood as a war bride. This chapter will evaluate the experiences, memories, identities, and subjectivity that most give Wendy a sense of subjective composure while also considering memories, identities, and subjectivity that must be worked through and potentially managed. Wendy's chapter will also evaluate if she is left with feelings of discomposure regarding certain experiences and whether these feelings can be resolved.

## Part One: Wendy's Courtship and Marriage

During her interview, Wendy recounts meeting her Canadian pilot husband in 1942 on the way to a wartime dance while serving at her first anti-aircraft base near Loughton, Essex. Soon after their meeting, Ed was posted to India and the couple continued their courtship through correspondence.<sup>2</sup> Of their long-distance courtship, Wendy states, "... that way we never fought. [laughs] But uh well I wouldn't change it, I guess."<sup>3</sup> Wendy and Ed married on June 26, 1945. Compared with many wartime marriages, they had a formal wedding and the bride wore a traditional wedding dress, certainly not simple to arrange during the war.<sup>4</sup> The wedding was a family affair. Wendy's five sisters served as attendants and her aunts baked a wedding cake (certainly a wartime rarity due to rationing)<sup>5</sup> that her confectioner cousin expertly decorated.

Wendy very quickly transitions from discussing her wartime service in the ATS to meeting her husband and their 1945 wedding. Claire Langhamer argues that the Second World War was a disruptive and emotional era during which personal experiences of love and romance changed cultural understandings of appropriate gender roles, relationships between the genders, and the identities of men and women in relationships.<sup>6</sup> Wendy frames

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<sup>2</sup> Alan Allport argues that letters not only connected servicemen and their loved ones but also fuelled tension between the military and civilian communities due to the two groups having difficulty understanding each other's experiences, soldiers' lack of communication in letters, and fears that letters revealed accounts of infidelity committed by both soldiers and civilians. *Demobbed Coming Home After the Second World War* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 59-60.

<sup>3</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>4</sup> Measures rationing clothing in Britain that began on June 1, 1941 dictated that initially every adult would receive sixty-six coupons for a year. Ration allowances decreased during and after the war and between September 1, 1945, and April 30, 1946 adults received only twenty-four coupons. A regular dress cost eleven coupons. Laura Clouting, ed., "8 Facts About Clothes Rationing in Britain During the Second World War," Imperial War Museums, <http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/8-facts-about-clothes-rationing-in-britain-during-the-second-world-war>

<sup>5</sup> In January 1940, rationing for bacon, butter, ham, and sugar began. In March 1940, rationing for meat was instituted. In July 1940, cooking fats, margarine, and tea were rationed and in that same year rationing extended to cheese and preserves. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain Rationing, Controls, and Consumption 1939-1945* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 18.

<sup>6</sup> Claire Langhamer, *The English In-Love; The Intimate Story of An Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9-27.

her relationship with Ed as disruptive to her own life history and their relationship figures prominently in how she understands her past and herself as an individual. It is evident that Wendy views her relationship with Ed and their wedding as an especially significant part of her life history and frequently directs her interviewer's attention to this romantic past. During her initial discussion of her war service, Wendy appears quite reserved and her more animated construction of her romantic experiences is a departure from her earlier restraint. Her excited and joyful narration indicates that her romantic history with Ed and her portrayal of herself as a romantic and bridal figure provide her with a sense of confidence and subjective composure.

Wendy's wedding cake is particularly important to her wedding day narrative. She is especially animated when recalling the support she received from neighbours and her extended family to make the cake. It is interesting that when asked about her wedding, Wendy does not discuss her wedding dress but focuses instead on her cake.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps this is because professional wedding cakes were most likely a wartime rarity, arguably, even more rare than a wedding dress. Having such a rare treat indicates that Wendy's wedding was an especially significant event for Wendy, her family, and her community. The extent of the celebration supports the understanding that Wendy's family viewed the marriage as a "love-based lifelong commitment."<sup>8</sup>

Wendy points to one of two wedding photographs that sit prominently in her home to support her discussion of meeting her husband, their eventual marriage, and the

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<sup>7</sup> According to the BBC, an individual's typical weekly allotment of food would be as follows: "one fresh egg; 4oz margarine and bacon (about four rashers); 2oz butter and tea; 1oz cheese; and 8oz sugar. Meat was allocated by price, so cheaper cuts became popular. Points could be pooled or saved to buy pulses, cereals, tinned goods, dried fruit, biscuits and jam." "Rationing in World War II," BBC, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/rationing\\_in\\_ww2](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/rationing_in_ww2)

<sup>8</sup> Langhamer, *The English In-Love*, 188. "Rationing in World War II," BBC, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/rationing\\_in\\_ww2](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/rationing_in_ww2)

beginning of her life as war bride.<sup>9</sup> During the interview, she refers to this photograph depicting Wendy and her new husband on more than one occasion and it was the most significant prop that she used in the interview. My interest in the portrait and my encouragement that she use the photo as a prompt reinforced its importance.<sup>10</sup> In her interview, Wendy's expression becomes far more animated when referring to this portrait compared to when she initially discussed her war service. Wendy's excitement illustrates that the photograph and her memory of her wedding gives her much joy. The happiness Wendy conveys when referring to this photograph also indicates that it reinforces her belief that she has had a pleasant life in Canada and that marrying Ed was a good decision.<sup>11</sup>

Both of Wendy's wedding photographs convey and support traditional wedding customs that construct specific understandings regarding ideal femininities, masculinities, and heterosexuality. Sociologist Chrys Ingraham argues that "romancing heterosexuality is creating an illusory sexual identity category that defines perceived male-to-female socio-sexual relations."<sup>12</sup> For Ingraham:

[...] weddings, like many other rituals of heterosexual celebration such as anniversaries, showers, and Valentine's Day, provide images of reality which

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<sup>9</sup> Wendy's discussion very much differs from Mary Brockmeyer's counter-narrative of her wedding sparked by her wedding photograph that Alexander Freund and Angela Theissen discuss in "Mary Brockmeyer's Wedding Picture," in *Oral History and Photography*, eds. Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), Ibid 36-43.

<sup>10</sup> Langhamer encourages the use of photographs to prompt life history recollection in *The English In-Love; The Intimate Story of An Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 99. Valerie Raleigh Yow argues that photographs and other artefacts 'stimulate' memory narratives in *Recording Oral History A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences Second Edition* (Langham; New York; Toronto; Plymouth: Altamira Press, 2005), 264-265.; Also cited in Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson, "Introduction: Oral History and Photography," in *Oral History and Photography*, eds. Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 3.

<sup>11</sup> Rosemary Baird argues that her oral history respondents who migrated to Australia from New Zealand often used their oral history interviews to re-affirm their understanding that they made the correct decision in migrating to Australia. "Constructing Lives: a new approach to understanding migrants' oral history narratives," *Oral History* 40 (1) (Spring 2012): 65, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/41806581?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41806581?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

<sup>12</sup> Chrys Ingraham, *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 27.

conceal the operation of heterosexuality both historically and materially. In this sense they help constitute the heterosexual imaginary's discursive materiality. When used in professional settings, for example, weddings work as a form of ideological control to signal membership in relations of ruling as well as to signify that the bride and groom are normal, moral, productive, family-centered, good citizens, and, most important, appropriately gendered.<sup>13</sup>

According to Ingraham, the tradition of the white wedding dress began at Queen Victoria's 1840 wedding to Prince Albert.<sup>14</sup> "By the turn of the century, white had not only become the standard but had also become laden with symbolism - it stood for purity, virginity, innocence, and promise, as well as power and privilege."<sup>15</sup> Through wearing a white wedding gown, Wendy demonstrates her adherence to, support for, and furthering of, these social customs and their meanings.

Wendy's choice of a traditional bridal gown instead of her ATS uniform (or civilian clothing) reveals much about her wartime femininities. Rose argues that servicewomen had to successfully balance between presenting an attractive feminine appearance while not overly asserting their femininities (for instance through make-up) or they would face accusations of promiscuity.<sup>16</sup> The wartime newspaper articles regarding the ATS discussed in chapter two demonstrated how the British public was reassured during the war that ATS women blended their feminine appearance with their ATS appearance.<sup>17</sup> In both wedding photographs, Wendy's husband wears his Royal Canadian Air Force uniform and this uniform contrasts with Wendy's white and feminine gown. While her choice of a traditional wedding dress may suggest that she blended her military

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<sup>13</sup> Chrys Ingraham, "The Heterosexual Imaginary: Feminist Sociology and Theories of Gender" *Sociological Theory* 12 (2) (1994): 11, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.470.737&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Ingraham, *White Weddings*, 27.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 145.

<sup>17</sup> See: "A.T.S. At Work Cooks and Clerks for the Army," *The Times*, October 11, 1941; "The A.T.S. Uniform to be Smarter" *Western Daily Press*, July 22, 1941.

and feminine identities as she married just before her demobilization, her ATS identity is absent from the wedding photograph unlike her husband's Air Force identity. While socially acceptable for Wendy to reject her uniform for traditional wedding attire, Ed's more active service as a pilot made it more difficult for him to wed in any other attire but his military uniform.<sup>18</sup> In this sense, the image presents Ed's service as more acceptable, and worthy of recognition than Wendy's. Wearing his uniform could suggest that Ed's identity as a pilot more readily blended with other aspects of himself such as his identity as a groom and Wendy's husband.<sup>19</sup> However, it seems logical given his post-war career as a civilian worker with the Canadian Armed Forces that Ed's military identity was more integral to his subjectivity. Conversely Wendy's uniform and martial femininity could be put on, taken off, and was temporary.

A second wedding portrait demonstrates the importance of Wendy's wedding to her British family (Appendix B). The image depicts Wendy, Ed, and their wedding party that includes Ed's best man who also wears his Air Force uniform, Wendy's five sisters as bridesmaids and a flower girl, and Wendy's father. Wendy stated that her "parents were ordinary working people."<sup>20</sup> The fact that her wedding was so lavish despite her relatively humble background suggests that the marriage was especially supported and valued by Wendy's family. Claire Langhamer argues that romantic relationships during the Second World War shifted social understandings and expectations regarding love, courtship, and relationships between the genders.<sup>21</sup> These relationships also allowed individuals to articulate their personal identity and sense of self.<sup>22</sup> Langhamer's argument regarding

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<sup>18</sup> It is also conceivable that at this time, Ed's only option for formalwear was his uniform.

<sup>19</sup> This understanding of Ed's multiple masculinities stems from Martin Francis' work on airmen and masculinities in *The Flyer British Culture and the Royal Air Force 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.

<sup>20</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>21</sup> Langhamer, *The English In-Love*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

romantic relationships during the Second World War influencing personal identities and subjectivities can be expanded here as the wedding allowed not only Wendy and Ed to articulate themselves as individuals within a heteronormative romantic framework but also allowed Wendy's family despite the wartime setting to express their individuality, their familial wealth, their support of their family, and their adherence to specific masculinities, femininities, and heteronormativity.

Thomson argues that "Photos provide rich visual evidence about the migration experience: about places visited, houses built, and domestic appliances bought, and about domestic life and family rituals. They are also evidence about the subjective meaning of the experience and the ways in which migrants made sense of the new country and new lives."<sup>23</sup> For Wendy, her wedding photographs provide a bridge between her British past and Canadian present. They mark the beginning of her life as a war bride and her migration experience. Freund and Thiessen argue that "the [wedding] photograph is intended to document an event, to prove that they were indeed married."<sup>24</sup> Wendy's photographs confirm her status as a war bride for her Canadian family (including her in-laws) as they literally document Wendy and Ed's wedding. The photograph underlines the couple's specific femininities and masculinities respectively through their juxtaposed wedding attire and signals that the couple took on heteronormative masculine and feminine roles within the marriage as Ed has more authority through his military dress and Wendy presents a supportive feminine figure through her white wedding gown. The portrait that includes the broader wedding party reassures viewers including Wendy's Canadian family that Wendy's British family approved of the marriage and wished her well as she began her life as a war bride. Both photographs illustrate Wendy's fluidity between membership within

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<sup>23</sup> Alistair Thomson, "Family Photographs and Migrant Memories," in *Oral History and Photography*, eds. Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 180-81.

<sup>24</sup> Freund and Thiessen, "Mary Brockmeyer's Wedding Picture," 38.



her British emotional community (her family) and her contemporary emotional community in Canada through her marriage to Ed.<sup>25</sup> The portrait is also a testament of Wendy's Canadian citizenship granted upon her marriage to her Canadian husband.

After recounting the chronology of meeting her husband on the way to the dance, the timing of her wedding, and referring to her wedding photo, Wendy states: "Anyway, that's my story." This statement indicates that Wendy views her romantic experiences and her marriage to Ed as the most important aspect of her life story. Through this statement, Wendy implies that her courtship and marriage is her story because it led to her migration to Canada and experiences as a war bride, wife, mother, and grandmother. Wendy's experiences as a war bride in Canada feature greatly in her narrative and this chapter now turns to her memory regarding her settlement in Nova Scotia.

Wendy experienced challenges adjusting to her life as a war bride in rural Nova Scotia. However, Wendy infers that these adjustments were not overwhelming and that her perseverance facilitated her successful adjustment to life as a war bride settler. Living in a small village between the industrial cities of Birmingham and Coventry accustomed Wendy to the hustle and bustle of larger cities, certainly in marked contrast to the rural setting of her married years. Wendy recalls her first morning on her in-law's farm in rural Nova Scotia as very different from her past life in Britain:

But he he was on a farm we went to his father's farm and we arrived at night so I didn't see where we were so next morning went out into the farm yard and uh looked around oh it was so beautiful! The snow was on the spruce trees and the sky skies were blue everything just a lovely scene just like a Christmas card. And I enjoyed it for a while and then I thought but Wendy, you can't see another rooftop. [laughs] And that was a shock because the place I lived in was ten miles to the nearest second biggest city in England!<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Barbara Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107 (3) (2002): 842. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/532498?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/532498?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

<sup>26</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

Rather than defeating her, Wendy portrays the harsh conditions she experienced on the rural farm that winter, including the lack of indoor plumbing, as exciting challenges. She attributes to her youth her perseverance over, and adjustment to, this more rural and harsh way of life. "I was young I thought it was a challenge you know, didn't didn't really bother me that much. But it was a shock."<sup>27</sup> Compared with other war bride veterans interviewed for this project who migrated to rural homes, Wendy far more positively discusses the challenges she encountered adjusting to her new rural life. Wendy indicates that her children helped her transition to this rural existence and states that once all her children were in school, the family relocated to the small nearby community of Middleton due to Wendy's loneliness living on the isolated farmstead. This move complicates Wendy's initial depiction of her successful adjustment to rural Nova Scotia life. However it supports her composure with her role as a mother as it was her discomposure with her children leaving home that influenced Wendy to reconsider her rural living situation.

Wendy does not discuss her actual migration experience. Her narrative transitions from her wedding to focus on her first morning in Nova Scotia. Perhaps Wendy's reluctance to discuss her actual migration stems from the fact that she very much missed her family during her first years as a war bride as her parents did not own a telephone and they corresponded only through letters. Penny Summerfield argues that participating in women's oral histories sometimes leads to feelings of discomposure for the interviewee.<sup>28</sup> This occurs when narratives are inconsistent with broader social discourse, or if individuals fail to create a coherent narrative that leaves them satisfied with their articulated experiences, identities, and subjectivity.<sup>29</sup> "It may arise from probing the self-

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Penny Summerfield, "Dis/composing the Subject-Intersubjectivities in Oral History," in *Feminism and Autobiography Texts, Theories, Methods*, eds. Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield (London; New York: Routledge 2000),104.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

representation that the woman offers.”<sup>30</sup>The following interview exchange reveals much about Wendy’s discomfort regarding leaving her family and her migration to Canada:

WT: Oh yes, yes but I never talked to my mother for ten years because uh people over there at that time did not have telephones [shakes head] I mean it was a luxury and only the rich could afford them. And uh so it was ten years before I talked to my mother.

LA: Oh wow.

WT: But I did write a lot, a lot of letters.

LA: That must have been hard.

WT: Yah,... well I was luckier than most of the girls because some of the girls had never left home before but I had been away three and a half years and really it wasn’t really being away from home because once every three months we had seven days of leave. So I used to go home so it wasn’t a complete break. Course this was.

LA: Hmmm mmm.

WT: Yah. [looks pained]

LA: So it must have been difficult.

WT: Yes, yah.

LA: When you first came.

WT: Yah. [frowns]

LA: Especially when you seemed to come from a close

WT: That’s right. [nods]

LA: family.

WT: Yah.<sup>31</sup>

Wendy’s facial expressions during this exchange are especially revealing as she moves between portraying a sense of composure and having to work through her discomposure in discussing her longing for her British family. My involvement in the exchange seems to return her composure, perhaps reminding her of the fact that she is participating in an

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid 105.

<sup>31</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

interview.<sup>32</sup> When she recalls that her migration was a ‘complete break<sup>33</sup> from her family in England, her expression is especially pained and uncomfortable. When I empathetically reply that this “must have been difficult”<sup>34</sup> Wendy seems to gather her composure and constructs a response. In this sense, it would seem that Wendy wishes to put forth a manageable and composed account for her interview. In a more intimate setting, perhaps she would have felt more comfortable voicing her discomfort and may have further processed and worked through her unsettled feelings regarding her migration and separation from her family.

Wendy qualifies her more candid discussion of the strain of her migration on herself and her British family stating: “I wouldn’t have changed things. I’ve heard people say if I had to live my life over I would do this or that. But you make other mistakes. You know, it’s just you don’t make the same ones. Yah. [looks down]”<sup>35</sup> Wendy’s admission implies that she is less satisfied with her life as a war bride and her migration than suggested by her earlier discussion of her courtship, marriage, and her initial settlement. It is telling that Wendy uses the term ‘mistake’<sup>36</sup> as this is the only discussion in the interview in which Wendy reveals to this extent that she has some negative feelings regarding her migration and settlement in Canada. The fact that Wendy looks down after expressing her potential doubt regarding her migration and the *mistake* she may have made in leaving her family especially illustrates the discomfort and unease she continues to feel

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<sup>32</sup> Penny Summerfield argues that intersubjective relationships can cause discomposure. “Dis/composing the Subject-Intersubjectivities in Oral History,” in *Feminism and Autobiography Texts, Theories, Methods*, eds. Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield (London; New York: Routledge 2000), 94-104. While the theme of the interview (Wendy’s war bride experience) caused her to feel a sense of discomposure, our intersubjective relationship also helped Wendy restore her sense of composure with her story. Therefore, composure and the processing of discomposure can be viewed as rather fluid feelings that occur over the course of the interview due to the interviewee’s relationship with their past.

<sup>33</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

regarding her separation from her British family. It is evident that Wendy's separation from her family caused, and continues to cause, her unsettling feelings. However, Wendy "wouldn't have changed things."<sup>37</sup> Her statement indicates that despite her continued negotiation with more troublesome consequences of her migration to Canada, as well as discomposure with her identity as a migrant, she subverts these feelings and reinforces her confidence and composure with her decision to marry Ed and reside in Canada, as well as in her identities as a war bride wife, settler, and mother.

Later in the interview, Wendy discusses the conception of her first child and her husband's plans for a large family. Through this revelation, Wendy furthers an understanding of their fruitful and loving partnership as well as Wendy's comfort with her experiences and identity as a mother. Wendy infers that parenthood was an important part of their relationship and a principal purpose of their marriage. She recalls: "He always said when we got married that he wanted six boys with six shining new hoes and for a while they had hoes but they soon got rid of those."<sup>38</sup> Wendy laughingly remembers that after the birth of their seventh and final child, their only daughter, a local man remarked their "mission was accomplished!"<sup>39</sup> After recalling this statement, Wendy says "you get the picture"<sup>40</sup> suggesting that Wendy and Ed took much pride in the fact that their family grew beyond their expectations with the addition of a daughter. It is evident that Wendy finds much pride and subjective composure with her role as a mother and her mothering identity. When asked about her children she indicates that she and her husband, although she more vocally credits Ed, successfully instilled in their children values of discipline and hard-work which have greatly contributed to their successful careers. She is especially

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

enthusiastic when she discusses her sons' careers in the military, her grandsons' service in Afghanistan, and her daughter's Royal Canadian Mounted Police career. Through this discussion, Wendy conveys the understanding that her family's successes demonstrate her personal success as a war bride settler, wife, mother, and grandmother.

Drawing on Thomson's arguments that photographs of migrant families mark the successes of migrant life and the importance of mothers, in particular, in happy family photographs,<sup>41</sup> pictures of Wendy and her husband, their children, and their grandchildren cover the walls of Wendy's home and reinforce Wendy's understanding that her life has been happy and rewarding in Canada. A most prominent and large image (Appendix C) depicts Wendy, her husband, and their seven children taken when the children were in their twenties. As this image shows Wendy and Ed's children at the age that many couples marry and begin having children, it also implies that Wendy and Ed's marriage and partnership as parents laid the foundation for future generations. In so doing, the portrait emphasizes and reinforces Wendy's composure with her war bride past and her experiences and identities as a war bride settler, wife and mother.

In her later years, Wendy actively participated in war bride activities. At the time of her interview, in the summer of 2010, Wendy participated in both a local war bride group, as well as the provincial Nova Scotia War Brides Association. In her capacity as Vice-President of the Nova Scotia War Brides Association, Wendy helped organize biannual war bride reunions. However, a January 22, 2013 email from Wendy revealed that this provincial group no longer holds events as there are too few surviving members.<sup>42</sup> Wendy's email confirmed that her local war bride group continues their monthly lunches. Wendy states in her interview that war bride gatherings give war brides the opportunity to

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<sup>41</sup> Thomson, "Family Photographs and Migrant Memories," 180-81.

<sup>42</sup> Wendy Turner, email to Lauren Auger, January 22, 2013.

“laugh, talk, [laughs] have a good time!”<sup>43</sup> Beyond these more intimate gatherings, Wendy also has participated in larger war bride commemorative events. In June 2010, Wendy and other war brides from Nova Scotia met Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II during her visit to the province. Wendy confirmed in later emails that she also attended the 2006 cumulative ‘year of the war bride’ celebration at Pier 21 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Wendy’s active involvement in war bride organizations demonstrates the extent to which her war bride history is significant to her as well as her composure with her experiences and identities associated with her war bride past (her identity as romantic bride, a proficient Nova Scotia housewife, and as a loving wife, mother, and grandmother).

### **A Shared Memory of Nova Scotia Life**

This chapter will now examine how Wendy’s narrative and her conveyed identities can be considered representative amongst other war bride veterans. Wendy’s war bride friend Catherine London indicates that she adjusted to her migration by settling into her life as a wife and mother in rural Nova Scotia. Catherine takes great pride in discussing the history of her home where she raised her children and lived with her husband until his death. Her husband’s family have lived in the home for over two hundred years and Catherine continues this tradition. Like Wendy, Catherine remains in her rural Nova Scotia home, living a great distance from her children who have all relocated. Her desire to remain in her home demonstrates that she has become accustomed to rural life and takes pride in continuing the traditions of her husband’s family. Despite her contentment living alone she states that she misses her children: “So I have the three of them but I don’t see ‘em too often but I’m alright, I don’t mind living alone like this.”<sup>44</sup> Her home gives her a sense of composure and contributes to her sense of subjectivity through her identity as a member of

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<sup>43</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>44</sup> Catherine London, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 20, 2010, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia.

the London family.<sup>45</sup> Through remaining in her home, Catherine reinforces her connection to her husband, his ancestry, their children, her youth, her war bride past, and her identities as a war bride migrant, wife, and mother.

Wendy also feels connected to her community and lives away from her children despite having lived with her son in Halifax for brief time. Although Wendy too spent time at her husband's family's home, it is not this experience that connects her to her community but her experience as a young housewife and mother. Wendy frames this time in her life as an exciting opportunity and challenge. She laughingly recalls that prior to her migration she did not know how to boil an egg and was expected, to her surprise, in her capacity as a housewife to bake six loaves of bread every other day. Some of Wendy's early kitchen experiments failed and she remembers the criticism she received from her mother-in-law and sister-in-law due to the closeness of her new community:

I mean, in England you were a private person and nobody knew or cared you know, you do what you did but uh one time I made date squares and now my sisters-in-law and my mother-in-law were beautiful cooks, they they really were. And uh so I made these date squares and there was something wrong with the oven, I always say, [laughs] and they turned out very anaemic looking so I said to my neighbour, I said uh, "I'll put them up on the top shelf so Ruby and Ethel wouldn't see them because they are such good cooks. [chuckles] Well the next time I saw Ruby, she said, "I hear you made date squares." [Chuckles] I mean there's nothing bad about that but I thought, oh my gracious, I can't even make date squares!<sup>46</sup>

Wendy presents this incident as an embarrassing episode because of the "smallness of gossip"<sup>47</sup> within the rural community and her new family. Rather than giving Wendy a sense of discomposure, Wendy laughs about her kitchen failures and makes light of her initial difficulties. She frames these initial mishaps as challenges that she overcame and

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<sup>45</sup> A. James Hammerton argues that migrants centre their migration stories around their families in "The Quest for Family and the Mobility of Modernity in Narratives of Postwar British Emigration," *Global Networks* 4(3) (2004): <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2004.00093.x/abstract>.

<sup>46</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.



demonstrative of her eventual proficiency and composure with her life as a housewife and mother. Wendy proudly claims that she eventually adeptly baked six loaves of bread every other day. Wendy's successful adjustment to rural life seemed to give her an even greater sense of pride and joy than her retelling of her courtship and marriage as she focused on her post-married life more than on her courtship and wedding. It would seem that these stories of adjustment give Wendy a sense of composure as they reassure her that she made the correct decision in marrying her husband and settling in Nova Scotia.

Catherine demonstrates that her sense of belonging that she developed living at her husband's ancestral home extends to her understanding of her national identity. Although she certainly blends this identity with her understanding of her British past demonstrated through her retention of a Cockney British accent, it is evident that Catherine views herself as Canadian. She recalls a recent trip to France visiting the war graves of "our boys."<sup>48</sup> It could be interpreted that Catherine's use of the word 'our' refers to a generational and wartime connection to Canadian soldiers based on her own wartime experience as a British civilian during the London Blitz, her role in the ATS, and her experience as a war bride. However given that the interviewer with whom she converses is Canadian, it is likely that Catherine views herself as having a connection to her interviewer through their shared Canadian national identities and accordingly uses the word 'our.'<sup>49</sup> Her connection to fallen Canadian soldiers is interesting because these men died before Catherine became a Canadian citizen.<sup>50</sup> Catherine's Canadian identity connects her not just to a post-war Canada but to historical Canadian figures. Through indicating her connection to fallen

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<sup>48</sup> Catherine London, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 20, 2010, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. Homi Bhaba argues in an interview with Paul Thompson that migrants construct themselves based on how they perceive their interviewer and that migrants' life histories are representative of migrants' changing identities. "Between Identities," in *Migration and Identity*, eds. Rina Benmayor and Anders Skotnes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 199.

<sup>50</sup> Catherine married on May 12, 1945. Catherine London, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 20, 2010, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia.

soldiers of the Second World War, she is suggesting that she views Canadian history as part of her own history through her own wartime experience as well as her Canadian identity.

The previous chapter on cultural narratives surrounding women in the Second World War discussed the fluidity of identity, specifically gender identities. Hammerton and Thomson argue that participants in their study on British migrants in Australia had “mixed” national identities that are in an ongoing process of development.<sup>51</sup> Wendy and Catherine’s war bride veteran friend Evie articulates her own fluid understanding of her nationalities. When asked about her current feelings about Canada, Evie replies: “I love it! [Smiles] I wouldn’t go home to live.”<sup>52</sup> The use of the term ‘home,’<sup>53</sup> to describe Britain illustrates that much like Hammerton and Thomson’s participants, Evie holds fluid national identities that move between her British past and Canadian present. Despite designating Britain as “home,” Evie indicates her preference for life in Canada. Evie’s discussion demonstrates the fluidity of home as a concept and that people can have more than one home in mind when they feel a sense of belonging. Wendy’s discussion of her first return trip to Britain indicates that an understanding of home can also live in one’s memory and may be temporal. Wendy recalls her distaste for changes made to her village in Britain: “I know the first, when I first back I looked out of my bedroom window thinking I’d see all these green fields? And rooftop after rooftop after rooftop. [chuckles] It had grown up so much.”<sup>54</sup> Wendy too had grown up during her time away from her village and had, arguably, become accustomed to the tranquility of an even more rural existence. In this conversation, Wendy implies her connection to Canada and that she feels a sense of

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<sup>51</sup> Hammerton and Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms*, 345.

<sup>52</sup> Evelyn Brooke, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 20, 2010, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia

belonging in her Nova Scotia community. Arguably, Wendy's proficiency and joy as a housewife and mother in Canada acted upon her understanding of home and influenced her understanding of her national identity.

### **War Brides in the Cultural Sphere: Romance and Motherhood**

This chapter will now examine the ways in which Wendy's narrative relates to cultural memory regarding war brides. Popular historian Melynda Jarratt was a pivotal figure in the 2006 'year of the war bride' campaign. A petition by Jarratt to the Department of Veterans Affairs requesting the declaration of 2006 as the 'year of the war bride' reveals her understanding that war brides were significant in shaping Canadian history, as well as the sentiment behind the eventual provincial recognition of war brides:

It goes without saying that if there had not been a war, there wouldn't have been a War Bride phenomenon and we certainly would not be talking about commemorating their arrival to this country sixty years later if not for war veterans. The Ministry of Veterans Affairs is a logical choice to take the lead for commemorative activities during 2006. Canadian veterans are rightly proud of their War Bride wives and the one million Canadians- including War Bride children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren who have a War Bride in their family tree are also proud of their connection to these women, who in turn, are inextricably linked to the men who, through their service overseas met, fell in love and married their War Brides during the war..."<sup>55</sup>

Jarratt's comments recognize war brides for their identities as romantic partners, mothers, and grandmothers. The excerpt implies that war brides' motherhood is their greatest contribution to Canadian society as she frames the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of war brides as war brides' greatest legacy. Like Jarratt, Wendy frames her role as a mother as her greatest legacy through her discussion of her children and grandchildren's accomplishments. She supports this understanding through the photographs of her children and grandchildren displayed in her home particularly

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<sup>55</sup> Melynda Jarratt, "'Year of the War Bride' Canadian War Brides 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1946-2006 Discussion Document November 10, 2005," Canadian War Brides, <http://www.CanadianWarBrides.com>.

photographs of her grandsons in military uniform and her daughter in her Royal Canadian Mounted Police uniform.

