

# Stark Raving Sane: On Forgetting

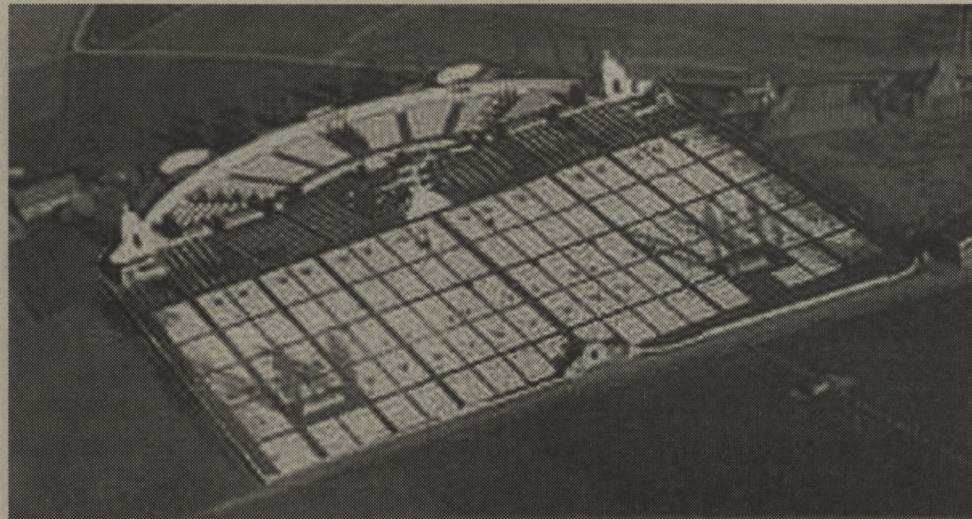
By Catherine SWEET

I'm torn about Remembrance Day every year. It's always difficult for me. I'm one of those weepy people who wells up at particularly touching Campbell's soup commercials. One of the main themes in my breakdowns is my pride in Canada. The national anthem is especially problematic for me. I usually can't sing along with the crowds at the basketball games because my voice audibly breaks. We are SO lucky.

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I think it's that pride that makes me a wreck every November. It's the procession of men and women coming down University Avenue on the way to the cenotaph in front of Province House. Their heads are held high with their uniform berets, chests proudly displaying medals and regiment pins. And there are so few of them. Some are in wheelchairs. Some are aided by canes. They're getting older every year.

I suppose it's better than there being younger and younger veterans every year. It makes me think of all the elements of war I am blissfully ignorant. My big dilemma now is whether or not to remain ignorant. I want to know everything about these horrible events because there's no way I can fully appreciate them if I don't, but I



**Tyne Cot: The largest Commonwealth cemetery in the world with over 12,000 graves. Did you know that?**

don't think my psyche can take it.

Some of the best war stories have recently been put on film, but no matter how many Oscars they drag in, I can't bring myself to watch them. I tried to watch Schindler's List but had to turn it off. I haven't seen Saving Private Ryan yet, either. I know it would be emotionally immolating, so I can't. I was really proud of myself that I got through Life Is Beautiful, but I cried for about an hour solid when it was over.

There are so many wars being fought right now. I don't think it's more than there were before (there have always been wars and I wager there always will be) but I think we are more aware of them now. Global media makes all the problems seem more immediate. Human rights problems as close as Turkey and child soldiers in Africa's constant battles make people think, but as close as these issues seem to be on CBCNewsworld,

it's still a half-planet away and there's nothing we can do.

Still, a day's drive away in Washington, George Dubya is rearing to light it up with Saddam like someone who desperately needs to see a Freudian psychiatrist. I mean, get the guy an SUV already. It'll make him feel like a "big man" and he'll be burning up so much fossil fuel he'll justify the need to pave the wildlife reserve in Alaska. But I digress.

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Every November I'm inundated with excellent reminders of how free I really am. Look at me, I'm writ-

ing my opinion in my school newspaper. Look at me, I'm a woman getting an education. That, and I'm not afraid about publicly airing my opinions about what a huge jackass President Bush is. If I was elsewhere, I could be kidnapped tonight, tortured and killed and then my family would be terrorized for years.

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I'd like to plead for pacifism, but as nice a concept it is, it's impractical unless the masses take to it. It's not powerful until we have a Ghandi-type situation. To get there, the Western world will suddenly have to get a lot more respect for their "enemies". The concept of power is still destructive, not constructive, and not much will change until there's global reconsideration.

My head is spinning. I have to go fill my mind with something else. I can't continue to think about the futility of war while one looms involving our closest neighbour. This has been, by far, the most challenging Stark Raving Sane to write. I have so many opinions and emotions about war and its consequences that organizing this has been a nightmare. And then I feel guilty because this is the biggest nightmare that I'm facing: being challenged at school. Big deal.