Jarratt portrays war brides as not only part of the Canadian wartime context but an important part of Canadian history in their own right due to their marriage and motherhood. Her portrayal of war brides' role in Canadian society and Canada's Second World War experience is markedly passive compared to the active role held by their Canadian veteran husbands. In her petition to Veterans Affairs, Jarratt fails to consider or acknowledge that war brides may have had more active roles in the war in addition to their romantic and feminine roles as the girlfriends and wives of Canadian servicemen. As this project demonstrates, many British war brides are veterans in their own right of the ATS, WAAF, and Wrens. Instead, Jarratt draws on broad themes of love, romance, marriage, migration, and motherhood when portraying war brides' importance in Canadian society. It is interesting that in the spirit of recognizing war brides for their experiences during the Second World War that these experiences do not extend to their wartime experiences (potentially in the services) in their home countries. The themes used by Jarratt in her petition resemble how Wendy, Catherine, and Evie view their pasts as war brides in Canada. All draw on their histories and identities as loving wives and mothers to explain their transition to life in Nova Scotia and to indicate how they coped with the challenges of migration especially leaving behind their British families and lives. Jarratt's portrayal of war brides reinforces traditional gendered divisions and hierarchies of war, which see it as a male activity in which women only participate as onlookers and passive victims.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Gerard J. DeGroot discusses how understandings of appropriate, and distinct, feminine and masculine roles in war have complicated women's integration in the military in his introduction "Arms and the Woman, in *A Soldier and a Woman Sexual Integration in the Military*, eds. Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 3-17.

### **Wendy's Family and Her War Bride Story**

Returning to Wendy's narrative, when asked whether her family knows about her war bride past, Wendy responds enthusiastically and affirmatively. She believes that her involvement in war bride activities supports her family's understanding of her war bride history.<sup>57</sup> Certainly Wendy's role as a leader in the war bride community reinforces her family's understanding of her war bride experience. As has been previously discussed, she has participated in many public war bride events beyond her involvement in her local war bride club and in her capacity as the Vice-President of the Nova Scotia War Brides Association. The garden party with Queen Elizabeth II figures prominently in her interview and it is likely that she discusses special war bride events such as this with her family. Wendy further indicates her fluid relationship with her British and Canadian identities when she reveals that her younger sister married Ed's nephew and settled in the western Canadian province of British Columbia. This marriage reinforces the connection between Ed's and Wendy's families, Wendy's war bride past and her husband's veteran identity, as well as the continued blending within their extended family of Canadian and British nationalities. For Wendy and her family, retention of her 'Britishness' such as a British accent or celebrating her war bride past does not indicate a failure to settle into a Canadian life but rather represents the family's collective history connected to both countries.

### **Wendy's Blended or Fluid National Identities**

Hammerton<sup>58</sup> and Thomson<sup>59</sup> as well as Chamberlain<sup>60</sup> argue that families influence how migrants understand their national identities. This chapter has demonstrated how Wendy's

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<sup>57</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>58</sup> Hammerton "The Quest for Family,"

<sup>59</sup> Hammerton and Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms*, 325.

<sup>60</sup> Chamberlain, "Gender and Narratives of Migration,"

family life acts upon her understanding of her past, femininities, and national identities. However, other relationships influence how Wendy understands her national identities. In her interview, Wendy considers what involvement in war bride organizations means to elderly war brides. She argues that war bride clubs provide aging war brides with much needed support, as children and family do not necessarily live in the same community as the war brides:

Well it's it's like really when any of us is sick or something there's always support and always people who care. You're not cuz I don't care who it is when you get older your friends are going away and leaving, your children are gone and a person does need support and I think we all get that from the association.<sup>61</sup>

Her narrative suggests that war brides gain a sense of community due to their common memories and bond based on their similar migration experiences. Marilyn Barber observed a similar sense of community and willingness to aid in the narratives of female domestic servants who migrated to Canada in the early twentieth century.<sup>62</sup> These migrant groups differ as war brides came to Canada as the fiancées and wives of Canadian servicemen and Barber's interviewees came for employment as single women. Nevertheless, Barber's subjects often migrated with other domestics who were family members, friends, or at least acquaintances from Scotland.<sup>63</sup> Despite their different reasons for migration, members of both migrant groups bonded with women who migrated under similar circumstances. These connections facilitated their identities as migrant communities in Canada and allowed them to provide support for community members in times of need. It would seem that common feminine identities and shared experiences of migration and adjustment

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Marilyn Barber, "Hearing Women's Voices: Female Migration to Canada in the Early Twentieth Century" *Oral History* Vol. 33 No 1 (Spring 2005): 73.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

intersect in the lives of women migrants and shape the forming of “emotional communities”<sup>64</sup> that assist the migrant through the ongoing process of settlement.

Wendy discusses war bride activities with a sense of authority. Her confidence in this subject suggests that she is extremely comfortable with her war bride past and that she identifies strongly with her experiences as a war bride settler, wife, and mother. It is telling that when Wendy briefly moved to Nova Scotia’s provincial capital, Halifax, to live with a son and his family she sought the company of other war brides through participating in a Halifax war bride group. In joining this war bride organization, Wendy indicates that she very much appreciates the emotional community she gains with other war brides. Wendy eventually returned to her preferred community of Middleton:

But uh anyway, I thought, I’m just waiting to die here. And all my friends were here so I decided I’d pack up and leave. My son was quite upset because I think he thought ‘I’ve got you where I can keep you safe.’ You know? But uh, I just couldn’t stand it. [chuckles]<sup>65</sup>

Wendy’s bond with her war bride friends and her community in Middleton is so strong that life in Halifax was unsatisfying. Her adjustment to life in rural Nova Scotia was so complete that she views Middleton as her home even in the absence of her children and her late husband. In this sense, Wendy’s community in Middleton especially her war bride group provides her with a sense of subjective composure. Wendy’s narrative broadens the works of Hammerton and Thomson as well as Chamberlain<sup>66</sup> that focus on the impact of family on migrant identity as Wendy’s local war bride friends and her involvement in war bride clubs also contribute to her sense of self and her sense of belonging. It can also be argued that Wendy’s identity as a mother is so strong that her move to her son’s home was unsuccessful because she could not reverse her caregiver role and relationship with her

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<sup>64</sup> Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” 842.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Hammerton and Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms*, 325; Chamberlain, “Gender and Narratives of Migration,”

son. It is likely that Wendy feels that this move threatened her independence and personal authority. In returning to Middleton, Wendy could be viewed as reasserting her independence through her role and identity as a leader in the war bride community.

Hammerton and Thomson argue that a migrant's identity is "rarely settled and final"<sup>67</sup> as immigrants continue their negotiation with ongoing, and shifting, loyalties to their birth and contemporary nations. Wendy's involvement in her war bride group demonstrates her fluid national identities. Although war brides from other nations such as Holland participate in war bride clubs, most Canadian war brides migrated from Britain.<sup>68</sup> Wendy's recollection of how she initially declined invitations to the local war bride organization demonstrates how her understanding of herself as a Canadian wife and mother acted upon her relationship with her British identity:

You know when uh we came over here at first and for many years afterwards, we were busy having our families and bringing them up and not much chance to get together. But when our families started leaving the nest we sort of thought it would be nice to get together. But uh at first I wasn't [shakes head] too interested because I thought I had got too Canadianized you know, but uh anyway I was asked two or three times if I would join and in the end I said, "I will." I've enjoyed it ever since [smiles] yah.<sup>69</sup>

Through her participation in war bride clubs Wendy blends her familial experiences and identities, her experiences and identities as a migrant, and her British history including her service in the ATS. For Wendy, her involvement in war bride clubs allows her to highlight aspects of her life that distinguish her from other Canadian mothers and housewives of her generation and these distinctions make her feel special. Her blended British and Canadian experiences and identities facilitate this feeling of significance. Wendy's involvement with

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<sup>67</sup> Hammerton and Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms*, 325.

<sup>68</sup> Project participant Anna who migrated from Scotland stated that she stopped going to war bride meetings as the war bride group was predominantly English and she felt excluded from the group. Anna Armstrong, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 2, 2010, Kingston, Ontario.

<sup>69</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.



war bride groups demonstrates that she very much values herself as a war bride settler, as a wife, mother, and grandmother, as well as a British Canadian. Her participation allows her to cohesively blend these identities in shaping her composed subjectivity.

### **Part Two: Wendy's Complex Relationship with her ATS Past**

In her interview, Wendy recalls joining the ATS and illustrates that during the war she felt that her participation in the war effort was important. She chose the ATS because her father served in the British Army during the Great War: "Well I guess we liked the army. My dad was in the First World War and he was in the army, so I guess, I just followed."<sup>70</sup>

Wendy discusses enjoying her work in the ATS especially the comradeship amongst the serving women:

No I uh I I really you know it's a funny thing to say about war, I really enjoyed the army and the companionship and you know, you never have the same comradeship for the rest of your life. Although I do find going to war brides that it's a lot the same because we've shared a lot of the same experiences.<sup>71</sup>

Wendy indicates that during the war, despite the stress of her position on a gun site and her proximity to danger, she felt generally confident in her role as a telespotter:

And uh I looked at the predictor numbers and usually when they were following their dials it was like this [indicates spinning clockwise] they were like *this* [turns sideways continues spinning clockwise] and I thought how can they keep so calm but here I was plotting all the time it was drilled right into you just kept right on, yah.<sup>72</sup>

Wendy's calm attitude stemmed from her keen sense of duty that her army training instilled. Wendy articulates the above statements regarding her war service in a clear and strong voice. Through this confident remembrance, she illustrates the wartime pride she

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Dorothy Sheridan's respondents for her 1980s oral history project with ATS veterans indicated that while in the military they too enjoyed camaraderie with other ATS women. "Ambivalent Memories: Women and the 1939-45 War in Britain," *Oral History* 8 (1) Popular Memory (Spring 1990): 34. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179138?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179138?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

<sup>72</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

felt towards her service and that this pride continues in her memory of her ATS past. My interest evident in my questions regarding her war service and my project's focus on war bride veterans may have encouraged Wendy's discussion and articulation of her veteran identities.

Her composure and confidence with her ATS service and her identity as telespotter may have developed in the cultural climate of the People's War. Rose questions the understanding of a 'united' British wartime defence as not all Britons served equally in the war effort.<sup>73</sup> The work of Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird<sup>74</sup> on women and the Home Guard as well as wartime controversy regarding women using weapons also complicate this understanding that all Britons equally took part in the war effort as women did not have the same right to defence roles and weapons as men. Gerard DeGroot's study of women anti-aircraft gun site veterans demonstrates that despite their marginalized capacity on the gun site, his respondents felt pride towards their service. Women could not be conscripted to serve on a gun site and had to volunteer for this posting.<sup>75</sup> DeGroot argues that women's patriotism strongly motivated them to volunteer for a gun site role.<sup>76</sup> Lucy Noakes argues anti-aircraft service was viewed as exciting because it was "[...] the closest that most women could get to the high status masculine occupation of combat."<sup>77</sup> It is probable that a similar sense of patriotism and a desire to contribute to the war effort in an active role motivated Wendy to volunteer for anti-aircraft duty. She indicates that she

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<sup>73</sup> Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 21.

<sup>74</sup> Corinna Peniston-Bird and Penny Summerfield, *Contesting Home Defence Men, Women and the Home Guard in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Of Hockey Sticks and Sten Guns: British Auxiliaries and their weapons in the Second World War," *Women's History Magazine* (76) (Autumn 2014);

<sup>75</sup> Lucy Noakes, *Women in the British Army War and the Gentle Sex 1904-1948* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 116.

<sup>76</sup> Gerard J. DeGroot, "'I love the scent of cordite in your hair' Gender Dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries during the Second World War," *History* 82 (265) (January 1997): 77.

<sup>77</sup> Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, 118.

retains this sense of pride and composure with her gun site role during the concluding discussion of the interview when asked: “Is there anything you would like future generations to know about your wartime experiences?” Wendy responds: “Well, I think the thing that was important, it was a job that we liked doing and we were proud to do. That’s about all really.”<sup>78</sup> This is her most positive statement in the interview regarding her war service and her most confident articulation of herself as a veteran. However, during the interview, Wendy does not discuss her own role in choosing her telespotter career. Likely Wendy’s more complicated feelings regarding her service influenced her omission of why she chose a gun site wartime role.

Wendy illustrated her confidence in her veteran identity when she wore her service medals when meeting Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at garden party in the summer of 2010. Invited, presumably by the event’s organizers, to wear ‘decorations’<sup>79</sup> perhaps Wendy felt comfortable blending her veteran and war bride identities as several of Wendy’s war bride friends, as well as Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, also served in the ATS. Even if accompanied to this event by war brides who did not serve in one of the forces, most of these women would have contributed in some capacity to the war effort. It is logical that their shared understanding of the British wartime experience encourages Wendy’s articulation of her ATS past and veteran identities in the context of her war bride organization activities and expression of her war bride identities. It is possible that Wendy feels that her gun site role differs from the less active wartime roles adopted by most of her war bride friends (with the exception of Victoria who is the subject of the subsequent

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<sup>78</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

chapter). In this sense, Wendy seems to portray her wartime role as exceptional even though anti-aircraft service was quite popular amongst ATS recruits.<sup>80</sup>

Despite this sense of pride in her wartime role, Wendy's narrative also indicates that she had difficulty during the war reconciling her femininities with her ATS service. DeGroot argues that "it is possible that the essentially masculine environment in which these women lived made them ever more keen to assert their femininity."<sup>81</sup> Wendy recalls her uniform and laughingly laments that the issued wool stockings were not sufficiently feminine and attractive: "they just looked like an old spinster's!"<sup>82</sup> Wendy confides that she and other ATS personnel defied protocol and wore silk stockings that were much more attractive and feminine.<sup>83</sup> Wendy further defied ATS regulations, despite being confined to her barracks for an infraction, when she fled her barracks and base without permission. During this unsanctioned adventure, Wendy returned to her parents' home to examine the progress being made on the making of her bridesmaids' dresses. In leaving her base without permission, Wendy demonstrates that despite enjoying her war work during the war she did not take her role in the ATS completely seriously. She illustrates that her wedding and her bridal identities were particularly exciting for her and more significant to her sense of self than her ATS service. Wendy's retelling of this episode indicates that she continues to support this disregard for ATS regulation and protocol as she does not indicate any remorse for her actions and laughs when recalling her youthful defiance. Through her

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<sup>80</sup> Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, 119.

<sup>81</sup> Gerard J. DeGroot, "Lipstick on her Nipples, Cordite in her Hair: Sex and Romance among British Servicewomen in the Second World War," in *A Soldier and a Woman Sexual Integration in the Military*, eds. Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2000):107.

<sup>82</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>83</sup> DeGroot questions in "I love the scent of cordite in your hair," 91. "[...] whether cosmetics and clothes were tools of empowerment or whether they were examples of how a patriarchal establishment manipulated female soldiers in order to keep them feminine."

portrayal of this incident, Wendy demonstrates her continued preference for her bridal experience and identities over her ATS past and veteran identities.

Wendy complicates her identity as a committed, competent servicewoman and her perception of herself as a veteran worthy of recognition when she remembers her male captain correctly identifying an enemy plane when command had identified the air craft as friendly:

I don't know one time I was on duty and uh we were firing at a target [looks down] and the gun operations officer called me and said, "Sugar 2-7- you're firing at a friendly plane." And uh so I told, Noby Clark he was our captain and uh the men used to say that he'd fire at his grandmother if she were over on a broomstick [chuckles] and uh so anyway, he kept on firing and I kept trying to attract his attention and he'd go like that [waves hand] [chuckles] and so they wanted to get him to the phone and give him the dickens you know and uh so anyway after a while the fellow said at the other end, "You were right in firing Sugar 2-7- just dropped bombs, eggs in your area." [Chuckles] And so it was a scary moment.<sup>84</sup>

Recalling this incident, on the surface, would seem to indicate that Wendy is articulating herself as a veteran. Certainly only one other interviewee had such an active anti-aircraft wartime post. It is interesting that of all the experiences she had in the ATS it is this story that resonates in her memory. In relating this experience, Wendy portrays her male captain as superior, capable, and aggressive while she portrays herself as inexperienced, supportive, and passive. It is possible that Wendy uses this account to draw her listener's attention away from the very active experiences she had in the service by making light of her service and by reinforcing her very much preferred supportive femininities. This anecdote combined with Wendy's failure to discuss how she volunteered for this service suggests that she may have unreconciled feelings towards her anti-aircraft gun site service and that she tries to manage these feelings by omitting from her discussion mention of

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<sup>84</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

volunteering for this posting and by diminishing the importance of her personal wartime role.

Wendy's response to questions regarding her role on the gun site reinforces her portrayal of women's gun site role as supportive. Wendy challenges the account of one Nova Scotia war bride veteran interviewed for a local oral history book *The Road Here Stories from Senior Women in Rural Nova Scotia* who implied that she actively took part in firing anti-aircraft guns.<sup>85</sup> However, Lucy Noakes notes one experiment where ATS women did, indeed, load and fire anti-aircraft guns. This active service of ATS personnel was prohibited following the vocal disapproval voiced in the wartime media, in the War Office, and in Parliament.<sup>86</sup> Wendy informs her interviewer: "The women didn't, I read in that book that one of the girls said that she was manned the guns [shakes head] but no nobody, no women did. The men did all the gun firing."<sup>87</sup> Wendy's correction of the war bride veteran's statement shows that she feels confident in her secondary gun site role and that she wants her researcher to have an accurate perception, based on her knowledge, of women's role during the Second World War. It could also suggest that she does not feel comfortable with women serving in wartime positions that involve firing guns and that she wants to distance understandings of her war service from such active and potentially masculine service.

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<sup>85</sup> Betty McIvor, *The Road Here Stories from Senior Women in Rural Nova Scotia*, ed. Rachel Brighton (Bridgetown, Nova Scotia: The Western Area Women's Coalition, 2008), 34.

<sup>86</sup> Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, 120.

<sup>87</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia. Corinna Peniston-Bird's article: "Of hockey sticks and Sten guns," page 14, concludes based on her examination of personal accounts found at the archives of the Imperial War Museum and the commemorative web site BBC World War II People's War "that auxiliaries wielded weapons – rifles, pistols, Sten guns and grenades – on a local, random basis, dependent on personnel, roles, geographical location, the availability of arms and of training facilities."

Wendy also suggests that she is not completely comfortable with her wartime past and veteran identities when asked whether male commanding officers accepted female personnel. Instead of addressing this question and discussing gender relations on anti-aircraft gun sites, she quickly recounts female commanding officers acting as matrons waiting to catch ATS women secretly returning to their barracks after an evening of fun. This story illustrates that instead of discussing her significant war service and professional relations between female and male military personnel, Wendy prefers a narrative that reinforces her romantic femininities and marginalizes her identity as a competent ATS servicewoman and worthy veteran. This story belittles the ATS as a cohort, presenting army women as immature and flighty romantics who defied ATS protocol for an evening of fun; presumably with men. According to Gerard DeGroot: ATS gun site officers:

were [...] responsible for the administration and discipline of the women. They pay their women, conduct their physical training, give them certain talks and lectures applicable to women, look after their welfare . . . do their health and hygiene inspections, and arrange the girls' recreational training and games. The ATS officers act as messing officers to the whole battery. The male officers on the other hand are entirely responsible for the operational training of the women.<sup>88</sup>

Despite their limited capacity to punish women for absenteeism as the ATS did not “strictly enforce laws of desertion”<sup>89</sup> Wendy’s story portrays officers as harsh older women who sought control over the social actions of younger women. Although the actions of young ATS privates may challenge their respectability, Wendy indicates the harmlessness of ATS women’s insubordination as these illicit actions reasserted their attractive femininities and their role as the romantic partners of male military personnel. Her re-direction of the conversation may also suggest that questions regarding the evaluation of

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<sup>88</sup> DeGroot, “I love the scent of Cordite in your hair,” 86-87.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid 86.

women soldiers by male counterparts and superiors give her a sense of discomfort and that she may have felt like a marginalized and criticized member of her gun team.<sup>90</sup>

Wendy further indicates her complicated feelings regarding her war service when she recalls meeting Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in June 2010. Wendy's brief conversation with the Queen caused her much distress: "My mind went completely blank. My wits just left me so I said uh I said I ought to the stupidest thing! I said, "I always loved to see your pictures when you were in uniform." [laughs] And she said, "That was a long time ago." [laughs]<sup>91</sup> It is likely that Wendy's embarrassment stems not only from speaking out of turn, and colloquially, with Her Majesty but her reference to the Queen's more pedestrian (and arguably more masculine) wartime role as a driver and mechanic. Wendy's framing of her conversation as 'stupid' is interesting as she does not see her connection to the Queen given that they are both ATS veterans and lived in wartime Britain.

### **A Shared Cohort**

Evie Brooke and Catherine London both offer composed accounts of their service in the ATS; Evie as a canteen server and Catherine as a maintenance worker repairing damaged tanks and other military equipment. Evie especially illustrates that during the war she very much desired a role in the war effort as she joined the ATS underage, at sixteen. Although her service was domestic in nature when recalling her involvement in the ATS she states:

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<sup>90</sup> DeGroot examines tensions between male and female gun site personnel in his article "I love the scent of ccentordite in your hair," 85-86. He argues that some male officers found their inability to discipline ATS personnel frustrating. His respondents recall sexist attitudes and opposition towards anti-aircraft servicewomen especially by male superiors. Also contributing to a climate of tension on the gun site was the fact that one of the greatest opponents to women serving on the gun site was ATS commanding officers who, according to DeGroot, largely came from the upper class, held Victorian values regarding gender roles that led to their opinion that ATS personnel were not soldiers, and their fear that integration with male anti-aircraft units would lead to ATS officers losing control of the cohort. Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.



“But [shrugs] it took all kinds [...] to make the army.”<sup>92</sup> Evie’s shrug when she evaluates her war service communicates that she views her position as a canteen worker as less significant to the war effort than other ATS positions. It is likely the more active service of her war bride veteran friends Wendy and Victoria influences her perception. Despite Evie’s inference that her war service was not overly significant, she still indicates through her confident recollection that her canteen role contributed to the larger war effort and that she gains a sense of comfort and pride in her contribution. Catherine also presents her war service in a confident and composed manner. She recalls: “I didn’t go and work in an office.”<sup>93</sup> Instead, she “worked on parts you had to go and pick them out and send them off.”<sup>94</sup> Catherine illustrates that she views her war service with pride as she feels that this position more practically contributed to the war effort than working in an office and was more aligned with her working-class background.

Both Evie and Catherine seem more genuinely comfortable with their veteran selves than Wendy. Perhaps this comfort for Evie stems from her difficult beginnings in Canada due to her husband’s alcohol problem and his family not accepting her into the family. For Evie, her wartime service provides her with a sense of composure as it was a happier time in her life than her initial settlement experience. Her service also does not present a challenge for her post-war war bride identities as serving in a canteen is more aligned with her experiences as a war bride settler, wife, and mother. Wendy’s post-war migration was a more positive experience in her life history. Her active, potentially masculine, service on a gun site is more troublesome for her considering her more rigid understanding of her femininities demonstrated by her keen celebration of her bridal experiences and identities during and after the war, as well as in her narrative. Catherine

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<sup>92</sup> Evelyn Brooke, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 20, 2010, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia.

<sup>93</sup> Catherine London, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 20, 2010, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

also illustrates less tension between her veteran and war bride identities, unlike Wendy, because her war service more readily blended with her existing identities including her femininities and working class background.

Both Catherine and Evie indicate that their veteran identities are important in their contemporary lives. Evie prominently displays a photograph (Appendix D) depicting herself and her husband in their Canadian Legion uniforms. The portrait frames both Evie and her husband as veterans as both wear their military medals. It presents the couple's service as equally valued as Evie and her husband stand side-by-side. This picture indicates that their military pasts were important to understanding themselves as individuals and as a couple. Evie and her husband met through her service at the canteen and, in this sense, had Evie not served in the ATS she would not have had the opportunity to meet her husband, migrate to Canada, and eventually have an amicable and long-lasting partnership. Evie and her husband married in uniform, unlike Wendy, illustrating that Evie might have valued her wartime service during the war more than Wendy. However, marrying in uniform could have been primarily an economic decision as Evie came from a family that was less financially comfortable than Wendy's.

Catherine also takes part in Legion activities but what is most telling of her strong connection to her ATS past and confident military identity is that she is the only war bride interviewed for this project who retains her ATS uniform. After her migration, Catherine's mother sent Catherine her uniform. Catherine presented her uniform during the interview and spoke of the artefact with pride. During her discussion, she touched her uniform and had an admiring facial expression. These silent indicators signal that Catherine continually values her uniform, and by extension, her war service. By sending her uniform, Catherine's mother indicated that Catherine's British family felt proud of her wartime service. In contrast, Wendy's family supported Wendy and her sisters asserting their idealized

femininities at Wendy's wedding. It is likely that the support Catherine received from her family for her wartime service has influenced her more vocal representation of her veteran past through her involvement in the Legion. Unlike Wendy, both Evie and Catherine participate in their local Legion and war bride activities. Although Wendy indicates that she blends her war bride and veteran identities, Evie and Catherine more equally represent both experiences and identities through their involvement in both the Legion and war bride organizations. War brides have received some recognition as veterans in the cultural sphere and this chapter will now analyze this recognition in comparison to Wendy's narrative.

### **War Brides as Veterans in Cultural Memory**

Melynda Jarratt acknowledges that some war brides served in the British auxiliary services during the Second World War devoting a chapter in her book on war brides to the experiences of British war bride veterans. In this chapter, Jarratt provides a description of women's role in the British war effort and informs her readers:

Whether they served in uniform or toiled away in munitions factories, worked in the Women's Land Army or drove ambulances, the wartime work experiences of British women who married Canadian servicemen and then came to Canada as War Brides is an inextricable part of who they are and how Canadians perceive them today. [...] More than sixty years later, they are extremely proud of their work in the armed forces, and so too are their Canadian children and grandchildren who take pride in knowing the War Bride in their family made a contribution to winning the Second World War.<sup>95</sup>

Biographies of six war bride veterans follow Jarratt's introduction. Although these personal histories indicate that war brides served in a military capacity and provide insight into women's wartime roles, these accounts emphasize women's war bride histories and, in the process, marginalize war brides' potential military pasts and identities. Wendy also at times marginalizes her role in the war effort. However in comparison to Jarratt's work, Wendy's interview provides more insight into the full range of opportunities for women

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<sup>95</sup> Jarratt, *War Brides*, 172.

serving in Britain and how these wartime roles impact memory and subjectivity. The majority of biographies that comprise Jarratt's chapter depict women serving in positions that are supportive and less challenging to understandings of appropriate femininities. She also does not provide analysis of these women's accounts.

In comparison to Canadian popular memory regarding Canadian women's involvement in the Second World War, Jarratt represents war bride veterans as being much more involved in the war effort. Her acknowledgement of women's service strengthens her work in relation to Canadian popular memory. Despite Canadian women's wartime service in the Canadian women's military auxiliaries (discussed in the previous chapter), the Canadian History Channel series *War Story* presents munitions workers as the most contentious wartime role adopted by women living in wartime Canada. The only acknowledgement of women's involvement in the military during the war is on the program's website in the biography of former munitions worker or 'Bomb-Girl' and Air Force veteran, Queenie Curnoe. The biography states:

[...] Queenie made hinges for the famous Hawker Hurricane aircraft. After a year in the city, Queenie enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Having met her future husband, Bill, while training in New Brunswick, Queenie followed Bill overseas in June 1944 with a posting as an Air Force clerk based out of the famous Harrods department store. While in England, Queenie and Bill were married, a day made more special when two women presented them with a cake they had baked by saving up their butter and sugar rations. In June 1945, Queenie returned home and lived with her parents until Bill arrived soon after. [...] <sup>96</sup>

The anonymous author's choice of the word 'followed' <sup>97</sup> when describing Queenie's posting to Britain marginalizes the importance of her role in the Air Force and frames her deployment overseas as purely connected to her husband's service and their relationship. As the only acknowledgment offered by the *War Story* series of Canadian women as

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<sup>96</sup> "Queenie Curnoe" War Story All Stories, <http://www.warstory.ca/all-stories.php>

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

military participants in the war, it demonstrates a lack of comfort or interest with Canadian women as military contributors to the war effort in popular Canadian memory of the Second World War.

Returning to Jarratt's chapter on war brides who served in the British auxiliaries, the titles of the biographies reinforce the war brides' femininities and war bride identities with only two of the titles acknowledging war bride veterans' war service. The two titles that recognize war brides' war service: "She Went Ahead and did it Anyway"<sup>98</sup> and "She Preferred the Colour Blue"<sup>99</sup> only indirectly acknowledge the women's wartime service. "She Went Ahead and did it Anyway" refers to war bride veteran Doris (Field) Lloyd joining the WAAF despite being underage.<sup>100</sup> However, readers only receive clarification of the title in the text of the biography. Without this explanation, the title could also be interpreted as referring to Lloyd's war bride experience. The title "She Preferred the Colour Blue" although referencing the WAAF's blue uniform, emphasizes Lilian (Gibson) Olsen's fashion preference and in so doing, reinforces her femininities. This title can also be understood as blending her military identities with her femininities. However, only those with prior knowledge of British wartime military uniforms would understand the reference and recognize this fluidity.

Doris (Field) Lloyd's history in Jarratt's chapter discusses her experience as a WAAF serving at bases that experienced aerial attack during the Battle of Britain. Her history also highlights her initial WAAF marching training. Of her harrowing experience during a Luftwaffe attack at the Kenley Air Force Base located south of London she recalls:

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<sup>98</sup> Jarratt, *War Brides*, 174-178.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid 190-193.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid 174.

It was a gorgeous day. I remember because it was so hot with our uniforms on. We had just started lunch and they were suddenly on top of us. We ran to find cover. I remember looking into the sky and seeing so many bombers, the sky was black. They came in waves and the German fighters would come down low and machine-gun anyone who was running. We managed to get into safety. When they let us out the whole place was on fire. It was an awful sight. The next day the Germans started all over again. We got bombed every night for months after that as the Germans made their way to London and to other airfields in cities throughout England.<sup>101</sup>

Lloyd's account frames her proximity to the conflict as similar to the experience of the general British population rather than a specifically military experience. She recalls her sister and mother also experiencing the terrors of bombing when they visited her in Southern England. Although readers learn that Lloyd faced dangers during her service in the WAAF, they never learn her actual role in the WAAF as the personal narrative fails to mention her specific war service apart from her experiences with bombing and basic training. In this sense, this biography presents Lloyd's experiences as similar to other British citizens during the war and not explicitly reflective of her military service. The account proceeds from this discussion to centre on her romance with her husband and her migration experience. Although this biography emphasizes her wartime experiences, in failing to discuss Lloyd's service and in indicating that her experiences were reflective of the larger British wartime experience it fails to effectively broaden social understanding regarding war brides and their potential martial identities.

Conversely, Pauline (Portsmouth) Worthylake's personal history provides greater insight into the active capacities in which British women served as it discusses her role as a barrage balloonist:

Our crew numbered about twenty women housed in an almost empty house. We were up every night raising the balloon when expecting German planes that were bombing every night, and lowering the balloon when our own air craft came chasing them.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Jarratt, *War Brides*, 174.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid* 183.

Worthylake's portrayal of her service reflects Wendy's discussion of her gun site service as both women acknowledge and convey their close proximity to the conflict.

Worthylake's biography also educates readers about barrage balloons and discusses her service in East London and in Bristol, England. The narrative certainly is the most active portrayal of women's service in Jarratt's book. This portrayal differs from Wendy's interview negotiation with her wartime past as Worthylake presents her service experiences as more straightforward and less of a source of discomposure and uncertainty. However, like Wendy's account, Worthylake's biography still emphasizes her experiences as a war bride over her military past. Given that this is but one personal biography in a chapter that is intended to focus on war brides' experiences in the British Second World War auxiliaries, this chapter falls short of effectively acknowledging and educating readers about war brides' military pasts. It is telling that in the spirit of recognizing war brides for their role in the Second World War that this chapter does not present experiences that challenge war brides' acceptable feminine identities. It fails in its attempt to truly recognize war brides for their contribution to the war effort. This project on war bride veterans goes beyond Jarratt's work in its recognition of war brides as servicewomen. Analyzing Wendy's story provides insight into more active service opportunities for women in the war effort. It also demonstrates that for some women these active positions complicated their relationships with gender discourses and resulted in an ongoing processing of their war service, military identities, and subjectivities. In comparison to Jarratt's work on war brides, the exploration of contradictions in Wendy's memory and subjectivities allows for a greater understanding of war brides' wartime experiences as well as an understanding of how these complicated histories and relationships with cultural discourses continue to impact these women's memories and subjectivities in their elderly years.

### **Wendy's Family and her ATS History**

Returning to Wendy's narrative, when questioned about whether her children know about her war service, Wendy looks down and away from her interviewer indicating a sense of discomfort with either, or both, her lack of acknowledgement for her war service and her actual military career. The following exchange illustrates that Wendy frames her family's understanding of her wartime past as marginal compared to their understanding of her war bride experiences and identities:

LA: Hmm mmm. And did they join the military do you think because your husband was in the military and you were in the military?

WT: Well and their father too. Uh really my children were brought up just like they were in a military camp you know. [chuckles] My husband was well I say a strict disciplinarian [smiles chuckles] he didn't beat them or anything like that but you know, rules were rules and uh yah.

LA: So there they were sort of bred for it and did you, did you you live that way too obviously because you were

WT: Yes

LA: were in the army.

WT: I mean it was just natural to me and I guess some people wouldn't have thought it was.

LA: Hmm mmm.

WT: Yah.

LA: Oh wow. And your daughter joined the RCMP. [Royal Canadian Mounted Police]

WT: Yes she wanted to ever since she was a small child I don't why it was never pointed out to her but I think at first the musical ride and the red jackets might have fascinated but she loves her job and she's done well.

LA: Oh wow. And do your children know all about your war experiences? Do they know about

WT: Um, not too much I don't think. I think they knew more about their father's because that was a big part of his life too. [Looks down] Yah.

LA: Hmm mmm. But they know about you obviously being a war bride because



WT: Oh yes.<sup>103</sup>

This exchange suggests that Wendy believes that her husband's wartime service, rather than her own, holds more value and importance within her family. She implies that her husband determined their disciplined parenting style and that while her service in the ATS may have prepared her for such a parenting style, this method was the result of her husband's military service and not her own. In Wendy's view, her children's involvement in the military and RCMP stems mostly from her husband's service and not so much her own. Wendy's narrative suggests that her husband retained a stronger connection than she to his wartime past and military identities. He articulated his martial outlook and identities through his parenting style and ongoing career, as a civilian, at a local Air Force base. Wendy's migration, life as a housewife, and motherhood distanced her from her own military past and she did not so readily combine her domestic and military identities as her husband. To diminish her apparent unresolved feelings of discomfort with her family's lack of recognition of her war service, I directed Wendy's attention to her war bride experiences because I recognized that Wendy faces less of a negotiation with these experiences and satisfying memories.

### **Wendy's Blended War Bride and Veteran Identities**

Thomson argues that migrant families demonstrate their success as a family (and their migration) through photographs and that the representation of happy mothers particularly symbolizes a family's migration success.<sup>104</sup> One picture, in particular, in Wendy's home demonstrates her successful migration experience. The photograph (Appendix E) captures Wendy wearing her ATS medals and a poppy alongside one of her veteran grandsons who served with the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan. In the photo, Wendy's grandson

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<sup>103</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>104</sup> Thomson, "Family Photographs and Migrant Memories," 172.

wears his Canadian military uniform, his own decorations, and poppy. A family member presumably took this photo on Remembrance Day. This photo demonstrates that an image can capture more than one identity, experience, and feeling.

For Wendy, the photo of she and her grandson demonstrates her blending of her war bride past and her ATS past with her contemporary identities as a grandmother and veteran. Wendy's movement between her civilian and martial identities is evident in her feminine civilian clothing in this photograph that juxtaposes with her military medals. The image demonstrates that she feels a sense of camaraderie with her veteran grandson and that she feels accepted, in this specific context, as a veteran by her family. However, her civilian clothing demonstrates that she may not be as active in veteran activities or is more distant from her military past than her grandson. Thomson argues that when people are at the end of their lives they seek to make sense, or to 'justify,' their life experiences.<sup>105</sup> He argues that another reason to undergo a process of life review is so that "a memory of the life, and of the lessons learnt along the way, lives on after death."<sup>106</sup> It would seem that Wendy, nearing the end of her life, feels comfortable portraying herself to her family as a veteran because as she understands that they know little of the military aspect of her wartime life. Arguably, her advanced age makes her want her family to know more about her wartime history beyond her experiences as a war bride. Her participation in my oral history project could support this argument.

Dorothy Sheridan argues that her ATS veteran respondents in the 1980s viewed their experiences as servicewomen as temporary: "The war went on for only six years, and though those six years were undoubtedly significant in the lives of the women I studied, they were still only a small part of a woman's life. What went on the other years, and what

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<sup>105</sup> Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 183.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid* 184.

goes on today for them cannot be separated from the way they recall the meaning the war period had for them.”<sup>107</sup> In examining the narratives of Wendy and her two war bride veteran friends, it is evident that Sheridan is correct in her argument that veterans’ present lives influence how they remember their war years. Wendy’s remembrance of her ATS anti-aircraft service resembles the stoic narratives analyzed by Penny Summerfield in *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives*.<sup>108</sup> However, Wendy’s active wartime role differs from the less active positions held by Summerfield’s respondents. Despite the nature of her wartime service, Wendy diminishes her wartime role through portraying herself as a passive, unreliable, and sometimes uninterested ATS woman. Despite this complicated framing, Wendy’s experiences as a war bride (her romance with Ed, their marriage, her migration, and settlement) are the experiences that connect her wartime past and her post-war life in Canada. For war brides, the war and their experiences in the war dictated the rest of their lives. For Wendy, her wartime history including her service in the ATS is more prominent in her memory and had a greater impact on her life history narrative than Sheridan’s respondents because she is a war bride veteran. Sheridan’s respondents may have also met their husbands through their war service. However, Sheridan doesn’t explore these experiences. The war for Sheridan’s respondents may have facilitated the course of the rest of their lives. However, it did not lead to such a life changing event such as migration. Wendy (and war brides who had similar composure with their war bride histories) is very much connected to her wartime past because she had such a happy and fruitful life as a war bride.

Wendy blends her military and war bride identities through her involvement in war bride organizations. War bride clubs serve as Wendy’s preferred emotional community

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<sup>107</sup> Sheridan, “Ambivalent Memories,” 39.

<sup>108</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives*, 92-99.

(besides her family). Her membership allows her to articulate herself as a veteran and as a war bride with other women whom have had similar experiences as servicewomen in the Second World War and as war bride migrant wives and mothers in Nova Scotia. Wendy reinforces her war bride identity through involvement in war bride organizations. Her war bride history connects her ATS and post-war life and her involvement in these organizations maintains the significance of her wartime life to her subjective composure. Wendy's involvement in war bride clubs influences her articulation of a blended national identity. This identity combines her British past including her wartime experience in the ATS with her contemporary identities developed during her life in Canada. Wendy has become a pillar in the Nova Scotia war bride community that includes veterans of the services. She is a widow who uses her memory of her wedding to recall happier times with her husband. Wendy is also a mother trying to maintain her matriarchal identity and authority despite her elderly age. She is grandmother who supports her grandchildren and tells others of their achievements. Wendy is an ATS veteran who has a complicated relationship with her gun site service yet can also articulate her pride in this service and, at times, present herself as a veteran worthy of recognition.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has examined how Wendy negotiates with contradictions in her life between past and present, British and Canadian contexts and identities, as well as military versus civilian roles. Wendy's chapter analyzed her narrative of her experiences as a war bride, wife, homemaker, mother, and grandmother in relation to her experiences as an ATS telespotter. It demonstrated that she very much prefers viewing herself as a romantic bridal figure and that she treasures her memories of her wedding demonstrated through her wedding photographs depicted in her home. For Wendy, migrating to Canada although unsettling was an adventure that helped her develop as a person. She became accustomed

to a rural lifestyle and took much pride in her work as a housewife and mother. These war bride experiences and identities are strongly articulated in each level of discourse (personal, shared, cultural, and familial). Wendy's friend Catherine also takes much pride in her rural life on her husband's family's ancestral land. Both women indicate in their narratives that their experiences as wives and mothers in rural Nova Scotia led to their successful adjustment to their war bride migrations. Melynda Jarratt's campaign for war brides highlighted the importance of war brides' domestic experiences as wives and mothers in connection to their significance in Canadian history. Wendy's involvement in war bride activities emphasizes her war bride history and identities for her family, especially her involvement in significant war bride events such as the 2006 'year of the war bride' celebrations and Queen Elizabeth II's garden party. For Wendy, her happy life in Canada as a wife, mother, and now grandmother allows her to blend or move between her national identities without causing feelings of discomposure. Her British identity connects her to other war brides and gives her a sense of community. This British identity makes her feel special and that she had a different life history than most Canadian wives and mothers.

Wendy indicates that a sense of duty motivated her service in the ATS, that she enjoyed her wartime duties, and that she feels pride as a veteran in her wartime role as a telespotter on an anti-aircraft gun site. However, she has complicated feelings regarding her active involvement and never discusses how she volunteered for this service. She tries managing her unreconciled feelings regarding her war service by portraying her ATS service as supportive, and herself as an unreliable ATS woman who valued her wedding and bridal identities over her wartime responsibilities. Wendy's friends face less of a negotiation with their war service because they served in capacities that better blended with their existing femininities and class identities. War brides' experiences in the services

do not so easily translate to cultural and familial levels of discourse. Although Melynda Jarratt recognizes war brides as veterans, her representation of these women's wartime service is diminished compared to her celebration of their romances with Canadian soldiers, as well as her focus on war brides' marriages, migrations, and settlements in Canada. Wendy states that her family is more aware of her husband's Air Force service than her service in the ATS and indicates that she feels a sense of discomfort about their lack of knowledge of her ATS past. However, one photo in Wendy's home demonstrates that in her capacity as an elderly grandmother she feels comfortable articulating herself as a veteran alongside her veteran grandson. This picture allows her to blend her military and domestic identities as well as her Canadian and British nationalities. Wendy's ATS experience and her experiences as a war bride closely connect because her wartime service directly influenced the course of her life as she met her husband on the way to a dance whilst serving in the ATS. Her service led to her most valued and most composed experiences and identities as a bride, wife, successful housewife and settler, and her contemporary identity as a leader in the war bride community. Her war bride experiences connect her wartime and post-war lives.

This chapter provided insight into how women who gain comfort from experiences that are consistent with dominant femininities may have difficulty reconciling wartime service that is particularly active and more challenging to these discourses. It demonstrated how migrants can be comfortable and gain a sense of self based on their fluid and blending national identities. Wendy's chapter also considered how other emotional communities such as war bride groups influence and help make composed these fluid national identities. The chapter demonstrated to scholars interested in personal memory, culture memory, the history of wartime Britain, migration, and women veterans of the Second World War that war brides' experiences provide a unique opportunity to understand how women whose

post-war identities and experiences are consistent with appropriate femininities negotiate their war service when this service facilitated these appropriate feminine experiences and identities as well as another significant life event- migration. This chapter provided a model of how life history research can provide insight into personal histories, memories, feelings, identities, and subjectivity as well as how war bride veterans may connect to dominant discourses regarding gender and nationality. It also demonstrated how photographs are useful prompts in life history interviews that can facilitate discussion that helps scholars understand their subject's experiences, memories, identities, and subjectivity.





## Chapter Four - Victoria the 'Lady Soldier' and War Bride Survivor

*We fought against a dictator, Hitler, and I married one.*<sup>1</sup>

Born January 2, 1921 in Manchester, England the eldest of three daughters, Victoria Sparrow's interview discussion of her childhood centred on her strong relationship with the Catholic Church. At twenty, Victoria joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service. During her ATS career, Victoria served as a telephonist on a gun site as well as a tailor and military police officer. While serving as a military police officer in Manchester, Victoria met her Canadian tank driver husband Victor Sparrow. Prior to meeting Victor, Victoria never dated due to her natural shyness, a core element of her personality and identity that she frequently mentioned during her interview. They married in August 1945. Victor returned to Canada in December 1945 and Victoria followed in May 1946 on the war bride ship, the Aquitania. Victoria migrated to an unwelcoming community in rural Nova Scotia where her Catholicism was a source of tension with her Canadian family. She tried developing a relationship with Victor's family but they shunned the English Catholic war bride. Victor struggled financially intermittently working as a forest cutter which allowed him to eventually purchase a small farm. Throughout their marriage Victor drank heavily and had extramarital affairs. Victoria had four children during their marriage and five miscarriages. In her interview, Victoria stated that her doctor told her that the miscarriages were largely due to her unhappy home life. Victor died in 1980 leaving Victoria alone on the farm. Following Victor's death, Victoria became more involved in the Royal Canadian Legion and war bride clubs whenever a neighbour or friend could drive her to meetings. Legion members even encouraged Victoria to speak at local schools during Remembrance Day

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<sup>1</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

programmes. Victoria eventually moved to the small town of Middleton, Nova Scotia in the 1990s where she continues her involvement with the Legion and war bride association.

This chapter will examine the contradictions in Victoria Sparrow's narrative between past and present, British and Canadian national contexts, as well as military and civilian life. It will examine relationships between various personal, shared, cultural, and fictive kinship memories through the lens of Victoria's memories of her experiences during the Second World War serving in the ATS, as well as her involvement in the Canadian Legion and Remembrance Day educational programmes. It will also analyze, drawing on trauma theory,<sup>2</sup> Victoria's discussion of her courtship, marriage, and unhappy experiences as a war bride, wife, and mother in rural Nova Scotia. This chapter will consider whether Victoria's narrative can provide insight into the ways in which memories that are inconsistent with cultural memories impact personal memory narratives, personal identities, and subjective composure.

### **Part One: Victoria the Soldier**

Victoria begins her discussion of her war service by stating that she does not know how she "found the courage"<sup>3</sup> to join the ATS given her shy personality and rather isolated pre-war life in Manchester. She recalls that despite this, she thought that joining the services was important and the "right thing to do."<sup>4</sup> Victoria's composure with the fact that she volunteered for her ATS service is evident by the smile on her face when she discusses this important decision. According to Victoria after their mother learned about Victoria

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<sup>2</sup> This analysis will draw on theory in trauma particularly: Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery The Aftermath or Violence- from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Selma Leydesdorff, Graham Dawson, Natasha Burchardt, and T. G Ashplant, "Introduction Trauma and life stories," in *Life Stories of Survivors Trauma*, eds. Kim Lacy Rogers, Selma Leydesdorff, with Graham Dawson. (New Brunswick; London: Transaction Publishers, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

enrolling in the ATS, her sister comforted their troubled mother<sup>5</sup> by stating: “maybe this is just what she needs to bring her out more and make her maybe it will make her.”<sup>6</sup>

Although it appears that Victoria does not quite know how to conclude her sister’s phrase, the phrase “it would make her”<sup>7</sup> is indicative of how Victoria perceives her war service. Compared to her more meek personality and her marginalized and difficult experiences as a war bride, Victoria frames her experience in the ATS as an experience of self-determination.

Although admitting that women did not have an equally active capacity in the war effort, Victoria indicates that her training was an important life experience that made her a competent servicewoman:

[...] to be a telephonist you had to have good hearing, um... a good... let’s see a good reader, and good speller and pronunciation, and... you just had so that you could understand orders you were getting through the phone and you could understand it and ... give these right orders. And um... when we had we had to do dictation and, just trying to think, um... we had to learn about *guns*... [frowns] and... that sort of thing. Even though we wouldn’t have to do it [shakes head] [...] We had to *know* if everything about it, like *ballistics* and... uh we used to have to take meteor telegrams [mumbles] so that it was like gunnery officers, we had a gunnery officer that taught that sort of thing, so it was the same that the men were learning, yet w-we would never be on the *front line*. [smiles] But we had to know. We were supposed to know how to um, how to fix a field telephone, thing I can’t tell you I can’t tell you how that I would know [chuckles]. Um, we had to know, it was alright for me because as a guide I would learn the Morse Code [...]<sup>8</sup>

Victoria emphasizes her intelligence in stating that her telephonist assignment required that she be a “good reader, and good speller and pronunciation [...]”<sup>9</sup> Given that she had

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<sup>5</sup> Penny Summerfield argues that the war disrupted social discourses regarding the social and material role of the idealized daughter figure: “The 1930s construction of the obedient subject of parental will competed with a wartime discourse of the independent young woman at the disposal of the state.” *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 44.

<sup>6</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

already revealed that she left formal education at the age of fourteen, Victoria uses her recollection of her training to give herself a feeling of pride in her own abilities and this confidence contributes to a confident sense of self. By scrunching her face when she speaks about her training regarding weapons, Victoria illustrates that she understands the significance of this active training in comparison to other more supportive roles for women in the war effort. Given dominant discourses regarding appropriate femininities, her facial expression could also be interpreted as signalling her distaste or discomfort with this more active training. However, Victoria reinforces the significance of her training and her pride in the extent of her training when she recalls with a smile looking directly into the camera that “so it was the same that the men were learning, yet w-we would never be on the *front line*.”<sup>10</sup> Victoria’s troubled relationship with men was a prominent theme in her life history particularly in relation to her father who deserted his young family and her troubled and, at the very least, emotionally abusive relationship with her own husband. Victoria uses her confident retelling of her ATS training to assert herself in comparison to men and male soldiers. This account illustrates her composure with her ATS past and that her confident and heroic veteran identity is particularly important to her sense of composure and subjectivity.

When asked for clarification regarding her role as a telephonist, Victoria proceeds into a detailed, confident, and proud description of her experience. While she admits that women personnel released men for more active duty and that they did not fire guns, Victoria emphasizes her active and extraordinary role:

VS: Then the officer turned to me and he said, “nine.” Now, on a gun site you don’t just say “nine” you’ve got to say “*nine*” you had to like phonetically

LA: You had to say it clear.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

VS: very very clear. *Nine*. So that meant in nine minutes, seconds [taps head] um I had to repeat after him and there was a sergeant, you see, we were in dugouts, you know like a basement sort of thing we were downstairs and there was a sergeant who was in charge of the gun crew and he'd hear well we were to shout loud enough and he had a loud speaker to relay it to the gun crew. So when I had to say "*nine*," and he called up "nine" which got as to meant you got ready and then when he got to um... seven then I had to yell *fire*! So, I suppose [smiles] I actually gave the order to fire and then the uh... the sergeant relayed it to the gun crew.<sup>11</sup>

In positioning herself as the one who gave the firing order, Victoria indicates that she held an invaluable position that superseded women's supportive role in the war effort. In Victoria's perspective, her role as a telephonist gave her some authority over her male sergeant as he followed her order. In this sense, Victoria indicates that she perceives herself as an essential member of her heavy anti-aircraft gun team. Given the extent to which her husband dominated their troubled relationship and her general unease regarding men expressed during her interview, this story particularly gives Victoria composure and power as she perceives that she had authority over the male gun crew.

Graham Dawson developed the term 'soldier hero' in his foundational book in memory and masculinity studies: *Soldier Heroes British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities*.<sup>12</sup> According to Dawson:

The soldier hero has proved to be one of the most durable and powerful forms of idealized masculinity within Western cultural traditions since the time of the Ancient Greeks. Military virtues such as aggression, strength, courage, and endurance have repeatedly been defined as the natural and inherent qualities of manhood, whose apogee is attainable only through battle.<sup>13</sup>

Although Victoria does not frame her heroic wartime identity using all of Dawson's characteristics of a hero, she especially frames herself as courageous due to her proximity to the conflict. Following her description of her gun site role, Victoria admits that ATS women were not physically capable of carrying the shells used in anti-aircraft guns,

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid 1.

demonstrating that she wants to portray to her interviewer what she believes is an accurate portrayal of women's role in the war effort.<sup>14</sup> However, Victoria counters this admission of her more supportive gun site role dictated by her femininities by recalling a training session that demonstrates her proximity to the conflict.

VS: [...] and then we went to a practice *firing* camp. [...] so I went to this place called Norwich which was the um practice firing camp and while we were there, the gun site which was like a real, well it was a gun site [nods] and the gun site was almost like a pulpit of concrete and the gun was inside it and we were there just practicing with the men, and all of a sudden, it was foggy over the Channel and all of a sudden, here comes this plane, with a *swastika* on it right, he just skimmed, it was foggy and he had come across the the um the Channel and he he was flying *low* so that he could tell by the water would you know give him an idea where

LA: Where he was

VS: to reach the land. And that was, but he was a reconnaissance plane, but [points] reconnaissance planes also carried armament and he was so, we could see *the pilot* and and...

LA: You could see him!

VS: [nods] and boy, when he realized he was just over a gun site, [shoots arm in air] it shot right up into the air. [smiles] Just like that!<sup>15</sup>

Victoria articulates her strong connection to her ATS past and her heroic 'Lady Soldier'<sup>16</sup> identity through presenting her training as unique and particularly active, portraying herself as having an especially important role on the gun site as she courageously ordered male personnel to fire the anti-aircraft gun, and emphasizing her close proximity to danger. Victoria indicates through her confident remembrance that these experiences in the ATS and her identity as a heroic female soldier give her the greatest

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<sup>14</sup> Gerard J. DeGroot argues that his anti-aircraft respondents did not challenge the understanding that women are physically weaker than men in " 'I love the scent of cordite in your hair' Gender Dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries during the Second World War," *History* 82 (265) (January 1997): 84.

<sup>15</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>16</sup> Victoria uses the term "Lady Soldier" when referring to herself in the context of her involvement in commemorative activities. According to Victoria, male veteran guest speakers introduced her as a "Lady Soldier." Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia. This title and identity gives Victoria much pride and composure as will be discussed in this chapter.

sense of subjective composure. Penny Summerfield provides a framework to understand women's heroic identities. She states that heroic identities and narratives "[conform] closely to the heroic image of women's call up and participation in the war effort, especially in terms of taking on a man's role."<sup>17</sup> Her oral history participant Moira Underwood not only wanted to demonstrate her contribution to the war effort but also her willingness to put herself in harm's way.<sup>18</sup> Summerfield argues that some of her respondents suggested that they wanted "to cross gender boundaries"<sup>19</sup> through their war work. Victoria indicates that she wants to present herself as a similarly heroic figure who, through her capacity as a telephonist, crossed gender boundaries that limited women's role in the conflict. Victoria's heroic soldier identity gives her authority over men and this is particularly important to her subjective composure given her difficult post-war life with her husband.

Penny Summerfield's heroic interviewees deliberately chose what she classifies as "masculine" or more active and physical war work.<sup>20</sup> Some of her respondents (Greta Lewis, Heather McLaren, Amy O'Connor, and Yvette Baynes) recalled the prohibition on women using weapons and indicated that they believe this prohibition was unfair and also detrimental to the war effort, especially when they were expected to guard important sites with sticks when men guarded these same sites on different shifts with weapons.<sup>21</sup> Victoria never openly suggests that she wanted to fire guns. However, she does express her pride in ordering male personnel to fire and in learning about "guns"<sup>22</sup> and "ballistics"<sup>23</sup> in her training. Victoria's heroic identity combines her military identity, particularly her

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<sup>17</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, 82-83.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid* 83.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid* 84.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid* 88-90.

<sup>22</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*.

understanding of herself as an important and powerful figure, with her femininities. For Victoria, her feminine identities are important for her heroic identity because her femininities mark her war story as unique.

Immediately following her discussion of her training, Victoria presents a more nuanced perspective of her ATS past as well as her ATS and veteran identities. She recalls a male superior officer teaching Victoria and the other ATS personnel Morse Code:

[...] and we had a co-corporal from the signal corps, “Oh my god,” he said, “I can’t teach you girls anything!” [Laughs] “Oh my! Oh!” He said, he said, “This is terrible.” But, he used to tap things out and we used to try and sort it out into words. [...] “Oh!” He said, “I’m giving up on you girls!” Says, “I give up.”<sup>24</sup>

This statement presents servicewomen as rather incompetent and the male superior officer as authoritative, knowledgeable, and frustrated with female recruits. Victoria laughingly recalls this story and seems rather composed as she does not falter during this discussion. Further analysis of her physical response to this story (she looks away from the camera) reveals some discomfort with the women’s struggle learning Morse Code. It is possible that this discomfort stems from this anecdote’s inconsistency with her previous framing of her heroic gun site career.

Victoria also criticizes the strict regulation of the military particularly fraternization rules regarding officers and privates.<sup>25</sup> Victoria argues that it was unfair that a woman with whom she served could not walk with her husband in military uniform whilst on leave due to the differences in their rank: “That’s terrible! You know, a man and wife can’t walk out together, especially in wartime like that. You know, husband’s going away being sent

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> For a detailed discussion of how the British army approached the relationship between officers and their men during the Second World War see: Jeremy A. Crang, *The British Army and the People’s War 1939-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 58-75.



overseas and yet [...]”<sup>26</sup> Her criticism demonstrates that like Wendy, Victoria is also not completely comfortable with a regulated military culture.

Lucy Noakes argues:

One of the defining emotional responses to warfare, yet one which is remarkable for its marginality to the dominant cultural memory of the Second World War in Britain, is fear. While fear may produce a physical response in those who experience it, an embodied sensation, the expression of this response is often cultural; fear is expressed through language and culture as well as through the body, drawing on contemporary means of understanding the emotion in order to give voice to it in a way that others will comprehend.<sup>27</sup>

Certainly fear is absent from Victoria’s memories of her heroic anti-aircraft service. This can be understood as a product of what Amy Bell classifies (based on William Reddy’s ‘emotional regimes’ concept)<sup>28</sup> as the ‘regime of stoicism.’<sup>29</sup> She argues that “civilians sought to minimize or repress their fears except in moments of intense terror.”<sup>30</sup> Bell argues that this stoicism also applied to military personnel.<sup>31</sup> However, fear of men (including American soldiers, Canadian soldiers, and her husband) was a prominent theme in Victoria’s interview.<sup>32</sup> Victoria recalls disparaging remarks made by American military personnel about the ATS as they labelled the ATS ‘army tail stoppers’<sup>33</sup> and ‘officers’

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<sup>26</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>27</sup> Lucy Noakes, “‘War on the Web’ The BBC’S ‘People’s War’ website and memories of fear in wartime in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Britain,” in *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War*, eds. Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (Bloomsbury: London; New York: 2014), 52.

<sup>28</sup>See: William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> Amy Bell, “Landscapes of Fear: Wartime London 1939-1945,” *Journal of British Studies* 48 (1) (2009): 155,

<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=8753788&fileId=S0021937100012600>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid 154.

<sup>32</sup> For more on fear in wartime see: Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London: Virago, 2005); Joanna Bourke, “Rape as a Weapon of War,” *The Lancet* 383(9934) (June 2014):

<http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2814%2960971-5/fulltext?elsca1=EMAIL-AWA-SERIES-Violenceagainstwomen&elsca2=email&elsca3=2NPCT4F>; Juliette Pattinson, *Behind Enemy Lines: Gender, Passing and the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

ground sheets.<sup>34</sup> While serving in Manchester, American soldiers surrounded and attacked Victoria and another ATS woman groping and pushing the two women.<sup>35</sup> Rescued by an American officer who Victoria suspected of dating a British woman, the officer admonished the other Americans:

He said, "I want to tell you something. [nods] *These girls* take the place of men. They are doing men's job in the army. And that's more than I can say about *our* girls! Our girls that come over here their just" um.... [looks down thinking says softly] Oh what did he call them? "Companions like [...] for our soldiers. It's not for what they do." [shakes head] It's just that some of the fellas didn't want to go out with English girls. So they, that's what they were there for. But he said, "These girls are in the in their army and they, they work. They are not there for the convenience of men."<sup>36</sup>

Through these three anecdotes, Victoria complicates the understanding that she not only adjusted to military life but blossomed in her capacity as a servicewoman especially through her gun site service. Victoria's previous discussion of her active and heroic service suggests that she is influenced by or potentially balances her feminine identities when she presents herself as a heroic figure. Her heroic telephonist and veteran identities and memories of her gun-site experiences are Victoria's most valued memories and identities. The anecdotes that instill a sense of discomposure also draw on Victoria's femininities but to a greater extent and with a more unsettling effect. DeGroot and Rose argue that servicewomen faced pressure to blend their feminine appearance with their military appearance during the Second World War.<sup>37</sup> DeGroot contends that he views this discourse as reflective of a larger British social desire that women maintain their femininity despite

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Dorothy Sheridan argues that tension always existed between the need for women in the war effort and "deeply-held anxieties about taking them too far away from their destinies as wives and mothers." *Ambivalent Memories: Women and the 1939-45 War in Britain*, *Oral History* 8(1) Popular Memory (Spring 1990): 38. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179138?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179138?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents) It is likely that the Americans were articulating their own disapproval of women in the services.

<sup>36</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>37</sup> Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 145.

their war service.<sup>38</sup> These anecdotes that present Victoria as supportive and vulnerable do not so easily balance with her identities as a servicewoman and veteran. She reveals these stories intermittently throughout her larger discussion regarding her gun site role. In this sense, these stories qualify her more active service on the gun site. These anecdotes demonstrate that although she takes much pride in her gun site role and heroic identity, this identity is not completely stable. When she draws too much on her femininities, Victoria has difficulty reconciling these femininities with her heroic identities and she experiences a sense of discomposure. Despite her heroic identities and pride in her service she still demonstrates that she especially appreciates having her war service and heroic identities validated by men.<sup>39</sup>

### **A Shared Memory of Importance**

Like Victoria, Beatrice Cartier frames her war work as important and demonstrative of her personal significance. She recalls that she joined the WAAF because: “It seemed the the uh.... nicest force... the ATS they sounded a bit rough... and they were. Lots of the ATS girls were on the rough side. And the air force... they were a bit more...distaining... a little bit higher... So I went into the air force.”<sup>40</sup> Beatrice initially desired a role as a WAAF driver but the cohort directed her into a career as a wireless operator. “They said ‘well no you cannot drive we have plenty of drivers we need people with better education and a musical background [taps on the table] to do Morse.”<sup>41</sup> Through these memories of joining the WAAF and her initial role as a wireless operator, Beatrice distinguishes herself as refined, educated, and musical. These qualities meant that she could be of greater service,

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<sup>38</sup> DeGroot, “I love the scent of cordite in your hair,” 91.

<sup>39</sup> DeGroot argues that when his anti-aircraft veteran respondents stated they encountered male criticism they “found it a welcome challenge to earn male respect by satisfying male standards.” Ibid 76. Victoria indicates her satisfaction with her rescuer’s defence of her ATS role and identities.

<sup>40</sup> Beatrice Cartier, interviewed by Lauren Auger, June 20, 2010, Greenfield Park, Montréal, Québec.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

in her perspective, to the WAAF and the war effort. Her heightened qualifications give Beatrice a sense of composure and pride in her WAAF service, her identity as a wireless operator, and her identity as a worthy and confident veteran of the cohort.

On a prompt sheet indicating the chronology of her war experience, Beatrice wrote that she befriended the SOE agent Noor Inayat Khan while both women were stationed as wireless operators at the Bomber Command base Abington. My interest in the SOE agent prompted Beatrice's detailed discussion of their relationship. Through discussing her friendship with Inayat Khan, Beatrice connects herself to the exciting world of Second World War espionage. Beatrice indicates that after the two parted ways, she continued her training with a Morse slip reading course. I asked whether Inyat Khan would have received similar training and Beatrice responds "She wasn't on the Morse slip reading, she was just on the regular."<sup>42</sup> This statement indicates that although Beatrice did not serve with SOE, she wants to portray that she had an important role in the war effort in her own right.

Beatrice frames her war service as significant, secretive, and in close proximity to the conflict when recalling her posting at Leighton Buzzard:

It was all underground and I know that we were billeted in in some big fancy house and then we went by bus to um the the actual place where we did it and it was like our driveway our driveway goes down a hill. It had a steep a steep slope and there were sentries at the top with bayonets, fixed rifles at the top and the top had umm a camouflage net and the net had pieces of cotton all tied all over it. So you can't see you can't see what's inside. It had a camouflage net, so you went down the hill underground and underground the ceiling was solid six foot and concrete. And it's under there that the signals officers worked. And this is where I did this... [points to paper] this high speed Morse, in the signals office at Leighton Buzzard.<sup>43</sup>

Beatrice's framing of her war service differs from Victoria's more active and traditionally heroic portrayal of her gun site career where Victoria portrayed her courage, her proximity

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

to the conflict, and her authority over male servicemen. Beatrice articulated her war work as more consistent with her existing classed, educated, and feminine identities. While not portraying her service as necessarily heroic in the sense that she had a combat related role, Beatrice indicates that her work schedule was gruelling, her position highly specialized, and that it was very much connected to the war effort. She taught her interviewer how to read Morse slip code and demonstrated that her knowledge of Morse stays with her in her elderly years and is exceptionally important to her understanding of her wartime history, her WAAF identity, and her confident identity as a veteran. She was the most detailed interviewee about her wartime role and daily life in the services. Coupled with her portrayal of her highly skilled position as a Morse slip reader and sender, Beatrice indicated that she very much fondly remembers her service and the importance of her identity as a skilled WAAF to her understanding of her identities as a veteran. This skilled WAAF identity and shapes her subjective composure.

Beatrice, like Wendy, also indicates that she was not completely comfortable with her WAAF uniform and liked wearing “civvies”<sup>44</sup> when exploring wartime London with her friend Julie, who also participated in my oral history project, and their Canadian airmen boyfriends Jacques and Bill.<sup>45</sup> Through wearing civilian clothing, Beatrice indicates that she did not always value or hold important her military WAAF identity and also enjoyed expressing her civilian feminine identity. Both Victoria and Beatrice position themselves as better than other recruits due to their highly specialized war work. Beatrice’s blending of her femininities with her martial identity and her retelling of her wartime history do not give her discomposure like Victoria. Just as Dorothy Sheridan’s respondents,<sup>46</sup> Beatrice views her war service as temporary. Despite this, her ongoing knowledge of Morse and her

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Julie Dodd, Interviewed by Lauren Auger, June 25, 2010, Nepean, Ontario.

<sup>46</sup> Sheridan, *Ambivalent Memories*, 39.

willingness to teach her interviewer and clarify her wartime role in her interview suggests that while her service was temporary, her identity as a knowledgeable and worthy veteran is ongoing and continually shapes her understanding of her lived history and identities. Both women had very difficult experiences when they settled in Canada. Religion was a source of tension for both women. Victoria's Canadian family did not accept her Catholic faith and Beatrice's French Canadian family did not accept the Protestant English war bride due to her religion and national background. When her children were in their teenage years, Beatrice along with her youngest daughter returned to Britain and Beatrice divorced Jacques. The mother and daughter lived in Britain for many years before Beatrice married another Canadian and relocated to Montréal. Due to their difficult experiences as war brides, both women value and draw on their war service to give them a sense of self assurance and composure.

### **Recognition of War Bride Veterans in Bev Tosh's Art**

Victoria and Beatrice demonstrate that they value their memories of their wartime service. In contrast to Victoria and Beatrice's narratives, war brides have received little recognition as veterans in the cultural sphere. However, Bev Tosh depicts war brides as veterans in her art and I will compare her portrayals of war brides as veterans with Victoria's ardent memories of her gun site service. Tosh is the daughter of a Canadian woman who married a pilot from New Zealand during the Second World War.<sup>47</sup> She has created several art installations centred on the experiences of war brides. The Canadian War Museum displayed her works between May and December 2007 in the exhibition *War Brides: Portraits of an Era*.<sup>48</sup> In her book that discusses and displays much of Tosh's work, Tosh includes an essay by Canadian War Museum Historian Laura Brandon. The essay portrays

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<sup>47</sup> Tosh and her mother eventually returned to Canada after her parents' marriage dissolved.

<sup>48</sup> Laura Brandon "Bev Tosh's War Brides," Essay in *War Brides One-Way Passage*, Bev Tosh (Moose Jaw: Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery, 2008), 3.

the war as a disruptive moment in women's lives that allowed women more social freedom demonstrated by opportunities for women in the war effort including participation in the "women's auxiliary forces and civil defence."<sup>49</sup> Tosh's installation, *One Way Passage* includes over eighty portraits of war brides based on their wedding photographs. Brandon's essay that draws from Tosh's oral history project with war brides briefly discusses the stories of two women who served during the war in a military capacity. One woman served in the CWAC and another in the WAAF. Both women migrated to New Zealand.<sup>50</sup> Tosh's book displays the eighty portraits from her *One Way Passage* series as well as four portraits of women (including her mother) who migrated to New Zealand in her *String of Pearls* series.

Only four of the portraits in the *One Way Passages* series clearly depict women in uniform and she painted only one war bride in uniform in *String of Pearls*.<sup>51</sup> Both series emphasize war brides' bridal identities and their migration journeys. Although Tosh's work thoroughly captures the challenges and hardships experienced by war brides (as will be discussed later in this chapter) her work mostly pays tribute to her subjects' experiences as war brides and migrants and not as servicewomen. The book states that Tosh "has met 1000 war brides, and corresponded with and spoken to nearly 500 of them."<sup>52</sup> It is interesting that Tosh fails to portray more war brides marrying in uniform. Certainly most of my participants wore civilian clothing to their weddings. However, given the number of her respondents it would be likely that due to wartime rationing restrictions (discussed in the previous chapter) more would have married in uniform. It is not that I necessarily expect more recognition of war brides as veterans. It is simply interesting given Tosh's

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid 6-7.

<sup>51</sup> Bev Tosh, *War Brides One Way Passage*, 11, 29, 30, & 33. The book includes portraits of war brides in uniform on the pages listed.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid 6.

knowledge of war brides as veterans and her personal connection to these women that war brides do not receive more recognition as veterans in her work. The lack of visual recognition of war brides' military pasts and the prominence of these series (Tosh's works have toured widely in Canada and internationally) puts forth the understanding that war brides' marriages and migrations were the most important aspects of their lives. This thesis on war bride veterans has shown the significance of war bride veterans' marriages and migrations in their memories, as well as their portrayal of their identities, and subjectivities. However, it has also illustrated the importance of war brides' military histories in their life stories. For Victoria who emphasizes her war service and indicates that this military past very much contributes to her subjective composure, Tosh's installations fail to adequately represent her military history and recognize the significant contribution war bride veterans made to the war effort. Her work reflects wartime views of appropriate femininities discussed in chapter two. In this sense, Victoria receives little support for her confident retelling of her ATS past in the cultural sphere.

The limited presence of war brides as veterans in Tosh's work and by extension in Canadian cultural memory suggests that war bride veterans' private memories regarding their war service, particularly active service like Victoria's, do resonate in the cultural level of discourse. The lack of recognition of war brides as veterans in the cultural sphere reflects the complicated representations of women as servicewomen in general in Canadian consciousness. For instance, *Sunray The Death and Life of Captain Nichola Goddard* by Canadian journalist Valerie Fortney is a biography focused on the first Canadian female soldier killed in combat. Goddard served in Afghanistan as a forward observation officer and became the sixteenth Canadian killed in the Afghanistan Mission following her death on May 17, 2006. When providing a background of Canadian women's involvement in war, Fortney states:



Since the Northwest Rebellion of 1885, [Canadian women have] been willing to put themselves in harm's way as our nation went to war in various parts of the world. Enemy action during World War I killed 29 Canadian military women; in World War II, women held a wide variety of jobs, from nurses and cooks to parachute riggers and heavy mobile equipment drivers.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the more active portrayal of Canadian women in the First World War, Fortney fails to contextualize Canadian women's military involvement in the Second World War. Based on the diminished portrayal of women in the Second World War in the Canadian History Channel series *War Story*<sup>54</sup> discussed in the previous chapter, it would seem that Canadians have difficulty framing women (including war brides like Victoria) as military participants in the Second World War.

Analysis of Victoria's narrative regarding her war service demonstrates that when she draws too much on socially understood femininities, she at times has difficulty framing herself as a confident veteran. Tension between her veteran identity and her femininities is especially evident when she recalls the difficulty some ATS women experienced learning Morse Code. Tension regarding reconciling women's femininities with their participation in the military is not just evident when dealing with historical wars. Fortney's book demonstrates that portrayals of Nichola Goddard also present a fraught negotiation of Goddard's femininities with her active military role. Fortney argues:

But it wasn't Nichola's destiny to serve merely as a symbol of the final frontier of Canadian military gender parity: being remembered only as the "first female," say those closest to her, would have horrified the young woman whose entire life was a refutation of gender stereotypes.<sup>55</sup>

Fortney portrays Goddard as rejecting her feminine identities in order to become a soldier. She represents Goddard as exceptional and argues that her unconventional childhood

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<sup>53</sup> Valerie Fortney, *Sunray The Death and Life of Captain Nichola Goddard* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2010), 307.

<sup>54</sup> Queenie Curnoe, All Stories, <http://www.warstory.ca/all-stories.php>

<sup>55</sup> Fortney, *Sunray*, 13.

traveling with her family led to her adoption of this ‘unfeminine’ warrior persona.<sup>56</sup>

Christie Blatchford of the renowned Canadian newspaper *The Globe and Mail* reviewed the biography and articulates the tension between Goddard’s femininities and her military role and identities in Fortney’s book:

As Calgary Herald journalist Valerie Fortney tells it, Goddard's choices - first, her enrolment at the Royal Military College in Kingston, her selection of artillery officer as her career and her ascension to Forward Observation Officer, or FOO, one of the most dangerous jobs in an army - bewildered her family, close friends and the author herself. Though Nichola's parents, Sally and Tim Goddard, and sisters Victoria and Kate, were nonetheless always supportive, her best friend from childhood and maid of honour, Krista MacEachern, at one point pronounced her ‘almost brain-washed’ by RMC and complained they were growing apart. And there is a querulous tone to Fortney's observations throughout the book, as though even now, she finds it surprising that such an accomplished young woman should have joined the army, when so much else was open to her. Fortney seems to have set out to ‘answer the question of why this modern-day educated woman would have chosen the profession of warrior’ and feels she fell short.<sup>57</sup>

In this sense, reconciling women soldiers’ femininities and military identities is a conceptual problem in contemporary Canada. War brides with their comfortable and widely celebrated romantic and feminine identities are portrayed and acknowledged for these feminine identities. Other identities including their martial identities become muted. This tension regarding gender and women’s service in the military may explain why Victoria’s confident retelling of her anti-aircraft gun site past is complicated by social understandings regarding appropriate gender roles and identities. This chapter now turns to examine how Victoria has received recognition by male Legion members for her war service and how this service influences her articulation of her wartime past and veteran identity.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Christine Blatchford, “Review: Biography Enthusiastic Soldier Reluctant Heroine,” *Globe and Mail*, September 10, 2010, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-andmedia/review-sunray-the-death-and-life-of-nichola-goddard-by-valerie-fortney/article4326212/>

### **Victoria's Acknowledgment by Legion Members**

When she discusses her activities as a veteran, Victoria articulates her proud framing of her anti-aircraft service and her composed and confident construction of her heroic female soldier and veteran identities. Unlike any other of my oral history project participants, Victoria has received recognition as a veteran from male members of her local Legion chapter having participated as guest speaker at Remembrance Day activities at area rural schools, served as the first female president of her Legion chapter, and acted as a Legion representative at local Remembrance Day ceremonies. Her participation in educational activities dominated her narrative. According to Victoria, two Legion members, a veteran of the Second World War and a Korean War veteran misled her into participating in school Remembrance Day activities. The two veterans asked that she attend an event as an observer and then introduced her as a guest speaker to the students. The veterans introduced Victoria as “Comrade Victoria Sparrow who was a lady soldier.”<sup>58</sup> This introduction demonstrates that the male veterans viewed Victoria’s service as comparable to their own, recognized the importance of women’s war work and, most significantly, acknowledged Victoria’s heroic servicewoman and veteran identities. Their introduction also combines Victoria’s heroic identities with her femininities as they distinguish Victoria as a ‘lady soldier.’<sup>59</sup> Deceiving her into participating in these events also demonstrates that the male veteran speakers recognized Victoria’s shy personality and wanted to enhance her confidence. Victoria recalls that her audience mostly wanted to know how many Germans she shot, and that she admitted in her speeches that she had not been issued a weapon nor personally fired a weapon during the war. This response demonstrates that the male veterans’ portrayal of Victoria influenced the students’ perception of Victoria as a peer to

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<sup>58</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

the male veterans. After she moved from the farm, she no longer participated in these educational events. According to Victoria, the students noticed her absence and asked their teacher about the 'Lady Soldier.'<sup>60</sup> The students' interest in her wartime service indicates that while she may not have served in the same capacity as male soldiers, the students appreciated Victoria's service and acknowledged her heroic female soldier and veteran identities. In so doing, the students acknowledged her blended martial and feminine identities. Victoria's retelling of this experience demonstrates that she takes much pleasure from the validation she received from male veterans and students and views the Legion as her most supportive emotional community.<sup>61</sup>

In her discussion of her school speaking engagements, Victoria indicates her proficiency as an engaging speaker and recalls that the Korean War veteran bored his student audience relating the same account of his wartime experience year after year. Unlike the Korean War veteran, Victoria adapted her discussion for the purposes of captivating her audience. Victoria positions herself as more worthy of a heroic veteran identity than the Korean War veteran because her engaging oral history accounts make her a better representative of the veteran community to young Canadians. Her confident delivery during the Remembrance Day assemblies, as well as her confident discussion of her veteran activities during her oral history interview, illustrate that she is well practiced at recalling her involvement in the Legion especially her role as a guest speaker and she gains a keen sense of composure and pride from articulating her experiences as a recognized and celebrated heroic veteran.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Barbara Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107 (3) (2002): 842. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/532498?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/532498?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

Victoria's recognition by male veterans is certainly a rarity based on the experiences of other war bride veterans interviewed for this project. Many war brides did not join the Legion at all or were restricted to the same auxiliary status as Canadian wives of male veterans who may not have even served. Victoria's involvement in the Legion and her position as the first woman president indicates that she has a more active position than other women members. It seems likely that she receives recognition at her Legion due to the extent to which she voices her wartime past and actively inserts herself into the local Legion community. One of the men who involved Victoria in the Remembrance Day events was also a neighbour at the time, and would have known about Victoria's isolation on the farm and her difficult experiences as a war bride. Perhaps her acknowledgement stems not only from her active role in the war and her articulation of these experiences and martial identities but also Legion members' acknowledgement of her atypical and extremely difficult war bride past. Due to her rejection of her history as a war bride, it was easier for Legion members to acknowledge her experiences as an ATS veteran. In this sense, it is not only Victoria's heroic 'Lady Soldier' and veteran identities that distinguish her but also her difficult war bride experiences.

### **Victoria's Reinforcement of her Heroic Identities**

The most prominent visual display in Victoria's living room are two needlepoint portraits positioned side-by-side on the wall behind her couch (Appendices F and G). These needlepoints depict the ATS and Canadian Tank Corps emblems in honour of Victoria's service in the ATS and her husband's service in the Canadian Army. The positioning of the portraits is important as it demonstrates that Victoria views her service and the service of her husband as equal. As these needlepoint portraits are the most prominent decorations in Victoria's living room it is evident that she favours her memory of her ATS experience and heroic identities as a servicewoman and veteran over her other life experiences,

particularly her experiences as a war bride. Given Victoria's feelings of pride and composure gained through articulating her wartime experiences to young Canadians, it is understandable that she reinforces her heroic female soldier identity and past in her home through visual aids. In presenting her service as equal to her husband's service in the Canadian Tank Corps, Victoria indicates that she is just as deserving of a heroic identity as her husband. Her recognition of her husband may remind her of their difficult life together and may influence Victoria to view her post-war life as a time during which she continued to soldier-on in spite of the hardship and disappointment she experienced in her marriage.

Victoria further represents her heroic veteran identity in her home through displaying her Legion photograph (Appendix H). In discussing this photograph she states that her sister criticized Victoria when she sent the photograph to England due to Victoria's short hair in the picture. Victoria's sister thought she "[looked] like a man."<sup>62</sup> Based on this criticism, Victoria's sister is uncomfortable with Victoria's adoption of a more masculine appearance. This criticism can be understood in connection to wartime expectations that servicewomen should maintain a feminine appearance whilst in uniform.<sup>63</sup> Arguably, Victoria's sister criticizes Victoria for not adequately blending her heroic veteran identity with her femininities. Penny Summerfield discusses Edith Summerskill's failed campaign for the admission of women as equal members into the Home Guard as well as her movement that women in the Home Guard receive arms training. Summerfield refers to correspondence between Sir Percy James Grigg the Secretary State for War and the Minister for Home Security, Herbert Morrison. In a letter to Morrison regarding the opening of limited roles for women in the Home Guard, Grigg referred to Summerskill as

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<sup>62</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>63</sup> Rose, *Which People's War?*, 145.

“our Amazonian colleague”<sup>64</sup> in reference to the mythical female Scythian warriors who removed a breast to better fire arrows.<sup>65</sup> According to Summerfield, Morrison’s response although in support of Summerskill criticized her for transgressing appropriate feminine desires in preference for “manlier things.”<sup>66</sup> The Ministers frame masculinity and femininity like Victoria’s sister- as absolute. They criticize Summerskill for adopting masculine qualities and for, in the process, losing her femininities. Summerskill and Victoria are similar in that although they both seem to adopt masculine qualities and preferences through their association with more active military roles for women, both also retain their femininities. Summerskill campaigned for women because as a woman she perceived policies keeping women out of the Home Guard and from receiving arms trainings as inherently unfair. Victoria, despite adopting heroic soldier and veteran identities is always marked by her femininities. She only wears skirts or dresses and refers to herself as the ‘Lady Soldier.’ These women both receive criticism for not striking an appropriate balance between what is perceived as masculine experiences, perceptions, and behaviour (as well as in Victoria’s case appearance) with their femininities.

Returning to Victoria’s narrative, despite admitting that she didn’t want her hair trimmed so short, the smile evident on Victoria’s face in the photograph indicates her pride and composure with her more masculine appearance and veteran identities. Victoria also wears a skirt in the photograph articulating her attractive, feminine identity. She further emphasizes her confident martial and veteran identities in this photograph through wearing many medals on her Legion jacket. Previously, in the interview, when discussing and showing her medals Victoria states that since her husband’s death the Legion permits her

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<sup>64</sup> Penny Summerfield, “ ‘She Wants a Gun not a Dishcloth!’ Gender, Service and Citizenship in Britain in the Second World War,” in *A Soldier and a Woman Sexual Integration in the Military*, eds. Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 131.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

to wear his medals along with her own. Through this photograph, Victoria appropriates her husband's military identity and reinforces her own heroic identities. Victoria's portrayal of Victor in her interview illustrates that she views him as unworthy of a heroic identity due to their difficult relationship and his hurtful behaviour. It can be understood that Victoria perceives herself as more representative of what it means to be a heroic soldier and veteran due to her service, moral behaviour, and recognition as a veteran in her community. As this photograph was taken at her church, it also represents the cohesive combination and balancing of her martial identities, her femininities, and her Roman Catholic identity. Through this photograph, Victoria portrays her ideal identities- the identities that most give her a sense of subjective composure.

### **Part Two: Victoria the War Bride Survivor**

Victoria's account of meeting her husband foreshadows the ominous nature of their relationship. Many war bride participants like Wendy and Penny (discussed in the following chapter) recall meeting their husbands during romantic encounters especially at dances. Victoria recalls meeting her husband following an evening at the cinema. Her friend liked Canadians and the young women had noticed the two Canadians in the theatre. Upon leaving, they heard a voice in the darkened street state:

‘It's time little girls were in bed.’ [Smiles] Well, I wasn't feeling so hot really [laughs] and I said, ‘Not so little! We're old enough to be in the army.’ Then I didn't know who it was because it was black outside.<sup>67</sup>

Victoria's friend paired off with one of the men and Victoria walked beside Victor Sparrow, despite her general disinterest in men. Victor made many attempts at initiating a conversation with Victoria but she kept her answers as succinct as possible. Only when he asked about her faith did they begin a more detailed conversation. During this discussion,

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<sup>67</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.



Victor informed Victoria that he too, was Catholic. According to Victoria, “That was all a lie. He wasn’t.”<sup>68</sup>

Victoria frames this first meeting as an annoyance or a disruption and that it was only due to Victor’s statement about his Catholicism that she considered furthering the relationship. Knowing the difficulties she later experienced in her marriage and the dominance asserted by her husband in their relationship the phrase: ‘it’s time little girls were in bed’<sup>69</sup> seems particularly predatory and disturbing. Through her account of her terse response, Victoria certainly voices that she perceived the introductory line unwarranted given the age and military status of the two women. However, she does not indicate that she views the Canadian’s opening line as sinister. It seems her fright stemmed from the women’s isolation in the darkened street and their proximity to two strange men.

Victoria complicates her predominantly negative framing of her war bride life when she smiles after recalling the introductory statement made by either her husband or his friend. Secondly, she discusses her initial attraction to her husband. Victoria states that this attraction stemmed from her perspective that Victor was not sexually explicit like other Canadians and Americans she had encountered. However, the predatory nature of the phrase ‘little girls ought to be in bed,’<sup>70</sup> and the knowledge that Victor lied to Victoria during that first meeting about his supposed faith, something so fundamentally important to Victoria, overshadows any romantic undertones in her story.

Penny Summerfield’s theory of discomposure (the understanding that individuals have discomposure or unsettled feelings when their experiences are inconsistent with

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

dominant discourses)<sup>71</sup> is useful for analyzing Victoria's narrative of her war bride experiences. However, discomposure as a concept is insufficient for evaluating the extent of Victoria's discomfort regarding her war bride life. Leydesdorff, Dawson, Burchardt, and Ashplant argue that "The impact of trauma makes the processes of remembering and forgetting more complex than in other situations."<sup>72</sup> The authors draw on the sociologist Kai T. Erickson's argument that "Rather than conceiving trauma as caused solely by a discrete happening [...] that it should be considered as the outcome of a constellation of life experiences; that, in fact, trauma may arise not only from an acute event but also from a persisting social condition."<sup>73</sup> Victoria's narration of her war bride life history and identities supports Erickson's understanding of trauma as a product of ongoing experiences. Erickson also argues that trauma "disconnects the person involved from their relationship to the world."<sup>74</sup> The following section will examine how Victoria's difficult experiences as a war bride potentially make her feel like an outsider amongst other war brides.

Leydesdorff et al. argue that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa was conducted based on the understanding "that people have a moral and political urge to speak out about their suffering. The telling itself gives meaning to the trauma."<sup>75</sup> Judith Herman contends that by having others listen to their stories of trauma, victims "share [with their listeners] the burden of pain."<sup>76</sup> Recognition of their traumatic experiences by members of their community helps victims come to terms with their

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<sup>71</sup> Penny Summerfield, "Dis/composing the Subject-Intersubjectivities in Oral History," in *Feminism and Autobiography Texts, Theories, Methods*, eds. Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield (London; New York: Routledge 2000), 104.

<sup>72</sup> Leydesdorff, et al., "Introduction," 1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid 2.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid 12.

<sup>76</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery The Aftermath or Violence- from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 7.

traumatic past.<sup>77</sup> Through recognition of their trauma by their listeners, as well as restitution facilitated by the assistance and support of their listeners, victims can heal and create a new self.<sup>78</sup> Victoria's willingness to discuss her traumatic experiences indicates that she wants recognition from others for her challenging life experiences as a war bride and for her identity as a war bride survivor.

Unlike other oral history project participants, Victoria's husband never proposed:

Well he didn't ask me to marry him. He *told* me that I was going to marry him. [looks amused] He didn't say, "Will you marry me?" He said, "We'll be married and you'll come to Canada."

Following the couple's engagement, Victoria discovered Victor's lie about his apparent Catholic upbringing. Upon her discovery, Victoria outright refused the marriage as she wanted a marriage with a man of her own faith. Victoria eventually relented and married the Canadian. Unlike other war brides who gleefully described their weddings, Victoria frames her discussion of her wedding announcement crafted by Victor as indicative of the problems in their relationship:

[...] he never said the name of the church, and they had my name wrong, and they had that I had my bouquet was white roses, it was red, and my sister's name we always called my sister Gina, she had my sister's name the youngest sister was my maid-of-honour she had her as Gina, she had the bride was given away by an Uncle, no name, and...the British army. [wags finger] No names! And the name of the church, no name. [waves finger] The bride was married in the church and all no name. Uh the daughter of Mrs. Snell and the late C.S. Snell, my father's name was Alton! My mother's name was Cathleen, she was a 'C.' [...] He didn't want them to know he had married a Catholic. [Wags finger] He knew the reception I would get. It was a Baptist community but his people were the Baptists that never went to church!<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid 70.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid 70 & 196. Leydesdorff et al. draw from Judith L. Herman's argument regarding the importance of listening and sharing pain. They also use Susan Rose's argument regarding voicing narratives of trauma and gaining a sense of personal power from "Naming and claiming; the integration of traumatic experience and the reconstruction of self in survivors' stories of sexual abuse," in *Life Stories of Survivors Trauma*, 163, 174. According to Johanna Bourke, Michelle Jean-Charles argues in *Conflicting Bodies: The Politics of Rape Representation in the Francophone Imaginary* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2014). Survivors of sexual violence want to articulate themselves as "active, speaking subjects." "Rape as a Weapon of War," 20.

<sup>79</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

Victoria's recollection of her precarious engagement and more specifically her wedding announcement, illustrates that Victoria feels discomposure with these experiences. For Victoria, her engagement and Victor's lack of proposal is indicative of the control he would later assert over her when it suited him and his overall neglect during their tumultuous marriage. While she looks amused when discussing Victor's assertion that she would marry him, it seems that this amusement stems not from happiness as she quickly proceeds to a discussion regarding her feelings of betrayal that he lied about his supposed Catholic upbringing. Victoria shows amusement because of the absurdity that her husband never asked her whether she wanted to marry him and migrate to Canada. Her anger when discussing his first lie to her, regarding his faith, reinforces her discomfort with this part of her life. Victoria never discusses why and when she agreed to this marriage. Perhaps this hesitancy stems from her regret as well as her desire to distance herself from responsibility for her difficult and troubling history in Canada.

Victoria's apparent discomfort is especially evident in her agitated body language when she discusses her inaccurate wedding announcement where Victor did not note the name of the church in which the couple wed, state that they were married in the Catholic Church, provide the name of Victoria's uncle, wrongly identified the maid-of-honour, her late father, the colour of her bouquet, and most glaringly the bride's name. During her discussion of the announcement, Victoria looks down, away from the camera and her interviewer suggesting her embarrassment with Victor's announcement. While it is possible that Victor shielded Victoria from a hostile reception from his family through his announcement, the other numerous obvious errors indicate that even rightly stating his bride's name was of no concern for Victor. Victoria's anger captured in her stern wags of her finger and annoyed voice demonstrates that she comes to a similar conclusion

regarding the announcement and that her apparent feelings of discomfort and bitterness continue decades later.

Victoria recalls a visit to Manchester six years after her migration. On this return journey, accompanied by two of her children, Victoria wore the same clothes that she wore when she first travelled to Canada on the *Aquitania*. Victoria recalls: “And, he he he wouldn’t buy me clothes, my family clothed me, clothed my children too. He was that stingy.”<sup>80</sup> Victoria waited nine months in Manchester for the funds from her husband for his family’s return journey. Upon her return to Nova Scotia she woefully discovered that Victor purchased a ‘dilapidated’ farm in her absence despite Victoria’s fear “[...] of animals [shakes head] especially horses and dogs, I was terrified. And he knew that.”<sup>81</sup> Victoria does not discuss why she returned to Canada instead of remaining in Britain. This silence indicates her discomfort with her decision and the prospect of a real escape from her life with Victor. She quickly moves on to a discussion of her loneliness and isolation on the farm. Her unhappiness is most evident in her recollection of trying to have her child baptised. After months of pleading with her husband for a ride to the nearest town, Victoria walked part of a thirty mile journey to the nearest Catholic Church whilst seven months pregnant carrying her young child in her arms:

I was on the main road when he stopped the truck. “What do you think you’re playing at?” I said, “I gave you enough warning, Victor I’ve been at you four months now, asking you to take me to Bridgewater.” And [he] said, “*I’ve got to make a living in the woods.*” And I said, “Yah but it doesn’t make a difference with you when you want to get drunk, though. Does it? You can go to the tavern and take time off from the woods.” So, he was drunk he was always drunk.<sup>82</sup>

Victoria’s discomfort with her experiences as a war bride particularly her troubled relationship with her husband, his lack of acceptance or support for her Catholic faith, as

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

well as her aversion to her isolating rural Nova Scotia life is evident in Victoria's retelling of this episode. She illustrates her continued anger and resentment towards her husband by mimicking his participation in this event. The accuracy of this conversation is unknown but what was actually said in the altercation does not matter as much as how Victoria remembers this dialogue. Expressing Victor's statements in a particularly animated and scathing tone reinforces a negative understanding of Victor and her war bride past. Victoria's recollection of this episode appears composed in the sense that she remembers the event clearly having discussed this story in the past. However, the fact that Victoria remembers the altercation in such great detail and the extent of her anger and resentment expressed in her tone of voice and facial expressions illustrate the poignant nature of this event in Victoria's memory and her continued unease and discomposure with her experiences as a war bride, wife, and mother. Victoria's discomfort can be understood as a product of her knowledge that her experience was atypical and that other war brides did not have such difficult lives.

Given her animated memory of her courtship, wedding announcement, and traumatic life as a war bride, Victoria views herself as a war bride victim and a war bride survivor. War brides like Wendy, Evie, and Catherine indicate that although they faced initial challenges settling in Canada their motherhood, their bond with their husbands, and their sense of belonging in Nova Scotia helped sustain them and eased their adjustment. Victoria does not even frame her motherhood as an aspect of her life that helped her cope with her difficult situation but as another source of anxiety and tension in her relationship with her husband. She never settled into rural life in Nova Scotia and eventually relocated to the town of Middleton after years of unhappiness on the farm. Victoria confided that she is alone in Middleton and relies on the kindness of friends for transportation as her children do not live nearby. All of the hardships she endured influenced her identities as a war bride

victim and war bride survivor. These identities do not give her a sense of composure.

Victoria's narrative indicates that her memories of trauma still influence her unhappiness and arguably her separation from others.<sup>83</sup>

### **Two Different Weddings**

Although both Wendy and Victoria discussed and engaged with their wedding photographs in their interviews and both demonstrated the particular importance of their photographs to their personal memories, they view their weddings and portraits very differently. Wendy smiles and refers to her wedding portrait often when recalling meeting her husband, her wedding, and her migration. There are two prominent wedding photos in her home (Appendix B). As the previous chapter argued, these portraits emphasize Wendy's romantic bridal identities and the beginning of her life as a generally happy war bride.

Victoria also prominently displays two wedding portraits; one depicting the married couple and another capturing the couple with their wedding party (Appendix I and J). These images bear a striking resemblance to the photographs displayed in Wendy's home.

Victoria also wore a white wedding dress and her wedding dress was even more extravagant than Wendy's with a floor-length lace veil and long train. Victoria also held a massive bouquet of roses. She had fewer bridesmaids, three in comparison to Wendy's five. However, one bridesmaid even wore a veil like Victoria. Through her adherence to traditional wedding customs, particularly her extravagant white wedding dress, her elaborate veil, and massive bouquet Victoria asserts her bridal identities; her virginal identity, her attractive feminine identities, as well as her family's wealth.<sup>84</sup> In contrast to her very modest upbringing and the inauspicious beginning of their engagement, the

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<sup>83</sup> Leydesdorff et al. "Introduction," 2.

<sup>84</sup> Chrys Ingraham, *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 27.

wedding photos demonstrate that Victoria's family potentially took great pride in, or at the very least endured a great expense for, the wedding.

Despite the lavish affair, it is interesting that Victoria does not discuss her wedding to a great extent in her interview except in the context of betrayal and loss. While both women use these photos for the purposes of acknowledging this significant, and shared, life event, Wendy celebrates her wedding while Victoria portrays the photo as representing the beginning of her difficult life as a war bride.<sup>85</sup> Victoria's interactions with her wedding photographs indicate that her memories that are counter to cultural expectations regarding weddings and relationships are not alternative memories but are her primary memories of her experiences as a war bride, wife, mother, and unhappy settler. These memories do not give her composure as she demonstrates their continued negative effect on her understanding of her history and herself as an individual.

For Victoria, the group wedding portrait that includes the newlywed couple, her wedding party, and her family represents what she lost in marrying Victor Sparrow and migrating to Canada. When she and her interviewer examine the photograph she states:

VS: That was my mother and those were my mother's sisters. There was one missing and that was her the one on the end her. Her [...] Her twin sister.

LA: And which one is your little sister, the one who was in the air force?

VS: Alma. That's the one up there that died.

LA: Right.

VS: She's sick now.

VS: Half of them must be dead there. All my aunts are gone and my mother.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Alexander Freund and Angela Thiessen argue that Mary Brockmeyer's negotiation with her wedding photo in her oral history interview led to an alternative narrative where the photograph's "[...] meanings became increasingly complex, contradictory, and obscure." See: "Mary Brockmeyer's Wedding Picture," in *Oral History and Photography*, eds. Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 39.

<sup>86</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.



Knowing about Victoria's difficult war bride experience, it is likely that Victoria could not return to Manchester to mourn the loss of her relatives and in displaying this photo on her mantle it represents not only a wedding photo, but also a memorial to the family she left behind in Britain and members of her family who have passed away since her migration. While Wendy's portrait with her wedding party also captures the image of individuals that she left behind in Britain, including her father, this photograph does not symbolize her loss but celebrates her nuptials and a happy beginning to her war bride life.

Despite depicting similar images, the character of the photographs is also markedly different. Wendy's wedding photos are celebratory with the wedding party and wedding couple smiling jovially in both portraits. No such joyous smiles appear in Victoria's wedding photos as only one bridesmaid displays a small smile in the photograph. Given the viewer's knowledge of Victoria's difficult life in Canada, when greeted by the neutral and even stern faces in the photograph, it puts forth a dismal image.

When recalling learning about Victor's deception regarding his faith, Victoria proceeds to a discussion regarding her difficult life in Canada and her fear of Victor when she first arrived. She seems more comfortable framing Victor as a negative figure and she feels discomfort when she frames her mother's role in her unhappy life. Victoria learned about Victor not being Catholic when she overheard him talking to her mother. Instead of confronting him, she stayed in another room until her mother came to her and stated that Victor knew that she had arrived home. Victoria's mother also encouraged that the couple discuss their differences. Given the unhappy faces in Victoria's portrait, perhaps Victoria's mother regretted encouraging their discussion and Victoria's eventual consent to the marriage. Victoria recalls her mother's anger when she migrated to Canada as she told

Victoria before her migration: “You know, you have no family of your own now.”<sup>87</sup> Her cruel words must have been distressing for Victoria and made her feel quite alone. When years later, Victor did not send funds for his family’s return sailing to Canada and despite her dismay that Victoria wore the same clothes that she wore when she initially left Manchester for Nova Scotia, Victoria’s mother stated: “Hope he’s not done the same to you as your father did to me, walked out on yah.”<sup>88</sup> This statement indicates that Victoria’s mother was so distressed by her own experience as a single-mother that she wanted her daughter to return to a husband who was at the very least neglectful and emotionally abusive rather than remain in Manchester with her children away from Victor. It is likely that her mother’s role in influencing Victoria’s discussion with Victor, her negative response to Victoria’s migration, and her desire for her daughter’s return to a tumultuous marriage may mark her family wedding photo including the image of her mother as distressing for Victoria.

Following her discussion of her group wedding portrait, Victoria turns to her wedding portrait with Victor. She displays this photograph beside the wedding party photo at the centre of her fireplace mantle. Again, the bride and groom do not portray a sense of happiness regarding their marriage each showing fairly neutral expressions. Victoria’s interaction with this photograph is very telling of the way in which she views her husband, her experiences as a war bride, and her war bride identities. She looks directly at the photo and states in a sarcastic tone: “You would never think butter would melt in his mouth, [...] Could you?”<sup>89</sup> This phrase indicates that Victor appears harmless but had a much more sinister character. Her mocking of the photographed Victor is very different to the celebratory and excited way in which Wendy interacts with her wedding photographs. For

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

Victoria, this photograph not only depicts her wedding but it also represents Victor's flare for deception, the beginning of their troubled marriage, and her unhappy experiences as a war bride. Victoria demonstrates her identity as a war bride survivor through her interaction with this photograph as she empowers herself in mocking her late husband.

Through her interaction with her wedding photographs, Victoria indicates that she knows that her experiences were atypical as other war brides did not have such difficult partnerships and experiences as war bride migrants. Given that Victoria and Wendy are friends and live near each other, perhaps she has seen Wendy's happy wedding photos and has witnessed her joyful interaction with these mementoes. Unlike Wendy, Victoria does not display photographs of Victor in later years of their marriage. In so doing, she reinforces an understanding of their failed marriage. It is clear that this home is Victoria's home and that she controls the ways in which she represents her life and their family. For her identity as a war bride survivor she relies on her husband's absence from her life as she uses her continued bitterness and dissatisfaction with her war bride experiences to rearticulate her identity as a survivor and her preferred identities as a heroic telephonist and veteran. Despite her demonstration of her bitterness towards Victor and her life as a war bride, she seems rather secure in her portrayal of herself as a war bride victim and survivor. However, this security is more representative of trying to gain power over her traumatic experiences and by no means suggests that she finds these experiences comforting.

### **Bev Tosh's Nuanced Framing of War Bride Histories**

Bev Tosh's art provides a nuanced understanding of war brides' lived histories in Canada. She recognizes their struggles and complex emotions surrounding their migrations and settlements. Her installation *Wall of War Brides* includes up to eight hundred reproduced wartime photographs and letters in a collage fastened with hat pins. The installation also

displays small bottles throughout the collage filled with salt water representing war brides' sea migrations and the tears they shed due to their difficult experiences.<sup>90</sup> The bottles have the images of war brides inside the bottles and demonstrate the unresolved feelings that specific war brides have regarding their migrations.<sup>91</sup> Her work is much more representative of Victoria's traumatic memories than the 2006 'year of the war bride' celebrations (discussed in chapter two). The title of another Tosh piece: *Rough Ground* refers again to war brides' challenging and potentially unsettling experiences. For this work, Tosh projects fifty-two bridal portraits of war brides and uses these photos to represent war brides who remained in Canada, those who returned to their home countries, and those who never migrated.<sup>92</sup> Tosh also added to *One-Way Passage* a photo album piece entitled *Parallel Lives* that draws on some of the same portraits used in *One-Way Passage* but represents some war brides' experiences as more complicated. For instance, a black dress covers one war bride's wedding dress in the album unlike her first portrait and Tosh partly removed a photo of her father in a portrait with her mother in recognition of their disjointed relationship.<sup>93</sup> Through altering these photographs, Tosh demonstrates how war brides' relationships may differ from the happy war bride marriages celebrated during the 'year of the war bride.' Tosh alters photographs that seemingly represent happy family moments to depict harsh realities. Her work parallels Victoria's mocking of her husband when reflecting on their wedding portrait.

As a daughter of a war bride who had a failed marriage Tosh arguably feels part of the war bride emotional community<sup>94</sup> and this membership as well as her own personal history influences her recognition, through her art, of war brides' challenging and

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<sup>90</sup> Laura Brandon, "Bev Tosh's War Brides," 13.

<sup>91</sup> Bev Tosh, *War Brides One Way Passage*, 15.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions in History," 842.

unsettling experiences of migration and family life. Victoria's experiences of loss, unacceptance, and continued struggle as a wife and mother in a troubled marriage figure in Tosh's art. Victoria never mentions Tosh in her interview although the Pier 21 Museum in Halifax exhibited Tosh's art. Regardless of whether or not Victoria is aware of Tosh's war bride centred art, it is evident that Victoria's stories of trauma are supported, to some extent, in the cultural sphere through Tosh's work. Victoria articulates her traumatic experiences without clear awareness of Tosh suggesting that traumatic histories that are inconsistent with dominant cultural discourses can still be articulated as people rely on others to recognize their experiences and, in so doing, assist in the recovery process.<sup>95</sup>

### **Very Different Kinships**

Victoria participates in a local war bride group but her experiences with her war bride club do not figure prominently in her interview account. She states that she has continually had difficulty attending war bride meetings as she does not drive and must rely on neighbours or fellow war brides for transportation. When she still lived on the farm, a neighbour drove Victoria to war bride meetings but charged her thirty dollars for the thirty mile trip. Victoria felt victimized by her neighbours when attending war bride events. The war brides would often attend a luncheon and the expense of her travel costs, coupled with the cost of her meal, gave Victoria anxiety.

Victoria only recalls her experiences with her war bride group with a sense of composure and joy when she recalls that her war bride friends once visited Victoria's farm relieving Victoria of the costly trip and meal. Victoria served sandwiches and tea and the women stayed all afternoon and well into the evening. In that instance, Victoria indicates that she felt like a valued member of the war bride emotional community.<sup>96</sup> Despite her joy

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<sup>95</sup> Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 70.

<sup>96</sup> Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions in History," 842.

when she recalls this event, Victoria quickly changes her focus to her feelings of betrayal as her husband purchased the isolated farm without her consultation. Her life as a war bride was so grim that even when remembering a happy moment, her failed life with Victor draws her into a bitter and resentful reflection.

Drawing on Erickson's argument regarding trauma victims and isolation,<sup>97</sup> Victoria's challenging life as a war bride isolates her from other war brides as she is largely an outsider in this emotional community.<sup>98</sup> Knowing that I had an interview scheduled with Victoria after my meeting with Wendy, Wendy warned me about Victoria's misery with Victor. This warning illustrates that other war brides also recognize that Victoria's life as a war bride does not reflect the typical war bride experience. Perhaps Wendy's active involvement in war bride organizations and her contact with many war brides influences her understanding that Victoria's experiences as a war bride migrant, wife, and mother, differ from the experiences of most of the war brides in their community. Catherine and Evie, war brides who are members of Victoria and Wendy's local war bride community and who also participated in this project, also eventually settled into their lives as war bride migrants, wives, and mothers and had amicable partnerships with their Canadian husbands. These women's common war bride experiences influence their sense of community amongst other war brides. According to Victoria, her war bride friends have not invited her to biannual Provincial war bride events. She argues that her exclusion stems from the fact that there is no room for Victoria in the vehicle used for travel. As Victoria does not drive, she cannot attend these larger war bride reunions on her own. Through this admission, Victoria indicates that she is an outsider within the war bride community. Her outsider status stems from the great hardships she endured as a war bride migrant, wife,

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<sup>97</sup> Leydesdorff et al., "Introduction," 2.

<sup>98</sup> Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," 842.

and mother. Based on Judith L. Herman's argument about survivors of trauma wanting to share the load of pain with others and the need for willing listeners,<sup>99</sup> it is likely that Victoria's sharing of her traumatic war bride experiences and her identities as a war bride victim and survivor have influenced other war brides in growing tired of her troubling stories.

### **Victoria the British War Bride Survivor**

Leydesdorff et al. argue that:

Stories and life histories of traumatized individuals rarely reflect continuity: typically they are structured in terms of a 'before' and an 'after', hinging on one or several ruptures that have permanently affected these lives. In this respect a trauma is not an isolated event in a life story but may in itself often play a decisive role in a person's perception of life afterwards, interpretations of subsequent events, and consequently, memories of preceding experiences.<sup>100</sup>

Victoria's life history narrative provides insight into the workings of the cultural circuit<sup>101</sup> when someone's history is inconsistent with dominant social memories and understandings. Her discomfort with her traumatic experiences as a war bride influence her vocal remembrance of her past and her articulation of herself as a war bride victim and survivor. Drawing on Leydesdorff's et al. argument regarding trauma influencing re-interpretations of events before the trauma,<sup>102</sup> Victoria takes greater pride in her experiences in the ATS and her identities as a heroic telephonist and veteran than her experiences as a war bride wife, mother, and unwanted settler. Dorothy Sheridan argues that her oral history respondents viewed their experiences in the services as temporary in comparison to their preferred 'normal' experiences of marriage and motherhood.<sup>103</sup>

Victoria's narrative demonstrates that due to her trauma as a war bride, she draws on her

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<sup>99</sup> Leydesdorff et al., "Introduction," 6, and Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 7.

<sup>100</sup> Leydesdorff et al., "Introduction," 15.

<sup>101</sup> Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?," *Social Text* 16 (Winter 1986-1987).

<sup>102</sup> Leydesdorff et al., "Introduction," 15.

<sup>103</sup> Sheridan, "Ambivalent Memories," 34.

experiences in the ATS and her role as a recognized veteran guest speaker for a sense of subjective composure. For Victoria, her war service was the most valued and important event in her life. Her experiences as a war bride were so traumatic that she cannot draw on them to facilitate a sense of composure.

Tessa Stone argues that based on her project with WAAF veterans, it is the specific service that influences how servicewomen perceive their war service and identify with these experiences in later life.<sup>104</sup> Victoria and Wendy both served on anti-aircraft gun sites in the ATS in very similar active capacities. Both women frame their involvement in the service very differently: For the most part, Victoria presents a composed heroic account emphasizing her proximity to battle and her own authority as telephonist as she ordered the men on her gun-team including her superior officer to fire the anti-aircraft gun. Although she complicates her retelling, portraying ATS women as having difficulty learning Morse Code and her own vulnerability recalling the assault by the American soldiers, Victoria demonstrates that she very much prefers her heroic framing of her wartime service and identities. Conversely, Wendy generally complicates her gun site role and her commitment to the ATS. It is not the force that determines how war bride veterans view their war histories but their war bride and post-war lives.

Victoria never specifically discusses her national identity. Given her very unsatisfying and traumatic experiences in Canada and her preferred memory of her war service, Legion involvement, and her vocal articulation of her heroic identities, it is evident that her British past most influences her understanding of her nationality. Victoria did not fully integrate into a Canadian life and her relationship with Victor was unresolved as he

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<sup>104</sup> Tessa Stone, "Creating a (Gendered) Military Identity? The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War," in *Women's History Review* 8 (4) (1999): 606-607.  
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09612029900200227#.VIJNupeTOqw>.



drowned in 1980. Victoria's status as an outsider with her war bride friends all who indicated that they have blended national identities but lean towards their Canadian national identity suggests that Victoria's retention of her British identity may cause problems in her relationships with other war brides. Victoria's status as an outsider due to her femininities and her British war service made her a significant member of her Legion chapter and facilitated her role as a guest speaker at local schools. For Victoria, her British family was the family who supported her through clothing her and her children during her years with Victor. Although she suggests tension with her family over her migration, Victoria never discusses her Canadian family (particularly her husband and mother-in-law) with such a sense of connection.

Like Wendy, Victoria's war bride past connects her ATS and post-war life.

However, the connection between these experiences for Victoria is unique in the sense that it is her traumatic experiences as a war bride (her feelings of betrayal that Victor lied about his faith, her mother's role in the couple's reconciliation prior to their marriage, her mother's anger prior to her migration, her unwelcoming mother-in-law in Canada, the hardships of rural life, and her disappointing and troubled marriage with Victor) that influence her heroic retelling of her ATS service and framing herself proudly as a 'Lady Soldier.' Recalling her life story provides her the opportunity to articulate herself as an individual with agency, emphasize her preferred heroic identities, and share her pain with others. Through relating her memories, she can construct subjective composure with her contemporary self as she frames herself as a strong individual who soldiered on during the war but also during her war bride experiences especially her tumultuous marriage. Seeking composure through articulating her history has also isolated her in her war bride community and Victoria indicates that despite her composure, she still has unresolved

feelings towards her war bride history, the less complicated histories of other war brides, and her perceived outsider status in that community.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter found that Victoria draws on her experiences in the ATS as a telephonist and her involvement in the Legion for subjective composure. She prefers to view herself as a heroic servicewoman and veteran and these identities generally blend with her femininities. However, Victoria's narrative demonstrates that gender can complicate even the most confident articulations of women as servicewomen. This chapter also examined Beatrice's discussion of her WAAF service and demonstrated that she too gains a sense of composure through remembering her wartime service particularly her connection to a famous SOE operative and her skilled position in the WAAF. Beatrice also combines her femininities with her confident skilled WAAF veteran identity. However, Beatrice's account is not heroic in the same way as Victoria's as she did not have such an active role in the conflict and her identities as a WAAF better blended with her existing classed and feminine identities. In Bev Tosh's art, war brides as military women are not frequently represented. Her lack of recognition of war brides as veterans can be understood as a product of discomfort within Canadian society with reconciling servicewomen's femininities with their military service and martial identities. In this sense, Victoria's confident memories of her wartime service do not resonate at the level of cultural discourse. The Canadian response to the death of Captain Nichola Goddard (the first female Canadian soldier killed in combat) demonstrates how contemporary Canadian cultural still struggles with understanding and reconciling women as military personnel. Victoria's involvement in the Legion and her emphasis of her heroic identities in her home through photographs and wall art demonstrate the significance of her wartime ATS experience in her life history. She much prefers and finds subjective composure in her heroic telephonist and heroic and

worthy veteran identities. Victoria feels the greatest sense of community with male veterans.

The chapter also examined Victoria's narrative regarding her experiences as a war bride, wife, mother, and unwelcome settler in rural Nova Scotia. It found that Victoria experienced trauma as a war bride particularly through her troubled relationship with her husband. She expresses her continued distress with these experiences in her interview and presents herself as a war bride victim and survivor. Comparing Victoria and Wendy's interactions with their wedding photographs demonstrates that these women had very different experiences as war brides. This analysis provides insight into how Victoria views herself as a victim and indicates that her distress comes from her knowledge that her experiences do not reflect those of her war bride friends. Bev Tosh's art recognizes war brides' difficult and unsettling war bride experiences influenced by her own experience as a child of a failed war bride marriage. Victoria never mentions Tosh's work and her awareness of Tosh's recognition of war brides' difficult migration and relationship experiences is doubtful. However, Victoria's desire for recognition as a British war bride survivor influences her vocal retelling of her traumatic life in Nova Scotia. Victoria reveals her isolation from other war brides based on her troubling war bride experiences. Despite her identity as a survivor and her frank and willing discussion of her war bride life, Victoria conveys that she still has feelings of discomfort due to her traumatic life history as a war bride. As a result, Victoria prefers her experiences in the ATS and Legion as well as her heroic identities as these experiences and identities give her the greatest sense of agency and subjective composure.

Victoria's chapter demonstrated how the life histories of war bride veterans should be of interest to scholars exploring composure and discomposure in oral history as the chapter revealed how these theories are insufficient for participants with histories of

trauma. It also shed light on how individuals can articulate experiences of trauma outside of dominant social memory and discourses. Scholars interested in the cultural circuit should take note of how the need for recognition, reassurance, and sharing pain with others can supersede cultural circuits and discourses. The chapter also demonstrated through analyzing Victoria's interview that drawing on photographs in an interview may trigger revealing conversations that shed light on personal memory, composure, and memories that are different than the intended meaning of the photograph. Victoria's chapter expanded on the argument regarding the utility of photographs in oral history research discussed in chapter one and chapter three. For scholars interested in women and war (especially the Second World War), Victoria's chapter demonstrated how some women like Victoria who had difficult or traumatic post-war experiences may not perceive their war service and wartime self as a temporary experience or identity. Victoria's ATS history sustains her and she reaffirms her connection to her ATS past through speaking at schools, through the wall art in her home, her continued involvement in the Legion, and by participating in this project. The chapter also further demonstrated that it is the post-war life that determines how women view their wartime experience. For war brides, their migration experiences connect their wartime and post-war lives. For scholars interested in the history of migration, Victoria's chapter offered insight into how when the migration and settlement experience is so difficult and upsetting individuals may cling to their pasts for composure especially experiences when they felt powerful and autonomous as well as national identities of their country of origin.

## Chapter Five - Penny the War Bride Veteran

*Well that was my partner, there!<sup>1</sup>*

Born February 2, 1922 in the village of Burgh Heath in the Surrey Downs, Penny MacDonald's father worked for the Surrey County Council and her mother remained at home as a homemaker. Penny continued her education through secondary school and eventually apprenticed as a dressmaker. She also worked as an accounting clerk operating an analogue accounting machine. This training led to her assignment as a cipher operator in the ATS following her enlistment on October 21, 1941 in Croydon, Surrey. As a cipher operator, Penny served the War Office at Story's Gate in London. Unbeknownst to her at the time, she served in close proximity to Prime Minister Winston Churchill's underground office and living quarters. While serving in London, Penny met her Canadian husband, Henry, at a dance at Harrods. Henry proposed on top of double-decker bus on-route to Burgh Heath during the Christmas season of 1942. They married in April 1943 with much of the village in attendance. Their first child, Paul, was born in January 1946 and in November 1946 Penny migrated to Canada on the war bride ship the Queen Mary. After reuniting with Henry in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the family travelled to the Maritime province of New Brunswick where Penny and Paul received a warm welcome from Henry's family. After Henry's re-enlistment into the Royal Canadian Air Force, Penny and Paul journeyed across Canada to the remote community of Brooks Brook, in the Yukon Territory where Henry served at a small out-post radio repeater station. Due to Henry's military career, the couple and their family that eventually included three children travelled extensively and lived in over twenty homes before settling in the suburbs of Ottawa. Penny

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<sup>1</sup> Penny MacDonald, interviewed by Lauren Auger, June 25, 2010, Nepean, Ontario.

and Henry co-authored a memoir of Penny's life story and their collaborative project will be examined in this chapter in relation to Penny's oral history account.

This chapter will explore the ways in which Penny MacDonald negotiates contradictions in her life history between past and present, her British and Canadian contexts and identities, as well as her military versus civilian histories. It will unpack relationships between personal, shared, cultural, and familial memories through the context of Penny's account of her experience meeting her husband at a dance, her wedding, and her migration experience. It will also examine Penny's memory of her ATS service as a cipher officer. This chapter will also question how intersubjectivity particularly her husband's presence at the interview affected the conveyed narrative. It will consider intersubjectivity in life history writing and whether the couple's collaboration on Penny's memoir influenced the character of their book.

### **Part One: Penny's Joyful War Bride Experience**

While discussing her service in the ATS, Penny remembers the jovial social atmosphere experienced by ATS women, especially their participation in dances. She frames her life before Henry including her service in the ATS as events leading to her formative experiences with Henry and her life as a war bride. Penny describes one dance in particular where she met her future husband Henry:

And say there is a dance here, or there, and this one particular night, another girl and I went to uh Kensington, Harrods, you've probably heard of Harrods um near Knight's Bridge, and uh we both went and um, they have like at these dances like in those days like a Paul Jones? [...] a Paul Jones it's [...] the girls go around in a circle in the middle and the men around the outside. [Smiles] So um this Gwen, a friend of mine, who I still correspond with uh went to this dance and um [laughs] we were going around and when the music, oh yes, they're playing music, and when stops, whoever you're standing in front of, that's your partner. Well *that* was my partner, there! [points to Henry smiling]. [Looks at him for a moment smiling] And [...] And so anyway, the custom, we we'd we talked and danced for for for a

bit of the evening. And the custom then was for the man to say ‘can he take you home?’ Like meaning he’d escort you to where you lived. [Smiles] So that’s what happened. He took me to the apartment that I was living in in Hammersmith. [...]”<sup>2</sup>

Penny’s articulation of this story indicates the excitement and romance that underlined the couple’s initial meeting. As she begins the story of meeting Henry, after explaining the concept of a ‘Paul Jones’ dance, Penny’s face brightens and her animated tone demonstrates her excitement. Her excitement and joy peaks as she exclaims: “Well *that* was my partner, there!”<sup>3</sup> She frames the dance at Harrods as one of the most important events in her life. Penny reinforces this understanding later when she states: “And... well that’s how it started.”<sup>4</sup> Although not specific about what she means in using the word ‘it,’ her audience understands that she means her relationship with Henry and her life as a war bride.

Henry’s presence at the interview certainly influenced Penny’s excited recollection of their first meeting. She gleefully smiles at her husband as she recalls meeting Henry. Together they discuss the development of their relationship. Henry takes control of the interview during this discussion reading a poem by Hope Bridgewater that he feels especially captures the couple’s experience:

HM: It’s called ‘A War Bride’s Story’ [...]
   
In Britain, when Nazis were bombing our land
   
We asked other countries to give us a hand;
   
By crossing the oceans the Canadians came
   
Helping our country was their total aim.

Lonely Canadians would come to a dance
   
Hoping the girls would give them a chance
   
A chance to be close to someone again.
   
A chance to act as courtly young men.

I then saw an airman who danced with great flair.
   
[*PM smiles again before looking rather annoyed*]
   
He was handsome and had curly red hair;

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

*[PM looks at interviewer and smiles]*

He then caught my eye and asked me to dance  
And he danced and he said, 'Now do I have a chance?'<sup>5</sup>

Although cheerful during their discussion regarding the development of their relationship, Penny's facial expression conveys her annoyance that Henry wanted to control the interview's focus through reading the poem. She intervenes stating: "Well let's..."<sup>6</sup> Her vocal tone indicates that she wanted to suggest to Henry that he read the poem later. However, she relents and gives her consent: "well ok..."<sup>7</sup> Penny smiles and becomes quite jubilant when he reaches the point about the Canadian airman with red hair. Penny remarks that the poem reflects their own history as Henry had red hair as a younger man. Through reading the poem and, more specifically, his participation in this interview conversation, Henry communicates that this part of Penny's life history is a shared memory. Reading the poem and the couple's later discussion of the poem also suggests that they enjoy reminiscing about their relationship and that this reflection gives both Penny and Henry a sense of subjective composure. In so doing, the couple draw on their collective identities as sweethearts, lovers, partners, and co-parents in constructing their personal subjectivities.

Penny's initial annoyance with Henry reading the poem suggests that she wanted to control this portion of the interview and that despite the collective or shared nature of the story, she wished to articulate this experience on her own as part of her own life history and not necessarily in the context of their collective life story. Penny's smile and enthusiasm with the mention of the red haired airmen suggests that based on their shared identity as a couple, Penny finds comfort in subjugating her independent identities for collective identities (sweetheart, wife, and mother etc.) that have shaped their lives

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Hope Bridgewater, "A War Bride's Story," From "War Bride Plaque Inscription," pdf, Pier 21. [https://www.pier21.ca/wp-content/uploads/files/research\\_war\\_brides.pdf](https://www.pier21.ca/wp-content/uploads/files/research_war_brides.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Penny MacDonald, interviewed by Lauren Auger, June 25, 2010, Nepean, Ontario.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



together. In this sense, her war bride identities are not entirely autonomous identities but identities reliant on the juxtaposed masculine and very much present identities of her husband. However, these war bride identities (her sweetheart, wife, mother, grandmother, and welcomed migrant identities) give Penny confidence and empowerment as she finds subjective composure in her war bride past.

As Penny discusses Henry becoming increasingly close with her family and mentions their engagement, Henry interjects and asks his wife about receiving her engagement ring: “[...] whereabouts did you receive that?”<sup>8</sup> Penny laughs excitedly after Henry’s question and responds with a smile stating: “Yes! Oh yes!”<sup>9</sup> Penny recalls:

So we went home. And we would have to [smiles nods head] travel down from Sutton on the bus. Uh a double-decker bus. [Smiles] And we would always go up on the top. You know, we were young and we would go up to the top. So we went up onto the double-decker and uh he, [Henry] brought out this ring [smiles] and put this ring on my finger [touches and looks down at ring finger] on the top of a double-decker bus. [beams]<sup>10</sup>

The story of their engagement reinforces the romantic tone of Penny’s narrative particularly regarding her relationship with Henry and her war bride identities. Her happy and animated retelling of this story reflects the joy that she felt at the time as well as her continued composure obtained and reinforced through her relationship with Henry.

Penny also hints about the challenges she would experience in leaving her family and home due to her relationship with Henry and her migration to Canada. Penny recalls that despite her parents’ happiness and support for the couple’s engagement they were also not “too happy”<sup>11</sup> about the prospects of Penny’s eventual migration. She explains that her parents had envisaged Canada as “wild and quite remote and desolate [...]”<sup>12</sup> Henry again

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

joins the conversation exclaiming in reference to the couple's home in the Yukon Territory: "They were quite right in some respects!"<sup>13</sup> Despite again seemingly revealing a more challenging war bride experience through acknowledging the remoteness of Henry's first posting and difficulties posed by their isolation, the couple laughingly recall these challenges suggesting that the strength of their partnership enabled their perseverance and Penny's adjustment to a vast range of Canadian experiences and contexts.

Following Penny's articulation of her memories of preparing for the wedding and the actual event, Penny and Henry convey a more complicated negotiation with their wedding memories:

PM: Well of course, they've all gone. I mean I don't even know like if they exist anymore [...] Now. But

HM: What the people?

PM: Hmm mm.

HM: I can think of the group now. I envision it the group in front of the church. Cuz I had three servicemen who had gathered there. Neal?

PM: Oh yes.

HM: he's he's got dementia with age, Dan West, my best man, he came back from France a dentist, he's passed on. Stewart Aldon.

PM: Yah. He was killed.

HM: He was killed in Italy.

LA: Oh.

HM: And ah so that's it, that's the group and uh...

PM: Rosemary.

HM: Rosemary gone, your sister.

PM: My sister went at 62 with cancer.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Penny interviewed by Lauren Auger, June 25, 2010, Nepean, Ontario Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Their wedding has come to symbolize not only the formal beginning of their married lives but it also reinforces the understanding that they have lost friends and family over the course of their lives together. Unlike Victoria's discussion of loss in reference to her wedding photo that alluded to the life that she personally lost in marrying her husband and migrating to Canada, Penny and Henry collaborate in their conversation of loss. Although they may have experienced each loss individually, they also experienced and articulate their memory of these losses collectively. Despite the sadness that naturally accompanies this discussion, their audience also gains the understanding that Penny and Henry are survivors who coped with these challenges as a team through their strong partnership and their sense of composure gained through their relationship.

Unlike many war brides interviewed for this project, Penny describes her migration experience. However, she limits her discussion to the highly organized nature of the journey, the on-board entertainment, and the white bread served at dinner. When asked about when she set sail, Penny states: "Uh yes, it's it's very emotional you *know* [...] [shakes head] very emotional."<sup>15</sup> Her tone suggests that it is difficult for her to discuss this part of her war bride experience. Penny's discomfort indicates that despite having a happy life in Canada, it was difficult leaving her family. Her facial expression following my question regarding her voyage suggests her surprise that I asked about this part of her war bride experience indicating that my question seemed intrusive. She shakes her head and quickly transitions to more comfortable topics: life aboard the ship and her landing in Halifax. Penny's reluctance to focus on her memory of her departure from England and her family suggests that this remains for Penny a profoundly personal and traumatic moment that continually troubles her despite the composure and happiness gained through her war bride history. In describing her experience on board, particularly the entertainment and

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

food, Penny draws on more reassuring moments of her migration. It is interesting that such activities remain, decades later, a distraction from difficult emotions connected to her separation from her British family. She also recalls caring for her child onboard the ship and that she had a more comfortable and manageable trip due to the fact that she only had one child while many other war brides had several children. In drawing on her experience caring for her child, Penny subdues her complicated, discomfoting, and unresolved feelings about her migration in favour of her more comfortable experiences with motherhood.

Penny recalls that Henry met her in Halifax triggering Henry's further involvement in the interview. He discusses how to meet his wife and son, he travelled for a week from the Yukon. The couple reminisce about the moment they reunited; Penny smiles broadly at the memory. Henry then discusses how the young family travelled by train to New Brunswick for a visit with Henry's family. He quickly centres his narrative on life in the Yukon, particularly the challenges in coordinating a family home. It is interesting to observe the interview conversation at this point as it again transitions from Penny's personal narrative to a shared memory of the couple's family life. Penny reinforces this notion when she states: "Oh yah, we had we're missing the part, I went to Henry's home first."<sup>16</sup> In using the word 'we' Penny signals that while she desires to control the pace and subject of the interview, she is quite comfortable with a collective retelling of her story. Penny once again subverts her own narrative and an independent portrayal of her war bride identities for a collective depiction of her sweetheart, wife, mother, and migrant identities and a combined life history narrative with her husband. In so doing, her narrative and the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

identities she puts forth support understandings of appropriate femininities connected to women's supportive social role and identities in both the private and public spheres.

Penny takes great joy in recalling how Henry's family welcomed her and the couple's young son: "Well then, we finally did get down to New Brunswick and they were all waiting for us [...] And yes, I had a very nice welcome! [Smiles, hand on chin, nods starts to cry.] I mean it's very emotional, you know. [...] Even now. [...]"<sup>17</sup> Through her emotional recollection, Penny's audience gains the understanding that the welcome and support provided by Henry and his family assisted her adjustment to her new life. Barbara Rosenwein argues in defining her concept 'emotional communities' that individuals live in social communities such as the family, church, and workplace that shape emotion and that people move between these communities in their daily lives.<sup>18</sup> Based on Rosenwein's understanding, it seems likely that Penny cries with gratitude over her movement from her British collective and familial emotional communities to her Canadian collective and familial emotional communities. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Penny was glad of her freedom from the challenges and horrors of the war and relocation to a peaceful life with Henry in Canada. Her crying can also be interpreted as an indication of the difficulty she experienced in shifting her emotional community contexts through her migration. While her welcome in Canada was a happy experience and she appreciated her new Canadian context, her migration experience was still unsettling due to the trauma of leaving her family and the familiarity of Britain.

The remainder of her interview presents an underlining narrative that the couple enthusiastically conquered many challenges due to their strong relationship and affection.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107 (3) (2002): 842. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/532498?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/532498?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

Again, they collectively recall these experiences. Penny relies on Henry to acknowledge and confirm her account. While the interview centres on Penny, it really becomes a retelling of the couple's shared life experiences. The following section compares Penny's narrative of romance with the romantic memories of another project participant, Patricia Pearson.

### **A Shared Experience with Romance**

Claire Langhamer argues that the Second World War was “an emotional watershed; a period of rapid discontinuity.”<sup>19</sup> The extent of this ‘discontinuity’<sup>20</sup> facilitated a shift in social understandings and expectations regarding love, courtship, and relationships between the genders.<sup>21</sup> This thesis has already argued how the war bride phenomenon (their courtships, marriages, migrations, and settlements) was part of a larger disruptive cultural movement in which love sustained individuals during the chaos of war and assisted their development of an unique sense of self in opposition to, and despite of, the collective wartime atmosphere. The shared memories and narratives articulated by Penny and another war bride, Patricia, who also describes her romantic first encounter with her husband can be seen as part of this cultural shift and reflective of the romantic wartime climate. Providing support for Langhamer's argument regarding love facilitating personal identity and subjectivity,<sup>22</sup> both women demonstrate in their interviews how their relationships with their boyfriends/husbands influenced their understanding of themselves as individuals, how they articulate their femininities, and how they understand their national identities.

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<sup>19</sup> Claire Langhamer, *The English in Love The English In-Love; The Intimate Story of An Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

Like Penny, Patricia's narrative of her war bride experiences relies on her recollection of meeting her husband at a dance. Patricia recalls how their relationship blossomed after their second meeting:

[...] this one time I get in there and there's Jack again. And he sees me and I see him. He's dancing with a girl on the floor. At that point it was meant to be because [smiles and laughs] a man's voice said "the next this is [...] going to be a tag dance." That means you can say "excuse me," you know, so I said to my friend, "I know who I'm going to tag!" So I went over and hit the girl on the shoulder and she, he never saw her again cuz the two of us went and sat down and talked and talked and talked. And that's when it started, going together.<sup>23</sup>

Like Penny, Patricia uses the concept of fate when she describes meeting her husband at the dance and this underlines the romantic theme of the memory. Knowing that Patricia eventually migrated to Canada as a war bride, her audience gains the understanding that her romance with Jack was the defining aspect of her life and greatly influences how she describes her past and shapes her understanding of her subjectivity.

Patricia demonstrates her particular pride that she pursued her relationship with Jack by "hitting" the girl with whom Jack danced.<sup>24</sup> The word 'hitting' instead of perhaps 'tapping' demonstrates Patricia's active role in this encounter, her physical attraction to Jack, and her territorial feelings towards her future husband. This is interesting because other interviewed war brides, including Penny, did not articulate such an active role in their courtship and by extension, a potentially more active sexual identity. Patricia takes responsibility for her own emotional and physical desires in pursuing Jack.<sup>25</sup> While she

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<sup>23</sup> Patricia Pearson, interviewed by Lauren Auger, June 30, 2010, Kingston, Ontario.

<sup>24</sup> James Hinton examines how Mass Observation author Lillian Rogers participated in wartime dances in Birmingham to express her sexual identity and assert independence from her domestic life and relationship with her husband, Stan, in James Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives: Mass Observation and the Making of the Modern Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 117-120 & 128-129.

<sup>25</sup> Patricia's dance-hall courtship with her future husband differs from Lillian Rogers' dance-hall experiences as Rogers sexually manipulated men including her husband and used dances to pursue extramarital affairs. Patricia portrays her expression of her sexual identity as fairly benign as she used her sexuality to garner the attention of Jack who would eventually become her husband. Although Patricia discusses the care-free romantic atmosphere at wartime dances and that she casually dated other men that she met at dances prior to

conveys this desire for Jack and her active role in her pursuit of him, she also states that the couple did not dance but participated in the less physical, and potentially less sexual, activity of sitting and talking. Through articulating this aspect of the story, Patricia illustrates that the relationship blossomed due to the couple's compatibility and compensates for her own active role in pursuing Jack.

Penny's narrative of meeting Henry also relies on this notion of fate when she discusses the concept of a Paul Jones dance. It is likely that these women felt comfortable articulating their romantic first encounter with their husbands based on the common representation of war brides and dances in the cultural sphere. However, Penny does not discuss her attraction to Henry nor does she position herself as the active pursuer of the relationship. Instead, she focuses on the excitement of meeting Henry. His presence at the interview reinforced this more excited and romantic tone. Patricia uses a sultry tone when recalling meeting her husband at the first dance "I thought well alright. I'm not going to chase after the guy! [laughs] But he's *pretty* nice! I'm thinking [plays with her hair] that he's pretty nice."<sup>26</sup> Due to the fact we were alone during our interview, it is likely that it was easier for Patricia to articulate her own interest and desire for her husband than it was for Penny. In this sense, these women present different experiences and identities in the context of meeting their husbands. Penny presents a more demure, romantic experience and identity. This experience and identity reflects preferred pure and romantic feminine experiences and identities in wartime Britain examined in the second chapter of this thesis. Patricia's experience and identities seem more connected to the sexualized femininities

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meeting her husband, she does not portray these relationships as serious and only strongly articulates her sexuality in connection to pursuing her future husband.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



that were generally unwelcome and subject to disapproval and policing in wartime Britain, also discussed in chapter two.

### **War Brides, Romance, and the Cultural Sphere**

Contemporary cultural representations of war brides promote romantic war bride experiences and identities. These romantic portrayals of war brides centre on the love stories between war brides and their servicemen boyfriends and veteran husbands. Dances feature prominently in cultural representations of war bride histories and in cultural recognition for war brides.<sup>27</sup> The Canadian History Channel film *War Brides from Romance to Reality* begins with the recreation of a wartime dance. Filmed in black and white, with actors playing the part of Canadian soldiers and British women, viewers gain the understanding that wartime dances are the beginning of war brides' histories. The narrator reinforces this understanding when she states: "While the battle raged and the big bands played, thousands of European women kicked up their heels with Canadian soldiers. They would leave an indelible stamp on the social history of Canada."<sup>28</sup> The film indicates that dances helped young people cope with the violence and challenges they experienced in the midst of the conflict.<sup>29</sup> War bride Jean Spear comments:

It was an activity that was completely uplifting. And once you found that partner whose steps fitted into yours. You were away and happy as a clam. [laughs] And that's of course how I met the love of my life.<sup>30</sup>

The understanding that dances figured prominently in the Second World War cultural experience and the notion that dances facilitated the love stories of thousands of

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<sup>27</sup> The use of dances for recognizing war brides demonstrates that people understand the Second World War as a romantic historical moment.

<sup>28</sup> *The War Brides; From Romance to Reality*, DVD, Directed by Anne Hainsworth, (Kiss the Bride Productions, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> Framing wartime dances as therapeutic, supports Langhamer's argument connecting Second World War romances to the shaping of personal subjectivity. *The English In-Love*, 24. Through wartime dances people could forget the challenges of wartime life and articulate themselves as individuals in spite of the collective nature of the war.

<sup>30</sup> *The War Brides*.

Canadian soldiers and their war brides reinforces in Canadian cultural memory both a romantic perspective regarding war brides' experiences and understandings of war brides' identities as sweethearts and wives. The film portrays relationships between war brides and their husbands as twentieth century fairy tales where, through dancing, the couples successfully courted despite the dangers of wartime. Jean Spear reinforces this understanding: "It was the best and worst of times. And yet, there was so much action going on. We had this selection of men! We didn't care, the bombs could drop we'd just dance away!"<sup>31</sup> Dances figure prominently in cultural events recognizing war brides. For instance, the annual national war bride reunion held in London, Ontario in August 2014 included a gala dance and dinner. Dances also feature at provincial war bride meetings according to Wendy, the subject of chapter three.<sup>32</sup>

Many war brides certainly met their husbands at dances. However, recognizing dances as the beginning of war brides' histories also indicates how narratives regarding war brides reinforce understandings regarding gender that connect idealized masculinities to military identities and power and ideal femininities with women's identities as supportive sweethearts and wives. In so doing, these cultural representations of war brides promote heteronormativity and patriarchy. Through their representation of uniformed wartime Canadian soldiers and British women in wartime dresses, the recreated dance in *War Brides from Romance to Reality* underlines the juxtaposed gender identities of war brides and their soldier husbands. The soldiers articulate idealized masculinities through their military service and war brides articulate idealized femininities as they support men who serve and defend. In depicting wartime British women wearing civilian dresses, the film underlines understandings of attractive non-militarized femininities. Dances may have

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

served as not just a wartime distraction but an opportunity for men and women to perform specific gendered identities that portray men as having power over women as in dance men lead and women follow. In so doing, drawing on Langhamer's argument regarding romances shaping subjectivity,<sup>33</sup> through articulating gendered identities as dance partners, men and women may have asserted themselves as individuals despite their involvement in the collective war effort.

Wartime dances may have also represented an opportunity for men to articulate other aspects of their masculinities including what Rose classifies as 'softer' aspects of their identities.<sup>34</sup> Canadian soldiers could perform more personal and domestic identities through going to dances with British women and pursuing romances with these women. However, the patriarchal nature of dancing allowed these men to explore romance and relationships with women within the context of their dominant heterosexual social role and their identities as soldiers.

Dancing is not always patriarchal as wartime dances also allowed women the opportunity to explore other aspects of their femininities. In dancing with other women, instead of men, women could take on an arguably 'masculine' leadership role within the context of the dance. Women could also teach men how to dance and in this sense, could be viewed as taking on a more powerful role within their relationship with their dance partner. Patricia's narrative demonstrates that attending dances gave her a feeling of power due to her performance of her sexual feminine identity, choice of her partner, and pursuit of relationships. James Hinton discusses the diaries of Mass Observation respondent Lillian Rogers in *Nine Wartime Lives* and argues that dances presented a means for Rogers

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<sup>33</sup> Langhamer, *The English In-Love*, 24.

<sup>34</sup> Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 195-196.

to express an independent sexual identity away from her domestic life and relationship with her husband.<sup>35</sup> Drawing on Hinton's analysis of Rogers' diaries recounting her extra-marital romances, dances provided an opportunity for women to articulate their sexualities beyond the confines of their domestic contexts. As in Rogers' experience, women who went to dances may have had greater control over their life experiences through the opportunity to choose dance and romantic partners outside of their normal domestic experiences. In this sense, dances provided them the opportunity for greater power over their bodies, sexualities, and experiences. Further, women dancing together may have been viewed as socially acceptable and may have allowed women to pursue same-sex relationships. However, as the historical context chapter demonstrated, women who overtly portrayed more sexual identities including by going to dances faced criticism for transgressing social expectations regarding appropriate feminine sexuality. This discussion has demonstrated more fluid identities that could be expressed in participating in wartime dances. However, celebrating dances as a significant part of war brides' stories more often promotes idealized femininities that connect war brides to the domestic sphere through their identities as supportive sweethearts and wives and moderates their sexualities to marital relationships with their husbands.

### ***Surrey Girl: Constructing Penny's War Bride Identity***

Penny and Henry co-authored a memoir entitled *Surrey Girl (not just another war bride)* that reflects and informs their familial memory regarding Penny's wartime experience in the ATS and her experiences as a war bride. Although written in the first person from Penny's perspective, the cover credits both Penny and Henry as authors and Penny thanks Henry for assisting in the writing process particularly his memory of events and dates.

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<sup>35</sup> Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives*, 117-120 & 128-129.

Certain passages in the book also complicate the identity of the book's primary author; for instance, the following passage discussing Henry's re-enlistment in the military and his career: "In retrospect, we have been more than happy with the decision to go back into the Service and must say that we had an interesting and successful career during the thirty years spent with the Royal Canadian Air Force."<sup>36</sup>

*Surrey Girl* has a romantic tone supported by the collaborative authorship of the book. The chapter "All's Fair in Love and War" especially underlines the romantic tone. It details the couple's first encounter, their engagement, their wedding, and Penny's migration to Canada. The opening paragraph sets this romantic underpinning:

Every young lady must dream of the Cavalier who will one day come and sweep her off her feet. Will he really arrive on horseback, or more appropriately today, in his father's car? And how do you know when the right one comes along? 'Getting to know you' is more realistic than 'love at first sight.' As time passes we realize that chemistry and aging of partners plays an important part in the understanding and development of compatibility between each other. Well let's go back to an evening in London during the summer of 1942 and start the tale that continues to this day of writing.<sup>37</sup>

This opening passage frames and articulates the couple's personal history, and by extension war brides' histories, as a fairy-tale. This paragraph also portrays the man as the dominant figure in romantic relationships as the woman waits and ponders 'who will sweep her off her feet.'<sup>38</sup> In so doing, Penny and Henry articulate that they subscribe to a patriarchal heteronormative relationship dynamic where the woman has a more supportive role and the man an active role in the partnership.<sup>39</sup> They broaden their characterization of relationships later in the passage when they discuss being "partners." In framing their first

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<sup>36</sup> Margaret and Horace Macaulay, *Surrey Girl Special Edition 2006- Year of the War Bride*, (Nepean: HRM Publishing, 2006), 44.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid 30.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> However, the book also details Henry's familial experiences with Penny and, in so doing, indicates that his identities are also fluid and that he gains an understanding of himself through articulating other more domestically centred roles and identities associated with these experiences including his identities as a romantic boyfriend, loyal husband, and caring father.

meeting in the context of a fairy tale and stating how their tale currently continues, the writers also indicate the success of Penny's experience as a war bride. This theme of success continues in the book as it more thoroughly discusses the couple's post-war married life than their wartime experiences.

The narratives articulated in *Surrey Girl* and in Penny's oral history interview are very similar in theme and content. In both, Penny frames the story of meeting Henry at the Harrods dance in the context of her war work in the ATS and dances as a popular form of wartime entertainment. In both, Penny recalls the Paul Jones dance and emphasizes that their first meeting was really by chance. The couple's engagement on the double-decker bus figures prominently in the book. As has been discussed earlier in this chapter, Henry intervened in Penny's interview encouraging her discussion of his proposal after she mentioned their engagement and receiving her engagement ring. Recollections of their wedding are also comparative as Penny recalls in both the book and the interview the difficulties experienced organizing the wedding especially her dress. Penny similarly recalls her migration experience in the memoir and the interview focusing on the rich food and lively entertainment on-board her ship and caring for her infant son during the journey. The book also characterizes the warm welcome Penny received from Henry's family. However, the interview provides a greater understanding of just how touched Penny felt by her new family's support evident in her emotional and tearful articulation of this memory.

*Surrey Girl* differs from Penny's oral history narrative when she recalls her adjustment to Canadian society and the religious observances of the villagers in New Brunswick. Penny remembers her mother-in-law admonishing her for challenging an older male community member's disapproval of Penny knitting on a Sunday. Penny informed

the man that during the war she worked regardless of the day.<sup>40</sup> It is understandable that her two hundred and forty-five page memoir provides more detail given the couple spent years writing the memoir. However, this episode may also give Peggy a sense of discomposure given that it complicates her memory of a fairly easy migration and settlement experience that she articulated in her oral history interview.

*Surrey Girl* represents both Penny and Henry's personal histories and can also be understood as a larger family history. The book discusses the life experiences and backgrounds of Penny's parents and Henry's family in New Brunswick. The couple provide contextual chapters centred on the pre-Second World War European political climate, the declaration of war, civilian life during the war, and women's involvement in Britain in the conflict. The chapter focused on women and war also details Penny's experience in the ATS. *Surrey Girl* then focuses on Penny and Henry's relationship and her migration followed by several chapters detailing their experiences as a married couple with children particularly their adventures re-locating for Henry's military postings. As the memoir develops into a familial, rather than a personal, account, it acknowledges Penny and Henry's descendants describing the major life events in their children's lives, even introducing their grandchildren in the final chapter of the book. For their offspring, *Surrey Girl* provides an understanding of their family background, their family's history in one of the most pivotal events in modern history (including Penny's experiences in the ATS and as a war bride), and then documents some of the most exciting family events in more recent years. It serves as a genealogical record of four generations and provides a sense of familial historical identity for later generations. *Surrey Girl* reinforces Penny and Henry's identities as a veteran and a war bride veteran respectively. It also serves as a testament to

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid 42.

their successful partnership and Penny's composure with her war bride migration and settlement gained through her happy Canadian familial life.

Although the book largely deals with Penny's life as a war bride, the cover features a wartime photograph presumably given to Henry by Penny capturing Penny in her ATS uniform. Penny signed the photograph "lovingly Penny." Through this photograph, the cover supports an understanding of Penny's military history and identities as well as her war bride history and identities. The subtitle of the memoir (*not just another war bride*) also potentially alludes to Penny's war service. Knowing Henry's involvement in writing the book, the subtitle also serves as a testament of his love and pride for his wife and that she is not just another war bride - she is his war bride. The subtitle also points to the fact that the memoir develops from a more personal account centred on Penny's life in Surrey to a broader familial narrative as Penny is not just another war bride- she is the MacDonald matriarch. Therefore, the title simultaneously reinforces Penny's veteran and war bride identities and pasts.

*Surrey Girl* assists Penny and Henry in constructing a sense of self that gives them composure. Juliette Pattinson discusses how her SOE veteran respondents, particularly her male respondents who had the experience of articulating memories at schools or through writing prior to their interview with Pattinson, articulated rehearsed narratives and spoke of their experiences with authority.<sup>41</sup> Alistair Thomson's life history participant Joan Pickett had strong memories of her experience travelling in Australia as people often asked her about this period of her life and she would "perform the story."<sup>42</sup> Thomson's participants in *Moving Stories* all wrote their life histories and this previous conceptualizing of their

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<sup>41</sup> Juliette Pattinson, " 'The Thing that Made Me Hesitate' Re-examining Gender Intersubjectivities in Interviews with British Secret War Veterans," *Women's History Review* 2 (2001), 23-24.

<sup>42</sup> Alistair Thomson, *Moving Stories An intimate history of four women across two countries* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2011) 302.



experiences acted upon their oral histories. According to Thomson, “We use narrative to make meaning of our lives. Memorable episodes are crafted into anecdotes that introduce and define character, develop dramatic tension and perhaps conclude with an explanatory punchline.”<sup>43</sup> Repetition of certain episodes of her war bride experience particularly meeting Henry, their wedding, and her acceptance by Henry’s Canadian family influenced the strength of Penny’s retelling of these episodes in her interview. It is evident that both Henry and Penny are accustomed to the narrative of her war bride story when they interrupt and remind each other of an anecdote or portion of the story that had been omitted from the conversation. For instance, Henry interjects when Penny discusses her engagement ring encouraging her recollection of his proposal. Penny interrupts Henry’s discussion of his work in the Yukon to focus on the MacDonald family’s welcome, acceptance, and inclusion of Penny when she first arrived in Canada. Both of these stories provide Penny and Henry with a sense of self and their relationship in which they feel comfortable. For Henry, the story of the engagement ring reinforces his masculinity and also his personal wealth given that he could afford such a wartime luxury. It also supports his veteran identity as Henry proposed in the context of serving in Britain during the Second World War. Penny finds much comfort in her war bride identities and her emphasis of her memories of meeting Henry, their engagement, their wedding, and the welcome she received in New Brunswick give her a particularly strong sense of composure.

Thomson argues in *Moving Stories* that oral history differs from written memoirs as the “interviewer shares control of the story.”<sup>44</sup> He further clarifies:

In the performance of an oral history interview the form and movement of the story is also influenced by the relationship between storyteller and audience. In oral history, by contrast to letters and memoirs, the story is shaped by the face-to-face

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid 303.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid 312.

interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Most obviously, the interviewer directs the narrative with his or her questions and responses, and by establishing an agenda for the interview. Less obviously, each participant in an interview perceives and imagines the other in certain terms, and these expectations can affect both questions and answers.<sup>45</sup>

In contrast to Thomson's argument regarding the differing nature between oral history interviews and writing personal histories, *Surrey Girl* provides an interesting case for reconceptualising the relationship between personal histories and identities in life history writing. Despite the fact that the book is supposedly written from Penny's point of view, she 'shared authority' with her husband, Henry. Unlike Thomson's participants in *Moving Stories*, Penny's life history writing has been a collaborative and not necessarily a personal process. Thomson argues that "We shouldn't over-emphasise the difference between writing and speaking the past or ignore the extent to which written and spoken memories impacted upon each other; many of the written stories already had a spoken life in everyday reminiscence with family and friends."<sup>46</sup> For Penny, her perspective of her lived history and the identity that she achieves through articulating her life history both in writing and vocally is a collaborative understanding and identity that relies on her husband's counter identity and his participation. Penny indicates some discomfort with allowing Henry's articulation of her personal history and their personal history as a couple (as has already been discussed in this chapter). However, Penny demonstrates that in the context of articulating her experiences as a war bride, she gains much comfort in Henry's collaboration and that her war bride identities (her sweetheart, wife, mother, grandmother, and migrant identities) are collaborative identities that rely on her femininities and Henry's masculinities.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid 316.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid 311-312.

The couple's memoir demonstrates how intersubjectivity influences both supposed personal reflections of the past and personal understandings of the self as Penny gains an understanding of her past and self not only through a personal reflective process but through a collaborative and interactive reflection. Penny and Henry's memoir can, arguably, influence a re-thinking of writing history as intersubjectivity also influences personal memoir writing and the writing process can be understood as a shared activity and a means of articulating both shared and individual identities.

### **Penny's National Identity**

In her interview, Penny recalls that many people visited her when she arrived in New Brunswick. Penny agrees with her interviewer's assessment that she was a bit of a celebrity in the community. She remarks that her accent especially marked her as different:

"Because well... you were different. And of course you spoke differently. Yah uh I mean I've lost my accent now but you know."<sup>47</sup> In stating that she has lost her accent, Penny indicates she assimilated into her Canadian community. By extension, Penny understands herself as having a Canadian identity due to her perceived contemporary Canadian accent.

A. James Hammerton and Alistair Thomson as well as Mary Chamberlain perceive the family as significant in shaping a migrant's held national identity.<sup>48 49</sup> For Penny, it would seem that her post-war life in Canada, in which her family has been the most significant element, helped her adapt and assimilate into the Canadian community and adopt a Canadian identity. In this sense, it is through Penny's success as a war bride and her

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<sup>47</sup> Penny MacDonald, interviewed by Lauren Auger, June 25, 2010, Nepean, Ontario.

<sup>48</sup> Alistair Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms Australia's Invisible Migrants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 325.

<sup>49</sup> Mary Chamberlain, "Gender and Narratives of Migration," *History Workshop Journal* 43 (1997):104. <http://www.popline.org/node/527170>

identities as a war bride wife, mother, and grandmother that she gains an understanding of her identity as a Canadian.

Despite Penny's assertion that she has lost her British accent, Henry disagrees with this statement:

HM: I.... Anyone we meet today,

PM: [laughs] Yah. I guess.

HM: they know that you were from England. So you still have a bit of accent. I think.

LA: You do, a little bit.

PM: Yah? Oh! [laughs, blows nose, wipes eyes]

LA: You do.

HM: Yah a little bit.

PM: Well [laughs].<sup>50</sup>

Juliette Pattinson's concept 'passing,' the phenomenon when individuals try to convey the understanding that they hold a specific identity, for instance a specific nationality, when their actual identity differs from the portrayed identity,<sup>51</sup> assists in analyzing Henry's perception and my understanding of Penny's national identity. It would seem that both Henry and I view Penny as trying to 'pass' as Canadian despite having, based on our perception, a marked British accent. We both view Penny based on her British past due to her speech. This perception is not just based on our Canadian identity and our detection of British pronunciation in Penny's speech. We both had strategic reasons for viewing Penny as British. For Henry, Penny's British identity highlights his own wartime history and in viewing Penny as British he supports his own identity as a Canadian 'soldier hero.' For Henry, Penny's maintenance of a British identity also supports his own understanding of

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<sup>50</sup> Penny MacDonald, interviewed by Lauren Auger, June 25, 2010, Nepean, Ontario.

<sup>51</sup> Juliette Pattinson, *Behind Enemy Lines: Gender, Passing and the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 15.

her romantic identity as she remains his British sweetheart and war bride wife.

Recognizing Penny's British identity may also give him a sense of composure as Henry is remembering their youth and the happy experiences they shared in their early lives together instead of the health concerns and uncertainty of their present life as an elderly couple.

I perceived Penny through the lens of her British past based on my interest in her wartime experiences as a servicewoman in the ATS and in her history as a war bride. Despite her own articulation of her success in Canada as a war bride through her stories of her settlement in Canada and as a military wife, my interest in recognizing my participants for their wartime service may have influenced my more heightened awareness of Penny's British identity.

When Penny states that she lost her accent, she smiles demonstrating her contentment with her assimilation into Canadian society and her composure with her Canadian identity. In this sense, she also gains a sense of composure as a war bride who had successful and happy experiences in her capacity as a wife, mother, and grandmother. The interference into her discussion does not seem troubling for Penny as she laughs and moderately agrees stating: "I guess."<sup>52</sup> Penny seems comfortable in expressing her memories and identities associated with her British war bride past as these experiences make her unique and interesting. Being made other was never a negative experience for Penny like it was for Victoria the subject of chapter four. I gained an understanding that Penny enjoys the attention and celebrity she received as a war bride in New Brunswick and also through my project. Being reminded of her British identity only heightens Penny's war bride identities because her history with Henry connects her British and Canadian

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<sup>52</sup> Penny MacDonald, interviewed by Lauren Auger, June 25, 2010, Nepean, Ontario.

lives. It is evident that Penny most identifies with her war bride experience particularly as Henry's romantic partner, a wife, mother and grandmother, and a welcomed war bride. The couple's reinforcement of these identities through articulating their memories of their initial meeting, engagement, marriage, and her first experiences in Canada gives both Penny and Henry a sense of pride and helps them construct an understanding of themselves as individuals connected by their intersecting experiences. It is evident that their experiences of romance, married life, and long lasting partnership move fluidly through the cultural circuit.

### **Part Two: "A very good military career"**

In her interview, Penny articulates her pride in her war service as a cypher operator. She transitions smoothly from a discussion of her pre-military work to joining the ATS and her training. Penny shows particular pride in her posting with the war office at Story's Gate, in close proximity to Winston Churchill's underground wartime quarters: "Yes I went to uh a place called Story's Gate, which is the entrance, uh of the war office. That was near where Churchill's office was. [smiles] Although, at the time I didn't know."<sup>53</sup> Through smiling, Penny indicates that her wartime proximity to Winston Churchill gives her a sense of pride. Although she does not discuss learning the true location of her posting, her proximity to Winston Churchill frames her memory of her war service and her identity as a veteran. The location of her service gives Penny an understanding that she contributed to the war effort.

Penny frames her wartime duties as a cypher operator as particularly important and highly secretive:

Because, you see when we went to work it was all very restricted. Uh you had to have your pass and everything and you only went in a certain area and there were

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

MPs, I mean Military Police posted at every angle and every door. [gestures while she talks] [...] And you had to go by all these people to get to go to work. [...] But uh it was uh working in a group of people, a team of people, [...] men and women, [nods] yah.<sup>54</sup>

When asked about a typical work day, Penny again emphasizes the significance of her assignment:

Well the actual work was top secret. [...] You never discussed anything because [...] because it was all very very secretive. [...] And uh you went into secret rooms that were all guarded by these, MPs and um, you you had your position and your typex in front of you and uh it was assigned a job, you know?<sup>55</sup>

As with her retelling of her experiences as a war bride especially the welcome she received in Canada, Penny portrays herself as special having a unique life history marked by excitement and adventure. Penny's service at Story's Gate fits nicely into this larger narrative. In her recollection of her war service, Penny indicates that the military especially chose her for this more secretive and important war work reinforcing her confidence in these experiences: "they felt that I would be suitable for that."<sup>56</sup>

Through her recollection of her significant role at Story's Gate, Penny articulates her veteran identity. Despite not serving in combat, Penny states that she served alongside men, was especially chosen for her posting, and that importance and secrecy characterized her war work. Penny's memory of her war work and her framing of herself demonstrates her comfort with her ATS past and veteran identity. She recalls that she left the ATS after becoming pregnant and indicates that she partially regretted leaving service life:

LA: So how did you feel about leaving the services? Because you were pregnant? Did you want to leave? Or were you happy to leave or?

PM: Oh yes absolutely, [...] Well, you know in many ways but I enjoyed the military [...] and I certainly had uh uh uh a very good career in the military. And um, I felt I did alright. Oh, oh yes I I don't know if I would have stayed on ...after the war but

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

uh I fitted into the military life, I enjoyed it. [...] I enjoyed the camaraderie with the other girls uh and uh awful lot of people I met. And of course when I uh Paul was coming I you see, in those days as soon as you you know things, they were aware that you were pregnant, you didn't work anymore. [shakes head] No [shakes head] [...] Not like here now. Then Paul, when [he] came of course I had him to look after. And then I was getting ready to come to Canada.<sup>57</sup>

Penny states that she enjoyed her service particularly the camaraderie with the other serving women. Previously in the interview, Penny discussed her accommodations while posted at Story's Gate and agreed with her interviewer's comparison between the close quarters and fun of billet life and the experience of living in a university residence. In so doing, Penny indicates that she views her military experience as an adventure that provided her with some independence from her family.<sup>58</sup> Penny experienced this independence in a highly regulated atmosphere that required discipline and hard work; two aspects of her service that she states she particularly enjoyed. Her strong tone in recalling military life suggests that Penny's military career and her perceived contribution to the British war effort give her a sense of pride.

After initially agreeing that she felt content in leaving the services, Penny raises her voice and uses a downward inflection when stating "well you know"<sup>59</sup> suggesting that she possesses complicated feelings about leaving the ATS. When she discusses her positive feelings towards her military service, Penny speaks confidently. When she states the following strong statements: "I enjoyed the military"<sup>60</sup> "I certainly had uh uh uh a very

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Penny Summerfield discusses this connection between women's independence and military service in her analysis of her oral history interviews, the writings of wartime MP Edith Summerskill, Mass Observation research, and the works of wartime authors Phyllis Bentley, Margaret Goldsmith, Edith Pargeter, and Peggy Scott in *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 254-284. Summerfield highlights the wartime novel *She Goes to War* by Edith Pargeter in which the protagonist "Inspired by lighthearted patriotism, [...] shrugs of parental control to do something more serious for the war effort than her job as a gossip columnist on a local paper." Ibid 258-9.

<sup>59</sup> Penny MacDonald, interviewed by Lauren Auger, June 25, 2010, Nepean, Ontario.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.



good career in the military”<sup>61</sup> and “I fitted into military life,”<sup>62</sup> Penny looks directly at her interviewer suggesting her confidence in her positive feelings towards her ATS past and veteran identity. Her tone becomes more quiet and her facial expression more serious when she discusses her pregnancy and military protocol of releasing pregnant personnel. Unlike her previous discussion of the positive aspects of her service, Penny looks down or away from her interviewer only returning her interviewer’s gaze when she states: “you didn’t work anymore”<sup>63</sup> and when she discusses the birth of her son and their migration to Canada. For Penny, her motherhood and settlement in Canada give her a sense of reassurance regarding leaving the ATS. It is evident that she very much prefers discussing her positive memories of the ATS rather than leaving the service and that her identities as a mother and welcomed war bride help her cope with this shift in her life experience.

Despite Penny’s pride in her war service, it is also clear that she prefers her war bride experiences and war bride identities as a sweetheart, wife, mother, grandmother, and welcome war bride migrant over her ATS history and veteran identity. Penny’s initial discussion of her Story’s Gate assignment transitions from her recollection of her actual service to meeting Henry. Although throughout her discussion of the development of their relationship Penny discusses her posting in London and later to Salisbury, she uses this discussion only for qualifying her location whilst discussing the couple’s courtship. Penny recalls that while serving in Salisbury, she witnessed preparations for the D-Day invasion and heard aircraft flying overhead the night before the invasion. This discussion connects her experience with the larger British war experience. At this point in the interview, Penny

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

seems more comfortable with discussing her relationship with Henry and her experience as a British citizen during the war rather than her military past.

During the interview, Penny indicates that she held an important role in her capacity as a cypher operator particularly at Story's Gate. Although Penny suggests that her feminine identities blend or at least coexist with her understanding of herself as ATS ciphers woman when she articulates her pride in her service, her memories of Henry and their relationship overshadow and disrupt her narrative of her wartime service and presentation of her veteran identity. Her narrative regarding her experiences as a war bride dominates the interview indicating Penny finds greater composure in her war bride experiences and her identities as a significant other, wife, mother, grandmother, and welcome war bride than her veteran identity. In this sense, Penny reveals the complexity of her veteran identity. While she at times presents a confident and proud veteran identity, analysis of her narrative and her emphasis of her war bride past over her ATS service suggests that she is not completely secure in her veteran identity and that this identity is layered and complex.

### **A Shared Sense of Pride**

Like Penny, Gwendolyn Barry perceives the circumstances and location of her war service as particularly unique. Gwendolyn served in the WAAF as an electrician at RAF Hawkinge near Folkestone and Dover. In her interview, Gwendolyn highlights the dangers serving close to France citing Hawkinge as the first British base attacked during the Battle of Britain, as well as the fact that this part of England faced shelling from Nazi guns in France and experienced heavy bombings. According to Gwendolyn, the Air Force transferred most of the female personnel away from Hawkinge leaving approximately a dozen WAAF personnel including Gwendolyn. She mentions that Hawkinge prepared for a counter-

invasion following the successful D-Day landings. According to Gwendolyn, defense plans for this potential German invasion included the possibility of eating local dogs and cats if facing starvation. Gwendolyn recalls that she served in a slit-trench during this precarious period alongside men from the base. In her memoir, Gwendolyn clarifies that she volunteered as a runner and trained in mock-invasion scenarios.<sup>64</sup> The following excerpt from Gwendolyn's interview demonstrates Gwendolyn's feelings regarding the dangers she experienced at Hawkinge and her perspective towards how the other WAAFs handled the pressure:

GB: So there was only a dozen or so left at Hawkinges. And we just faced the fact that [nods] you know we whatever happened would happen so uh.

LA: That must have been hard.

GB: Well I I I it was it was hard for me to see the way some of the other women reacted, who were more nervous. Yes, more nervous.<sup>65</sup>

Gwendolyn indicates that she felt that the other women had greater difficulty dealing with the pressure of their posting to RAF Hawkinge and that Gwendolyn more steadfastly approached this difficult and fearful period. Through her criticism of the other WAAFs, Gwendolyn portrays herself as more capable of balancing other personal identities including her civilian identities and femininities with the demands of her war service and her identity as a competent WAAF.

Both Penny and Gwendolyn indicate that they served alongside men and that they had a high level of involvement in the war effort due to their postings and assignments. Like Penny, Gwendolyn articulates her pride in her service and her veteran identity. Despite this pride, Gwendolyn received criticism regarding her WAAF service and veteran status on multiple occasions in her post-war life in Canada. Gwendolyn's mother-in-law

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<sup>64</sup> Gwyneth M. Shirley, *The Memoir of a War Bride*, 14.

<sup>65</sup> Gwendolyn Barry, interviewed by Lauren Auger, August 11, 2010, Huntsville, Ontario.

implored her to not mention her service to people living in their town, Cochrane, because there “were some bad women in the services.”<sup>66</sup> Gwendolyn’s tone when discussing this episode demonstrates that she viewed her mother-in-law’s request as absurd and that she felt she deserved more recognition and support for her WAAF past. Gwendolyn later recalls that she felt deserving of permission to march in her local Remembrance Day parade in the same capacity, and alongside, male veterans. Despite the fact that Gwendolyn only desired recognition through participating in the parade, her Legion chapter president refused her request stating that he did not want her involved in commemorative activities because he did not want her drinking with male veterans.<sup>67</sup>

Gwendolyn indicates that despite perceiving herself as a veteran deserving of recognition and her particular pride for her service at RAF Hawkinge, she also indicates that during the war she was not completely successful in blending her military identity with her feminine identities. Gwendolyn desired a clerical position similar to her pre-war work in various governmental positions. Instead, she served as an electrician and worked on airplanes. At several points during the interview, Gwendolyn suggests that she did not necessarily enjoy her war work. She hints that this dislike stemmed from the solitary nature of the work, as well as the physical and dirtier nature of her job. “I’d been going around with dirty old overalls.”<sup>68</sup> In this statement, she compares herself to women who served in radar who wore “immaculate uniforms.”<sup>69</sup> Despite her more complicated feelings, Gwendolyn confidently recalls that she received a higher wage than the other WAAFS serving at her first posting at RAF Gravesend who mostly served as cooks or in other more supportive and domestic positions.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Penny has no such reservation about the nature of her war service as has been demonstrated in this chapter. It is likely that Penny faces a reduced negotiation with her war service in comparison to Gwendolyn's experience as a grounds crew electrician at a much targeted base. Despite serving in a very exciting location, Penny performed less active work physically; therefore, her war service was and is more consistent with her other life experiences and less challenging to her understanding of her feminine identities. Although both women have different perspectives regarding their war service and Gwendolyn has sought more active recognition through requesting her inclusion beside male veterans in a Remembrance Day parade, they both use their account of their war service for the purposes of framing their experiences meeting their husbands and as war brides. Gwendolyn quickly transitions from her discussion of the dangers at RAF Hawkinge and the stress associated with preparing for a post-D-Day counter invasion, to meeting her husband at a dance. This transition demonstrates that despite her pride for her service in such precarious circumstances, she feels a sense of discomposure regarding these memories. This discomposure likely stems from the fear and uncertainty associated with this part of her life history. Gwendolyn's discomposure regarding her experience at RAF Hawkinge may also stem from her discomfort with her militaristic and potentially masculine wartime experience. Her discomfort with her appearance may stem from the fact that the cultural sphere particularly emphasized an attractive appearance when justifying women's participation in the services during the Second World War (as demonstrated in chapter two). Therefore, she uses her memory of meeting her husband at a dance for reinforcing her confidence in her feminine and attractive appearance, as well as other feminine identities such as her romantic identity, wifely identity, and war bride identity.

Although Penny and Gwendolyn share a similar pride in their war service due to the circumstances of their service, the ways in which these women negotiate and relate

their experiences differ. Two dominant themes characterize Gwendolyn's narrative of her war service; the violence she witnessed and the more dirty and physical nature of her war service. Penny's account of her war service is more of a coming-of-age adventure narrative that leads to her love story with Henry. The two women view their identity and recognition as veterans quite differently. Compared to Gwendolyn, Penny presents a less complicated narrative regarding her war work and a reduced negotiation with her wartime experiences and veteran identity. Although Penny would have most certainly experienced the fear and uproar related to German bombings near Story's Gate in London, this aspect of her war history is largely absent from her narrative. Perhaps instead of negotiating with the more complicated aspects of her wartime experience, Penny marginalizes this more complicated aspect of her lived history in favour of her war bride history and the identities she seems to value most: her identity as Henry's girlfriend, fiancée, and wife, as a mother, a welcomed war bride, and her contemporary grandmotherly identity. Gwendolyn indicates an ongoing processing of her wartime service likely due to the more dirty and physical nature of her role that conflicted with her desire to present an attractive feminine appearance, her disconcerting memories of serving so close to the French coast, and her lack of recognition as a veteran in her post-war life.

The extent to which these women draw on their military pasts relates to their post-war experiences in Canada. Penny articulates composure with her experiences as a war bride. However, Gwendolyn conveys a more complicated war bride identity due to her initial challenges with motherhood (specifically breastfeeding), her initial difficult relationship with her husband after arriving in Canada, and her ongoing adjustment to life in Northern Ontario. The confidence of these women's veteran identities and the extent to which they put forth more militaristic and active framings of their war service relies on how strongly they characterize and articulate their war bride pasts and identities.

## Intersubjectivity and Cultural Representations of War Bride Veterans

Intersubjective relationships influence participant responses when individuals take part in an autobiographical anthology. *Most Excellent Citizens Canada's War Brides of World War II* by war bride veteran Eswyn Lyster presents a far more active characterization of women's participation in the British war effort than other cultural resources consulted for this project.<sup>70</sup> The book uses excerpts from letters written to Lyster by war brides and their families. Lyster's respondents felt comfortable openly discussing their war work including their role in the services. Betty Fouchard writes about her experiences as a WAAF plotter in an operations room. She captures the important nature of her work: "plotting the course of our fighters and bombers and enemy air craft."<sup>71</sup> Families of war bride veterans also contributed stories that more actively portray war bride veterans' wartime service. Bob Carswell writes:

When my mother arrived in Canada to Canadians she was just another war bride; to us she was our mother. In later years we found out that she was on plotting tables during the Battle of Britain at Biggin Hill (RAF Fighter Station), which was bombed fifty times. She took shelter during one bombing in a bunker under an unexploded bomb, and survived a direct hit on her building that killed a soldier on the other side of the wall.<sup>72</sup>

It is likely that contributors felt more comfortable openly relating war brides' military pasts due to Lyster's own status as a war bride who served as a Wren. The more active characterization of war brides as veterans in Lyster's book supports the understanding that individuals feel comfortable relating experiences to others who have had similar lived histories.<sup>73</sup> Although Lyster's work more actively portrays war brides' contribution to the war effort in Europe, war brides' experiences as war brides remain the book's core theme.

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<sup>70</sup> Eswyn Lyster, *Most Excellent Citizens Canada's War Brides of World War II* (Victoria: Trafford, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid 9.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid 10.

<sup>73</sup> Penny Summerfield, "Dis/composing the Subject-Intersubjectivities in Oral History," in *Feminism and Autobiography Texts, Theories, Methods*, eds. Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield (London; New York: Routledge 2000), 105. Summerfield argues how her pregnancy at the time of the interview influenced her interviewee's discussion of her own experiences with pregnancy.

The cover photo features a Canadian air man and his bride in her wedding gown. The book's title *Most Excellent Citizens Canada's War Brides of World War II* reinforces the understanding that war brides had successful experiences in Canada and became important members of Canadian society through their marriage and motherhood. Despite the more active portrayal of war brides' wartime lives presented in Lyster's book, underlining understandings regarding gender that connect femininities to domesticity and masculinities to militarism dominate the book.

### **Shared Authority and Penny's Military Past**

In comparison to her oral history interview, in her memoir Penny describes her wartime past using similar themes and anecdotes. She articulates her pride in her war service particularly her posting in close proximity to Winston's Churchill's private wartime quarters and the secretive nature of her service. She draws readers' attention to the significance of her posting when she states:

Of course we had no knowledge of who was behind the wall, and I can honestly say there was no sign of cigar smoke, nor did I ever detect a whiff of cognac in the air. However, if you are visiting London these days, be sure to take the guided tour through the WWII underground War Offices and note the proximity of the Signals' officers with respect to the Prime Minister's location.<sup>74</sup>

As in her interview, Penny discusses her service in Salisbury in the context of broader military preparations for the D-Day landing specifically witnessing the build-up of Allied troops prior to the invasion.<sup>75</sup> Penny provides more detail of her material role as a cypher operator in her memoir, particularly her service in the war office bunker. Based on her description of her work as a cipher operator, it is evident Penny finds this part of her life valuable and important. Unlike in her interview, Penny more assertively portrays her

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<sup>74</sup> Margaret and Horace Macaulay, *Surrey Girl*, 27.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid 29.



veteran identity in the conclusion of the chapter stating: “I will hold my head high as having participated in a conflict against tyranny.”<sup>76</sup>

Despite a more focused and detailed portrayal of her ATS past than in her interview, Penny provides only a brief articulation of her war service in *Surrey Girl* comprising of six pages of her two hundred and eighty-five page memoir. The first three pages of this chapter contextualize women’s involvement in the war effort centering on the participation of women in non-militarized cohorts including the Women’s Land Army, the Women’s Voluntary Service, and the Navy, Army, and Air Force, Institute. It is interesting that Penny does not provide a contextualization of the three women’s services. Perhaps this omission suggests some discomfort with women’s more active role in the conflict and a desire for a more supportive framing of women’s wartime roles.

Like Wendy, Penny articulates her feelings and identity as a veteran through her experiences and identity as a grandmother.<sup>77</sup> Penny dedicates her war service chapter to enlightening her grandchildren of her role in the war and begins the chapter by stating: “What did you do in the war Nana? Well my dears, that is another part of my story!”<sup>78</sup> She concludes with a self-reflexive discussion through which Penny articulates her pride in her service but also her fears regarding future conflicts. She states that she hopes her grandchildren never experience war. In framing this chapter in the context of her grandmotherly identity, Penny underlines her femininities and her war bride past while

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> The Canadian Broadcast Corporation’s coverage of the November 2013 Remembrance Day ceremony presented a short interview with Alice Milmore. She is a Canadian Air Force veteran of the Korean War and the Legion volunteer who organizes the wreath laying ceremony at the Cenotaph in Ottawa. During the war, Milmore served in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory giving landing and takeoff instruction to airmen. Framing her war service through her feminine characteristics, Milmore recalls that the airmen liked hearing her feminine voice. Remembrance Day Coverage, Canadian Broadcast Corporation, November 11, 2013. Her portrayal of her service suggests she views her war service through blending her military and feminine identities.

<sup>78</sup> Margaret and Horace Macaulay, *Surrey Girl*, 23.

simultaneously demonstrating her comfort with her ATS past and veteran identity as “another part of [her] story.”<sup>79</sup> Through her self-reflective discussion, Penny complicates understandings of gender that primarily connect femininity with the private sphere and masculinity with militarism. Penny combines a domestic understanding of femininity through her matriarchal grandmotherly identity with a military and veteran identity. Connecting maternity with a moral identity and a stance against military conflict has important historical connotations. Women have historically been considered the givers of life through their motherhood and men the takers of life through their military participation.<sup>80</sup> However, it is through Penny’s ATS participation and as a British witness of the war that she creates this authoritative veteran grandmotherly identity. Despite evidence of Penny’s blended identities as a veteran and grandmother, the space that she devotes to this blended identity in her memoir is considerably smaller than her articulation of her war bride experiences and identities. It is clear that while Penny blends her military and war bride identities, she prefers her war bride past. Her ATS experiences are simply “another part of [her] story.”<sup>81</sup>

Cosslett, Lury, and Summerfield argue that women’s writing expanded the concept of autobiography given that women’s autobiographies reveal fluid and potentially unstable subjectivities reliant not only on personal experience but the personal experiences and identities of others.<sup>82</sup> Their edited book *Feminism and Autobiography Texts, Theories,*

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Graham Dawson discusses the reduction of idealized masculinity and femininity to the quintessential identities of soldier and mother in *Soldier Heroes British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 12. For a further discussion on women and pacifism see: Jill Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common: Feminism and Anti-militarism in Britain Since 1820* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991); Sybil Oldfield, *Alternatives to Militarism 1900-1989* (Lewiston; New York: E. Mellen Press, 2000).

<sup>81</sup> Margaret and Horace Macaulay, *Surrey Girl*, 23.

<sup>82</sup> Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield, “Introduction,” in *Feminism and Autobiography Texts, Theories, Methods*, eds. Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield (London; New York: Routledge 2000), 2.

*Methods* includes works by Carolyn Steedman, Mary Chamberlain, and Penny Summerfield that demonstrate how personal narratives and conveyed identities articulated in text and in an oral history rely for their construction on external factors. Cosslett, Lury, and Summerfield argue:

Intersubjectivity, then, implies that the narration of a life or a self can never be confused to a single, isolated subjecthood. Others are an integral part of consciousness, events and the production of a narrative. Or, put more abstractly, the narration of the self cannot be understood in isolation from an other it acknowledges, implicitly or explicitly and with which it is in a constitutive relationship.<sup>83</sup>

Penny's portrayal of her life history, including her experience in the ATS in *Surrey Girl*, demonstrates how an understanding of intersubjectivity is useful for analyzing autobiographical writing. Memoir writing, especially when conducted as a collaborative project, relies on the connection or relationship between the authors as well as between writer and audience. Penny's memoir although written in her own voice credits both Penny and Henry as authors. During the interview, Penny recalls that Henry typed the memoir. Although Penny does not explicitly mention her husband in her military themed chapter, their shared authority and his significant role in shaping her identities and sense of self are evident. For instance, when recalling her Salisbury posting, Penny states that she will explain in the next chapter that centres on the couple's meeting and love story why she so much appreciated this posting.<sup>84</sup> Henry's involvement in the "Women at War" chapter becomes heightened with the inclusion of a poem composed by Henry about the Women's Land Army.<sup>85</sup> In framing this chapter with articulations of her grandmotherly identity, Penny constitutes Henry's counter masculine grandfatherly identity. In this sense, the chapter indicates that key parts of their collective identity as a couple are their shared

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid 4.

<sup>84</sup> Margaret and Horace Macaulay, *Surrey Girl*, 28.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid 24.

experiences during the war and shared identities as veterans. In analyzing this collaborative memoir, it is evident that intersubjectivity influences the narratives and identities put forth in written projects. Penny writes her war experience with her grandchildren in mind as a perspective audience. She informs them of her wartime service but the brevity of this narrative indicates that she presents these military experiences as simply “another part of [her] story”<sup>86</sup> and not the core of her narrative. In this sense, Penny blends her ATS past and identity with other aspects of herself such as her war bride experiences and identities. While she blends her ATS past and veteran identity in composing herself as a subject, her war bride experiences and identities are more prominent and have greater influence on her subjectivity.

Alistair Thomson discusses how his *Moving Stories* participants indicated a different level of confidence and voice between their written accounts of their life histories and their oral history interviews.<sup>87</sup> Penny presents similar constructions of her service past in both her memoir and oral history. Although there are some instances of greater detail in her memoir, it is evident that Penny presented at her interview a relatively rehearsed account of her ATS past. Intersubjectivity, specifically Penny’s relationship with Henry, his presence, and his veteran identity influenced the comparative nature of these narratives. Their relationship both during the writing process and interview influence Penny’s marginalization of more independent aspects of her identity such as her war service in favour of her life experiences and war bride identities as a girlfriend, fiancée, wife, mother, welcome war bride migrant, and grandmother.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid 23.

<sup>87</sup> Thomson, *Moving Stories*, 308-318.

### A Final Conversation on Women and War

Most reflective of their shared authority and identities is a final conversation in the interview sparked by the interviewer's question: "And what would you want future generations to know about your wartime experiences? [...]"<sup>88</sup> Penny responds that she very much enjoyed her military experience especially the camaraderie amongst the ATS servicewomen. She recalls that army life taught her discipline. She states that she would "recommend it to anybody."<sup>89</sup> However, her statement ends with the qualification that she would not recommend military life for a career. Given the success of her husband's military career, it would seem that Penny believes that women should enter the military only temporarily as a 'coming of age' experience that strengthens the individual. Penny also acknowledges that her youthful ambivalence made it easier coping with the bombings and violence of war. This is the most active portrayal of her war experience in her interview.

Henry interrupts this conversation for his own response to the interviewer's question. He begins by stating: "[...] As a male member during that time, [...]"<sup>90</sup> In emphasizing his male martial identity, Henry implies that his masculinities and soldier identity equips him with a particular authority for assessing the importance of women's role in the Second World War. He has written two books<sup>91</sup> about radar and seems comfortable and confident with articulating his memories, opinions, and identity as a veteran. Henry's authority as a veteran likely stems from his long and successful military career after the war and his view of the importance of his work with early radar

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<sup>88</sup> Penny MacDonald, interviewed by Lauren Auger, June 25, 2010, Nepean, Ontario.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Horace "Red" Macaulay, *Air Interception Radar in World War II Night Fighter Air Craft* (Nepean: HRM Publishing, 2000); Horace "Red" Macaulay *Floating Radars in the Channel: The Fighter Direction Tenders and Radar Units With Operation Neptune/Overlord, June 1944* (Nepean: HRM Publishing, 2001).

technology. His writing on the subject demonstrates a desire for providing insight into the workings of radar and its contribution to Allied success during the war. Perhaps his focus on radar stems from an understanding that Canadian culture marginalizes radar history in comparison to Canadian battlefield successes.<sup>92</sup> Henry's writing demonstrates how other military experiences and services contributed to the war effort and that his service was also particularly important. In this sense, his writing may suggest some instability in his veteran identity but more likely demonstrates his desire for acknowledgment of radar as a significant technological advancement that helped the Allies win the war.

Returning to our interview conversation, Henry recalls that women improved the air force because their presence made airmen more conscious of their behaviour and speech. Penny adds: "Oh right, they would never swear in front of you, they'd say, 'watch it there's an Nat' meaning, there's a there's a woman [...]"<sup>93</sup> The conversation progresses as Henry discusses women's equality following the war:

I think it it is different today. I don't, you know it is hard really to assess which is good. Women have come a long way since the the '40s. Which is good [...] because women are using the skills that are inherent amongst amongst the female. Before, this was all lost! [...] They they'd become tied to the kitchen. [...] But at the same time, if you think back, when we were, when we were kids, the woman in the community played a very important part. Even those who had their own little life, separate from the from the man. [...]"<sup>94</sup>

Penny agrees with her husband's assessment stating: "Yes."<sup>95</sup> Although Henry indicates that he supports women's furthered involvement in society, he offers an essentialist,

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<sup>92</sup> Cultural portrayals of the prowess of Canadian Second World War servicemen are especially evident in: Don Quinlan et. al. *The Canadian Challenge* (Don Mills; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 122; *Storming Juno*, DVD. Directed by Tim Wolochatiuk.(Entertainment One in association with Windup Filmworks the Historica-Dominion Institute and Shaw Media, 2010); "Remembering Juno," *Storming Juno*, DVD. Directed by Tim Wolochatiuk.(Entertainment One in association with Windup Filmworks the Historica-Dominion Institute and Shaw Media, 2010) DVD; *War Story*, "Road to Rome." Barry Stevens. <http://www.history.ca/video/#video/search/war%20story>; *War Story*, "Across the Rhine- Paratroopers in Germany." Barry Stevens.

<http://www.history.ca/video/video.html?v=2302457180#warstory/video/full+episodes>;

<sup>93</sup> Penny MacDonald, interviewed by Lauren Auger, June 25, 2010, Nepean, Ontario.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

patriarchal statement even belittling his preferred domestic role for women based on his patriarchal standpoint when he refers to their “little life separate from the man.”<sup>96</sup>

I interpret Henry’s statements regarding women and equality as a product of his belief that I desired such a response to my question. As his wife had not discussed women and equality, Henry felt his inclusion necessary and felt comfortable voicing his opinions based on his past experiences of authority as a man, a serviceman, a veteran, and a published author. He states: “Well, they’ve come a long way from the late teens in the last century when [...] women weren’t even recognized as persons.”<sup>97</sup> It is interesting that immediately after Henry makes this statement Penny finds greater confidence and speaks more on the development of women’s social role. Penny indicates that with Henry’s support she can assert more pride in her own military role in the conflict and in her perceived contribution to social change for women: “Oh well, the war has [...] brought that on towards women [...] because uh the women played a big role in the Second World War. Certainly, they didn’t they weren’t on the front line or anything like that, but they played a big part.”<sup>98</sup>

As Cosslett, Lury, and Summerfield have shown regarding the influence of external identities and experiences on women’s autobiography and self-perception,<sup>99</sup> Penny and Henry’s intersubjective relationship facilitated her more active statements regarding the impact of women in the services during the Second World War. In spite of her greater confidence in making these claims, immediately after articulating the above statement she turns to Henry asking: “You would agree that the WAAFs played a big part?”<sup>100</sup> Henry

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Cosslett, Lury, and Summerfield, “Introduction,” 2.

<sup>100</sup> Penny MacDonald, interviewed by Lauren Auger, June 25, 2010, Nepean, Ontario.

responds: “Oh yah. Particularly, in radar in the business I was in, pretty well all the ground stations, all the plotting rooms were run by women.”<sup>101</sup> For reassuring her more confident statement and perception of women’s role in the war, Penny requires Henry’s acceptance and support. Henry is the link between her ATS past and her post-war life. He understands women’s role in the conflict and more specifically his wife’s wartime role. Through Henry’s encouragement Penny shares her pride in her ATS past and women’s military role in general. During the conclusion of the interview, she cannot strongly articulate this more authoritative and self-aware veteran identity without his acceptance and reassurance. Her identity as a servicewoman is less certain in the cultural circuit than her husband’s counter military identity and she needs his support and encouragement for representing herself as a veteran.

## Conclusion

In comparison to Wendy and Victoria’s more singular narratives and identities, Penny presents a more fluid narrative and fluid identities that draw on both her war bride and service pasts. However, Penny finds most comfort in the identities and experiences associated with her history with Henry; therefore, she most values her experiences and identities as a girlfriend, fiancée, wife, mother, welcomed war bride migrant, and grandmother. While she can articulate confidently and with pride her ATS past, she requires Henry’s support and input for connecting her war service to women’s advancement in society. Their shared authority in writing *Surrey Girl*<sup>102</sup> influenced the tone of the book that largely portrays Penny through her experiences and identities as a war bride and Henry through his Royal Canadian Air Force history and identity. However, this memoir also demonstrates that Penny can articulate herself as an authoritative veteran

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Margaret and Horace Macaulay, *Surrey Girl*.



figure through articulating her experiences and identities as a grandmother. Penny's interview and memoir suggest the influence of strong intersubjective relationships, in this case romantic and familial relationships, on life history writing and speaking as well as the written and oral articulation of gender identities, and national identities. Both Penny and Henry use a gendered lens in their individual perceptions of Penny's national identity. Penny indicates that it is her life as a war bride that influences her understanding of her Canadian identity. Henry's narrative suggests that he connects Penny's British identity with his own military service and British posting. Like Wendy and Victoria, Penny's experiences as a war bride connect her war history and her post-war life. She met Henry due to her service and in articulating her memories of her war bride history in both her memoir and oral history Penny portrays her war service as the event that led to the most significant aspect of her life- her war bride experiences. Henry's identity as a veteran, their shared experience of wartime Britain, their romance, her migration and celebrity status, their loving partnership, and her grandmotherly identity equip Penny's understanding of herself as a veteran. Her framing of herself as special indicates that she understands that she had a unique war experience as a British ATS cipher officer and later as a war bride. However, based on her fruitful and satisfying life as a war bride, Penny feels more comfortable with her war bride past and identities.

This chapter demonstrated to scholars interested in oral history how written narratives compare to oral history accounts. It showed how the war bride experience and celebrity attached to this experience (reinforced by family) can influence war bride veterans' perspectives of their war service, their war bride experiences, and their identities associated with these experiences. This chapter constructed the understanding that the presence of Penny's husband Henry impacted her account of her ATS and war bride history in both her memoir and her interview. It showed the limits of fluid identities as

individuals prefer some histories and identities over others. This should be of particular interest to scholars interested in composure and discomposure. It also considered the role of intersubjectivity in Penny's national identity. This should be of particular interest to scholars interested in the nature of migrant national identity. Penny's chapter offered the unique opportunity to examine how intersubjectivity and shared experiences of war impact how both men and women remember their wartime experiences. However, male wartime memories have an easier progression through the cultural circuit than the memories of women veterans. This chapter also related some of the challenges that more than one person attending an interview can create for the interviewer as well as the stability and independence of a person's life history narrative and conveyed identities. However, it also showed how an approach that is sensitive to intersubjectivity can complement the life history method and how shared memories can reveal personal memories, identities, and subjectivities. I wish that I had the opportunity to interview more war brides with their husbands present. Such interviews may have provided further insight into the impact of war bride veterans' husbands on these women's memories of their war service, migration, and settlement. Unfortunately of the war bride veterans' interviewed for this project, no other women's husbands were alive in 2010. Therefore, the interview used for this chapter and this chapter on its own are important sources regarding how long and happy partnerships forged during the Second World War may influence memories of war service, wartime life, romance, migration, settlement, understandings of appropriate gender roles and identities, as well as national identities.

## Thesis Conclusion

War bride veterans' life histories provide insight into contradictions in their life experiences between past and present, national contexts and identities, as well as military and civilian roles. This thesis has examined these contradictions using a combined approach to knowledge. This epistemology acknowledges the importance of experience in these women's lived histories. However, it also recognizes that cultural discourses, particularly gender discourses, have influenced these women's experiences, how these women understand their experiences, as well as how they understand themselves as individuals. Understanding popular memory theory and the hegemonic nature of memories<sup>1</sup> has helped me to understand and explain why war bride veterans' experiences as veterans have not been vocally recognized in Canadian cultural memory. This theory has allowed me to gain insight into how certain war bride experiences are valued over others in Canadian cultural memory. Examining the three primary war bride accounts, as well as the additional narratives consulted for this study, has assisted me to develop an understanding of the commonalities and differences between the ways in which war brides negotiate with contradictions in their lives and "reconstruct [...] their wartime lives."<sup>2</sup>

This thesis considered the following key question: What do the examined oral histories of war bride veterans indicate regarding how social understandings of gender, in particular ideas about appropriate femininity, affect these women's memories of their war time experiences in the services and their experiences of romance, marriage, migration, and settlement? Through analyzing the life histories of Wendy, Victoria, and Penny, as well as other war bride veterans, the thesis found that discourses regarding gender

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Johnson and Graham Dawson, "Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method," in *Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics Volume 1*, ed. Richard Johnson et al. (London: BFI Publishing, 1984), 207.

<sup>2</sup> Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

particularly wartime gender discourses that prize women's domestic identities as sweethearts, homemakers, wives, and mothers influenced how war bride veterans viewed their past and understood themselves as individuals. It also argued that discourses regarding gender that limited the parameters of women's involvement in the war, and encouraged women to maintain their femininities whilst in the military, influenced how war bride veterans portrayed their wartime service, their war bride histories, as well as the identities they articulated in their interviews. War brides like Wendy and Penny who had happier post-war lives and joyfully recalled their war bride past indicated that while they have feelings of pride towards their war service, their feminine identities and post-war lives as war brides complicate memories of their military histories. Wendy especially tries to manage her portrayal of her military past as she has difficulty reconciling her proximity to battle with her femininities. Even proud veteran Victoria indicated that discourses regarding gender complicated her memory of her gun site service. These same gender discourses that prize women's domestic identities cause her to feel discomposure regarding her war bride experiences due her knowledge that her experiences were far from the norm. Perhaps Victoria's unresolved feelings also stem from the fact that social pressures (particularly negative attitudes towards divorce and lone motherhood articulated by her mother) influenced her staying in an unhappy marriage. Social discourses that encouraged women to marry and live happily as wives and mothers caused Victoria much unhappiness and uncertainty, and she remains haunted by her war bride past.

This thesis posed the question: How do war bride veterans shape their subjectivity in relation to discourses regarding appropriate femininities? All three women draw on understandings regarding appropriate femininities in shaping their subjectivity. Wendy and Penny conveyed that their experiences as wives and mothers very much shape how they understand themselves as individuals. Both women found composure from their romantic

identities and this thesis demonstrated that war brides' romantic identities strongly feature in Canadian cultural memory regarding war brides. Wendy and Penny articulate their veteran identities through their identities as grandmothers- blending their feminine and military identities. For Victoria, gender discourses and her understanding of 'normal' marital relationships influence her portrayal of herself as a war bride survivor. Although she is secure with this identity, her strained relationship with other war brides demonstrates that Victoria's need for recognition for her traumatic experiences and survivor identity (her need to heal through this recognition) alienates her from the active local war bride community. Victoria also prides herself on her 'Lady Soldier'<sup>3</sup> identity. She views this identity as an exceptional identity as not all women had the opportunity or the inclination to serve in such an active wartime capacity.<sup>4</sup> In so doing, Victoria uses understandings of appropriate gender identities for shaping her composure with her ATS history and her distinctive 'Lady Soldier'<sup>5</sup> identity. In using the term 'Lady'<sup>6</sup> Victoria also signals that she retains her femininities despite her 'unique' gun site service.

Dorothy Sheridan argues that her ATS veteran respondents from her 1980s oral history project viewed their experiences in the military as temporary in comparison to their preferred 'normal' experiences of marriage and motherhood.<sup>7</sup> She further contends that "what goes on today for them cannot be separated from the way they recall the meaning the war period had for them."<sup>8</sup> For war bride veterans, their wartime history is still prominent in their memories because during this period not only did they experience the

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<sup>3</sup> Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

<sup>4</sup> Lucy Noakes argues that ATS recruits were especially keen to volunteer for anti-air craft service. *Women in the British Army War and the Gentle Sex 1904-1948* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006),119.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Dorothy Sheridan, Ambivalent Memories: Women and the 1939-45 War in Britain," *Oral History* 8 (1) Popular Memory (Spring 1990): 34. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179138?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179138?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid 39.

turmoil and danger of the conflict but their experiences during the Second World War directly shaped the rest of their lives.

During the Second World War, war bride veterans served their country with some, like Wendy and Victoria, taking on active roles in the war effort as anti-air craft gun team personnel. This role was the closest to combat that women could serve in wartime Britain. Those who did not serve in such active roles like Penny still contributed to the war effort. For the women interviewed, the war very much allowed them the opportunity to gain freedom from their parents. Wendy, Victoria, and Penny left their parental homes for the first time due to their service. This was a formative experience that had a broader impact on their personal lives than merely instilling an understanding that they were contributing to the war effort. War bride veterans indicate that it was their service that facilitated their meetings with their Canadian servicemen husbands: Wendy met her husband on the way to a wartime dance whilst serving with an anti-air craft gun team, Victoria met her husband after her compassionate posting to Manchester closer to her ill mother, and Penny learned of the dance where she met Henry through her service at Story's Gate. For the interviewed war bride veterans, their war experiences facilitated their contemporary lives in Canada.

It has been demonstrated that a combination of their specific experiences and their relationships with social discourses determines war bride veterans' relationships to their past. Social understandings regarding appropriate gender identities weave through the contradictions in war bride veterans' lives. The thesis found that Wendy has a more straightforward connection to her war bride past than her past as a servicewoman. Her chapter demonstrates that the intersection of her past and present facilitated through her participation in war bride clubs gives Wendy composure. Although she indicates that she sometimes has difficulty reconciling her experiences as an ATS anti-aircraft telespotter, she is beginning to acknowledge this past and uses her present context as a grandmother to

soldiers to navigate her articulation of her identity as a veteran. Due to the trauma she experienced as a war bride, Victoria has a fairly complicated and unsettled relationship with her past. Her traumatic memories of her war bride experiences, particularly her relationship with her husband, act on her present experiences as she encourages that others acknowledge her identity as a war bride survivor and recognize her difficult war bride experiences. Victoria's relationship with her past as an ATS gun team telephonist gives her subjective composure. Penny's relationship to her past is similar to Wendy's with one exception, the presence of her husband at the interview influenced her articulation of their shared history. Penny's memoir<sup>9</sup> is a written record of her past that supports and influences her interview narrative, particularly her memory of her romantic history with Henry.

There are overarching commonalities regarding how war bride veterans present their national belongings. The majority interviewed view themselves as having a Canadian identity or a blended British and Canadian identity. However, those who had more difficult experiences as war brides retain a greater connection to their British past. A case in point is Beatrice who returned to and lived in England for many years. In this sense, how people understand their national identity very much connects to their relationship to their past and the nature of their past experiences. Gender discourses intersect with the passage of time in influencing how war bride veterans shape their national identities. The interviewed war bride veterans (with the exception of Beatrice) have lived the majority of their lives in Canada. During the Second World War, war brides who married prior to having children automatically gained Canadian citizenship when they married Canadian servicemen. Citizenship laws rewarded sexual restraint and understandings regarding appropriate femininity in connection to sexual purity. Wartime Canadian citizenship laws indicated

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<sup>9</sup> Margaret and Horace Macaulay, *Surrey Girl Special Edition 2006- Year of the War Bride*, (Nepean: HRM Publishing, 2006).

that men had more right to citizenship than women as war brides lost their citizenship to their home countries following their marriages. Wendy and Penny's long lives in Canada, strong connections to their Canadian families, and vocal representations of their war bride experiences indicate that other war brides have likely been influenced by gendered understandings regarding citizenship as well as the passage of time when they consider their national identities.

This thesis found that war brides' 'emotional communities,'<sup>10</sup> including their families, influence how they convey their national identities. Wendy demonstrates that blending her national identities need not be a complicated process and that it gives her a sense of subjective composure. The marriage of Penny's younger sister to her husband's nephew and her sister's migration to Canada further connected the two families and facilitated an understanding of the family's combined British and Canadian origins. Retaining a sense of her British past makes Wendy feel unique and her involvement in war bride organizations facilitates her composure with her blended nationalities.

Although Penny argues that she has lost her British accent, Henry contends that she retains her British accent and, arguably by extension, her British identity. While Penny may believe that she has a Canadian identity, Henry inferred that she does not 'pass'<sup>11</sup> as a Canadian. The discussion between Penny and Henry demonstrates that while family can influence a migrant's sense of national belonging, family can also influence a migrant's feelings of discomposure and insecurity regarding their national identities. Victoria's narrative also supports the understanding that families can complicate a migrant's sense of national belonging. Although Victoria does not discuss her national identity, she does

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<sup>10</sup> Barbara Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107 (3) (2002): 842. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/532498?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/532498?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

<sup>11</sup> Juliette Pattinson, *Behind Enemy Lines: Gender, Passing and the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 15.



frame her experiences in Canada as especially difficult due to her relationship with her husband as well as his unaccepting family. The primary situation in which Victoria articulates a sense of belonging with a community is her involvement with the Legion. Her British anti-aircraft service has made her an important member of this community and her participation in the Legion may also facilitate a sense of belonging in Canada. Therefore, war bride veterans' narratives shed light on how emotional communities outside of the family can restore a migrant's sense of national belonging when families disrupt or complicate migrant national identities.

This thesis also examined how war bride veterans negotiate with contradictions between their military and civilian lives. It found that negotiation with both their past and present as well as cultural gender discourses influences how war brides relate to these experiences. Tessa Stone argues that it is the force in which they served that influences the extent to which women veterans value their war service.<sup>12</sup> The narratives discussed in this thesis demonstrate that war bride veterans have complicated and differing relationships with their military histories and identities. However, one commonality amongst all examined war bride veterans is that it is not necessarily the specific force that influences these women's portrayal of their military experiences (Wendy, Victoria, and Penny all served in the ATS) but rather their position in the military, their post-war experiences, their negotiation between their past and present, as well as with dominant gender discourses. War bride veterans like Catherine, Evie, Patricia, and Penny who had wartime roles that were more consistent with their feminine identities face a lesser need to manage or negotiate with their wartime service. Although these women did not all necessarily

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<sup>12</sup> Tessa Stone, "Creating a (Gendered) Military Identity? The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War," in *Women's History Review* 8 (4) (1999): 404-407.  
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09612029900200227#.VIJNupeTOqw>

emphasize their military experiences, their service still resonates in their memories. For Wendy and Victoria, it is their role on the anti-aircraft gun site that figures in their interviews. Victoria emphasizes this service and portrays her wartime role as heroic. Wendy indicates her discomfort with her war service. She stoically portrays this service because it was inconsistent with her femininities during and after the war. Victoria celebrates the opportunities for self-development the ATS offered. Despite her conveyed discomfort, Wendy suggests some pride in her war service. However, she indicates that she prefers her identities as a war bride, wife, homemaker, and mother because these were the experiences that gave her the most subjective composure. Gwendolyn faces a greater negotiation with her military history due to the physical and dirty nature of her job as a WAAF electrician. Beatrice, like Victoria, has a difficult migration experience and her marriage eventually failed. She emphasizes her wartime service in the WAAF and her friendship with a famous Special Operations Executive agent, Noor Inayat Khan. Beatrice indicates the connection between her wartime role as a wireless slip code reader and her femininities. Her narrative demonstrates that she experiences less of a negotiation than Wendy and Gwendolyn regarding her wartime service. Both Wendy and Penny articulate their identities as veterans through their contemporary identities as grandmothers. In this sense, gender discourses, the passage of time, and individual experience intersect in war bride veterans' negotiation with their military and civilian lives and identities.

It became evident that Canadian cultural memory regarding war brides, particularly memory articulated in the campaign and celebrations surrounding the 2006 'year of the war bride' phenomenon, emphasized a romantic understanding of war brides' histories. Weddings were particularly significant to the 'year of the war bride' celebrations that recognized war brides as important figures due to their bridal identities and their intimate connections to Canadian Second World War veterans. Romance was a prominent theme in

war bride veterans' narratives. Wendy's interview celebrates her wedding day and the prominent wedding portraits in her home reinforce her memory of her wedding and its significance to her war bride story and identity. Penny and Henry also discuss their wedding day but what begins as a joyful discussion becomes a conversation regarding family and friends who have since passed away. Henry's proposal also figures prominently in the interview after Henry encourages his wife's reconstruction of this experience. Victoria also discusses her wedding but her narrative focuses on Victor's façade and the people she left behind in marrying a Canadian serviceman and migrating to Canada. A cultural circuit<sup>13</sup> can be understood as occurring with war brides' personal stories of romance, weddings, and cultural memories regarding war brides. However, as Victoria's chapter demonstrates, individual experience determines how people relate to dominant memory discourses. The 2006 'year of the war bride' celebrations did not recognize war bride experiences outside of the romantic narrative including their potential experiences as Second World War servicewomen. Although not evident in the 2006 'year of the war brides' phenomenon, war brides' difficult experiences as a migrant group have been recognized in the cultural sphere and are discussed in a contemporary Canadian history textbook.<sup>14</sup> While these experiences have been portrayed for Canadian audiences (for instance through Bev Tosh's war bride centred art)<sup>15</sup> the reception Victoria has received from other war brides indicates that cultural circuits regarding war brides' difficult and potentially unresolved issues with their migration are not as readily clear compared to romantic memories of war brides.

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?", *Social Text* 16 (Winter 1986-1987).

<sup>14</sup> Don Quinlan et al. *The Canadian Challenge* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2008), 204.

<sup>15</sup> Laura Brandon "Bev Tosh's War Brides," Essay in *War Brides One-Way Passage*, Bev Tosh (Moose Jaw: Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery, 2008).

This thesis has made war bride veterans subjects of an academic study. My oral history project provided these women the opportunity to articulate their histories and memories. I collected an archive of eighteen life history interviews that shed light on war brides' experiences as servicewomen during the Second World War, their wartime romances, their marriages, migrations, settlements in Canada, their motherhood, and their lives as elderly women. War brides' oral histories have been the subject of many popular books in Canada<sup>16</sup> but academic research on the life histories of war bride veterans has until now, not been conducted. This thesis employed war bride veterans' life histories as a lens through which to study the experiences of these women, women's role in Britain and, to a lesser extent, Canada during the Second World War, cultural discourses regarding gender in Britain and Canada during the Second World War, and cultural memory regarding war brides. It contributed to research regarding women's role in the Second World War, women's memories regarding their wartime lives, the relationship between cultural memory, personal memory, and subjectivity, as well as memories of migration and national identity. A primary concern was how war bride veterans understand themselves and their experiences in relation to the changing context surrounding their lives as well as their fluid sense of self. This analysis shed light on how war bride veterans' memories of war interact with their memories of migration and family life. It also provided insight into how cultural discourses regarding gender and cultural memory of war brides interact with the experiences, memories, identities, and subjectivities that war bride veterans conveyed.

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<sup>16</sup> Melynda Jarratt, *Captured Heart's New Brunswick's War Brides* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Publications, 2008); Melynda Jarratt *War Brides* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009); Eswyn Lyster, *Most Excellent Citizens Canada's War Brides of World War II* (Victoria: Trafford, 2009); Helen (Hall) Shewchuk, *If Kisses Were Roses a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute to War Brides* (Sudbury: Journal Printing, 1996); Ben Wicks, *Promise You'll Take Care of My Daughter- The Remarkable War Brides of World War II* (Don Mills: Stoddart, 1992).

The oral history methodology developed for and employed in this thesis- using the life history approach in combination with concepts of composure, discomposure, silences in memory, the cultural circuit, emotional communities, and trauma theory- is a model for oral history scholars, researchers interested in women's histories, research centred on the relationship between personal memory, cultural memory, and subjectivity, as well as for scholars studying the impact of migration on personal memory, identity, and subjectivity. The open and flowing interviews gathered for this thesis were rich and provided much insight into how war bride veterans remember their wartime pasts, their romance and migration, their settlement, their family life, as well as how they convey their subjectivities. This project demonstrated how the concepts of composure and discomposure can be used to inform a method for understanding the ways in which women share their memories of war in comparison to their memories of family life, as well as how they construct a sense of self based on these experiences. However, some subjects have had traumatic life histories and combining composure and discomposure with trauma theory provides insight into why people articulate these traumatic experiences in a particular way and how these experiences shape their understandings and portrayals of selfhood.

Through examining the life histories of war bride veterans based on the methodology developed in chapter one, this thesis expanded on scholarship regarding women in Second World War Britain. Using this unique methodology to understand women's experiences in wartime Britain is, in itself, a contribution to knowledge as is examining how war bride veterans negotiate their experiences of war in relation to migration and family life. The thesis argued that in comparison to women Second World War veterans who remained in Britain, war bride veterans' wartime experiences connect more to their post-war lives due to their war bride experiences. Most war brides

interviewed and certainly the three that are the focus of this thesis met their husbands due to their wartime service. These military experiences have particular importance in these women's memories because their wartime service facilitated their romances and migrations to Canada. Therefore, the war had an enormous impact on the rest of these women's lives. War bride veterans provide significant insight into women's experiences during the Second World War, social history in wartime Britain, and to social history in wartime Canada. These women shed light on the romantic atmosphere in wartime Britain, the transnational nature of the war effort, and the transnational cultural milieu in wartime Britain. Relationships between war bride veterans and Canadian servicemen indicate the importance of personal and private life in wartime Britain despite the collective nature of the war effort and the wartime cultural climate. These relationships also demonstrate the disruptive nature of love during the war<sup>17</sup> as love led to the migration of nearly 45 000 British war brides to Canada. Responses to war brides' marriages and migrations indicate that the disruptive nature of these relationships continued following the war as war brides adjusted to their new lives in Canada and British families coped with their relative's migration.

This thesis also contributed to research regarding popular memory and personal memory through employing the life history method in combination with the methodology developed in chapter one for the examination of how historical discourses regarding appropriate gender identities and roles influence cultural memory regarding war brides, war bride veterans' narratives, as well as their subjectivities. It used Johnson's cultural circuit theory<sup>18</sup> in combination with Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper's memory model<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Claire Langhamer, *The English in Love The English In-Love; The Intimate Story of An Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9.

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, " 'What is Cultural Studies Anyway?'"

<sup>19</sup> T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper develop their levels of discourse in "The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration Contexts Structures and Dynamics," in *The Politics of War Memory and*

tracing how themes conveyed by war bride veterans in their life history interviews are evident through various levels of discourse including those shared by other war bride veterans, their families, and groups like war bride clubs and the Canadian Legion. It demonstrated that memories consistent with cultural discourses that prize women's domestic experiences of romance, marriage, motherhood, and homemaking more fluidly complete a cultural circuit than these women's memories of their wartime service. However, this project also found that these women have received some acknowledgement as veterans but that this acknowledgement does not represent war brides as heroic or as contributing to the war effort to an equitable extent to male veterans.

The thesis built on research centred on oral history, migration, and national identity<sup>20</sup> by using the methodology developed in chapter one in examining how war bride veterans' memories of their migrations and settlements acted upon their life history narratives as well as their national identities. Using the concepts of composure, discomposure, silences in memory and trauma theory in particular provided insight into the ways in which gender intersected with war brides' stories of migration and settlement as they largely focused on and found satisfaction with their remembrance of their domestic lives as young mothers and wives in Canada. It also demonstrated the importance of families to how war bride veterans conveyed their national identities. Family life and their long adult lives in Canada influence war brides' Canadian identities. Historical understandings regarding gender and citizenship also influence war brides' legal nationality and may affect how war brides portray themselves as having assimilated into a

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*Commemoration*, eds. T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 17-32.

<sup>20</sup> A. James Hammerton and Alistair Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms Australia's Invisible Migrants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Alistair Thomson, *Moving Stories An intimate history of four women across two countries* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2011); Mary Chamberlain, "Gender and Narratives of Migration," *History Workshop Journal* 43 (1997): <http://www.popline.org/node/527170>.

Canadian life through their Canadian family lives. Families also have the capacity or power of disrupting or challenging war bride veterans' national identities as Penny and Henry's conversation regarding her British accent demonstrates. Traumatic experiences including those involving family influence national identity as Victoria indicates that she never fully settled in Canada due to her difficult life and unhappy marriage. This thesis also contributes to scholarship regarding migration and national identity as it examined how other emotional communities such as war brides' friends including fellow war brides, war bride clubs, and Victoria's Legion chapter influence these women's sense of belonging.

On November 11, 2015, the Canadian national newspaper the *National Post* published an article on Lorna Collacott - a war bride who served during the Second World War cyphering and decoding in the WAAF.<sup>21</sup> The article is the most active recognition of a war bride veteran that I have found while researching this thesis. This article does not mention the word 'war bride' (though readers learn that her husband was a Canadian serviceman from Windsor, Ontario).<sup>22</sup> The article presents Collacott as a veteran worthy of recognition because of the importance of her war work (particularly its connection to the Allied breaking of the German Enigma code) as well as the fact that she has only recently discussed her war service due to the secret and classified nature of her war work.<sup>23</sup> This article indicates that Canadian cultural memory regarding war brides is changing to accommodate, include, and recognize war bride veterans' military service. War bride veterans' themselves are contributing to this change as, like Collacott, they are more publically discussing their wartime service in their elderly years. It is telling that this

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<sup>21</sup> Sharon Hill, "Secret legacy: After 50 years' silence, Windsor veteran reveals she decoded messages for the Battle of the Atlantic," *National Post*, November 11, 2015, <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/secret-legacy-after-50-years>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



article was published just as I was completing my thesis. It is my hope that this thesis might facilitate further public recognition of war brides as veterans of the Second World War.

This thesis has demonstrated that war bride veterans provide insight into the social history of wartime Britain, wartime Canada, and post-war Canada. Analysis of their life histories sheds light on how women remember their wartime service in comparison to family life particularly when this service connects to their post-war lives through their significant experiences of romance, marriage, migration, and settlement. War bride veterans' life histories provide insight into how experiences consistent with dominant cultural memory have an easier cultural circuit than experiences that do not necessarily reflect dominant cultural memory. This thesis has developed a methodological model for other projects interested in finding meaning in oral history accounts especially the narratives of women veterans and migrants. It will be interesting to observe whether war bride veterans will receive further recognition as veterans in cultural and public spheres in the future, especially for their roles on anti-aircraft gun sites. Future research should examine the continued development and change in cultural memory centred on war brides. These studies could explore how discourses regarding gender, particularly appropriate femininities and masculinities, as well as how changing Canadian cultural memory regarding war brides affects the ways in which surviving war bride veterans perceive their life histories of war service, romance, marriage, migration, motherhood, and settlement in Canada. Research might also consider how families of war brides understand their war bride veterans' wartime years and how further recognition of war brides in the cultural and public spheres influences how Canadian families view the Second World War, women's role in this conflict, war brides' role as historical figures, and women's role in contemporary conflicts.



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## Appendix A

Year	Number of Marriages	Number of Births
1940	1 222	Unknown
1941	3 011	Unknown
1942	4 160	1538
1943	5 897	3132
1944	6096	5282
1945	9077	2773
1946	4088	1326

**Table One - Statistics Regarding War Bride Marriages and Births**

Library Archives Canada RG 24 CMHQ volume 12 444 File 6/Births/1

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1944	499	769	639	342	870	808	620	442	290	329	263	225
1945	441	441	unkno wn	725	716	853	956	1367	934	1206	497	941
1946	641	1213	972	293	293	265	183	128	100	unkn own	unk now n	unk now n

**Table Two - War Bride Marriages by Month in the UK 1944-1946**

Library Archives Canada RG 24 CMHQ volume 12 444 File 6/Births/1

Births in the UK	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1944	396	586	577	387	380	484	393	489	344	430	393	423
1945	447	447	Unknown	384	294	247	222	336	182	182	95	119
1946	224	211	241	143	143	137	91	68	68	X	X	X

**Table Three - Number of Births Recorded to War Brides 1944-1946**

Library Archives Canada RG 24 CMHQ volume 12 444 File 6/Births/1

Month/Year	Number of Marriages	Number of Births
December 1944	329	391
January 1945	329	391
September 1945	1206	187
April 1946	378	123

**Table Four - Alternative Figures**

Library Archives Canada RG 24 CMHQ volume 12 444 File 6/Births/1

Country	Number of Wives	Number of Children
Great Britain	44 886	21 385
Holland	1 886	428
Belgium	649	131
France	100	15
Italy	26	10
Denmark	7	1
Germany	6	2
Norway	1	0
North Africa	1	0
South Africa	1	0
Greece	1	0
Algiers	1	0
Hungary	0	3
Russia	1	0
India	1	0
Malay	2	0
Australia	24	2
Newfoundland and Caribbean Area	190	0
Total	47 783	21 950
Total Dependents 69 733		

**Table Five - Marriages and Children of Canadian Servicemen While Serving Outside of Canada up to December 31, 1946**

Library Archives Canada, File HQ650-124-33, *History of the Directorate of Repatriation*, page 34; Also cited in Melynda Jarratt Appendix to Melynda Jarratt, *War Brides The Stories of Women Who Left Everything Behind to Follow the Men They Loved* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), 269.

	Wives	Children
Army	80%	85.5%
RCAF	18%	13.1%
Navy	2%	1.4%

**Table Six - Total Percentage of Wives and Dependents Based on the Service**

Library Archives Canada, File HQ650-124-33, *History of the Directorate of Repatriation*, page 34; Also cited in Jarratt, Appendix to *War Brides*, 270.

	Navy War Brides	Navy Children	Army War Brides	Army Children	RCAF War Brides	RCAF Children	Total
Aug 44- May 31, 1945	288	72	6027	4146	1783	541	12 857
June 1945- Dec 31, 1945	43	7	1232	580	340	84	2286
1946	552	202	25 643	12 034	5 055	1 834	45 320
1947	7	3	362	227	19	7	625
Totals	890	284	33 264	16 987	7 197	2 466	61 088

**Table Seven - Statistics Regarding the Migration of War Brides and their Dependents**

Library Archives Canada, File HQ650-124-33 *History of the Directorate of Repatriation* 30.

	Wives	Children	Total
Those who do not wish to come at this time. Figure includes war brides whose husbands were demobilized in the UK believe 2-5% of these will re-open their case and wish to migrate)	3961	871	4832
Will sail before 30/7/47	574	310	884
Want to come to Canada but there are challenges (relationship dissolved etc.) require legal and welfare aid	544	452	996
	5079	1633	6712

**Table Nine - Remaining Dependents in the UK**

Library Archives Canada, RG24-C-1-File85361-3 Microfilms C5220 Found on *Héritage* [Heritage.Canadiana.ca/view/oocihmilac\\_reel\)c5220/41?r=0&5=5](http://Heritage.Canadiana.ca/view/oocihmilac_reel)c5220/41?r=0&5=5)

## Appendix B



Digital Image of Wedding Portrait taken by Lauren Auger during interview with Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

## Appendix C



Digital Image of Family Portrait taken by Lauren Auger during interview with Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

## Appendix D



Digital Image of Legion Portrait taken by Lauren Auger during interview with Evelyn Brooke, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 20, 2010, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia.



## Appendix E



Digital Image of Remembrance Day Photograph taken by Lauren Auger during interview with Wendy Turner, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

## Appendix F



Digital Image of ATS Needlepoint taken by Lauren Auger during interview with Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

## Appendix G



Digital Image of Tank Corps Needlepoint taken by Lauren Auger during interview with Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

## Appendix H



Digital Image of Legion Portrait taken by Lauren Auger during interview with Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

## Appendix I



Digital Image of Group Wedding Portrait taken by Lauren Auger during interview with Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.

## Appendix J



Digital Image of Wedding Portrait taken by Lauren Auger during interview with Victoria Sparrow, interviewed by Lauren Auger, July 19, 2010, Middleton, Nova Scotia.