ENVIRONMENTS OF MEMORY: BIO-GEOGRAPHY IN CONTEMPORARY LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF CANADA AND THE GREAT WAR

by

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ABSTRACT

Canadian remembrance of the Great War (1914-1918) in the early twenty-first century is often associated with grand gestures at national monuments like the opening of the new Canadian War Museum in 2005 and the restoration of the Vimy Ridge Memorial in 2007. However, these sites of memory, what Pierre Nora terms lieux de mémoire, are not part of the everyday environments of memory, the milieux de mémoire, of most Canadians. In my investigation of three contemporary works of Canadian literature: The Danger Tree by David Macfarlane, Broken Ground by Jack Hodgins, and Unity (1918) by Kevin Kerr, locally-based storytellers describe the continued influence of the Great War on their individual Canadian communities. The fictionalized narrating personas in these three works create what I refer to as bio-geographies: first-person accounts of the narrator’s particular social and memory environments. While the bio-geographers in these three texts lack first-hand experience of the Great War, their writing reflects the continued repercussions of the conflict in the weeks, years, and decades after the 1918 armistice.

The Great War differentially affected thousands of communities in Canada and Newfoundland. Constructing a coherent national narrative that accounts for the multiple lived experiences of individuals in communities across North America is virtually impossible. Turning to local representations of the Great War (in the case of the three bio-geographic texts: depictions of communities in Newfoundland, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan) provides a sense of the nation as a diverse landscape of memory with multiple vantage points. Negotiating the complex terrain of self, place, and memory, the bio-geographers in the three works I examine create representations of the past that reveal how sites of memory, lieux de mémoire, come to be firmly embedded in the ongoing lived experiences of community members, the milieux de mémoire.
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1 HISTORY, MEMORY, AND BIO-GEOGRAPHY

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Canada continues to remember The Great War. Recent national projects of public remembrance include the ninetieth commemoration of the Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge in 2007, the opening of the new Canadian War Museum in the nation’s capital in 2005, and the 2000 repatriation of the Unknown Soldier to the national war memorial in Ottawa. Canadians participate in these grand gestures of remembering the 1914-1918 conflict, but there are no physical historic sites of the Great War in Canada. The public memorials in Ottawa are sites of memory, not sites of history. Pierre Nora describes this separation of history and memory in “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux des Mémoire,” when he writes that “[m]emory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events” (22). If we think of events taking place on the battlefield and in trenches, the Great War – the actual sites of conflict – has no history, as Nora describes it, on the North American continent. Military training facilities and convalescent institutions across the country contend with the before and after of the Great War. However, Canada and Newfoundland were places to be from and places to go home to. The conflict in Europe did have a significant impact on the mental landscape of those who remained at home. Robert Rutherford, commenting on the Canadian homefront experience of the Great War, writes that “during the war, evidence of local, public expressions of action and sentiment remains scattered. Although responses to the fighting varied, few Canadians were isolated entirely from the war’s carnage. Yet what they used to interpret events was often situated close to home” (xiv). The expression and interpretation of the Great War differed in each community in Canada and Newfoundland. For those who remained
at home the conflict was experienced via whatever media dispatches reached their communities and was further influenced by the stories of returned soldiers.

While national interest in remembering the Great War has grown steadily as we approach the ninetieth anniversary of the armistice, these activities tend towards grand gestures of collective remembrance such as the refurbishing of the Vimy Monument and the repatriation of the Unknown Soldier. These acts, while expressing an important sentiment of national unity, fail to account for the fact that memory of the Great War continues to be differentially experienced according to the stories and histories of individual Canadian communities. I am interested in how the memory of the Great War, as expressed in contemporary literature, is communicated as a form of local knowledge. I focus on three works that provide a view of the homefront population during and after the conflict: David MacFarlane’s *The Danger Tree*, Jack Hodgins’ *Broken Ground*, and Kevin Kerr’s *Unity (1918)*. Each work presents the memory of the Great War via a narrator who has no first-hand experience of the conflict, but I suggest that local knowledge, shaped by the primary experience of local traumas and tragedies, allows the narrators to construct stories for their communities. These stories relate a shared understanding of site-specific catastrophes particular to each community: a sealing accident and the loss of sovereignty in Newfoundland, a devastating forest fire in British Columbia, and an influenza epidemic in rural Saskatchewan. History and memory co-exist in these environments. However, overarching national sentiments of remembrance are absent from the local understandings of the Great War. The communities depicted in *The Danger Tree, Broken Ground*, and *Unity (1918)* grieve the loss of neighbours, friends, and relatives; the conflict touches these communities and their storytellers on individual and personal levels. The Great War comes to be contextualized as
part of an ongoing community narrative when local experiences provide a way of speaking about and remembering trauma.

I use the term bio-geography to describe the first-person narratives created by Macfarlane, Hodgins, and Kerr. Bio-geography employs a locally-situated narrating persona who relates a story explaining the narrator's place within his community and in the world. The writing self (the "bio") in each of the three texts describes the human community and physical environment (the "geography") present in the Newfoundland, Vancouver Island, and Saskatchewan locations where the stories take place. The locally situated narrators in each of the works live in communities that are affected by the Great War, yet the "I" that speaks within the text has no first-hand knowledge of the conflict. The communities of Grand Falls, Portuguese Creek, and Unity must contend not only with the absence of men who fall in the 1914-1918 conflict but also with the memories of the war that return to Newfoundland and Canada with returned soldiers. These intangible aspects of the war become part of what Laurence Kirmayer refers to as a "landscape of memory, the metaphoric terrain that shapes the distance and effort required to remember affectively charged and socially defined events" (175). The actual landscape of the three communities described by Macfarlane, Hodgins, and Kerr provides a physical space for the act of remembering. These spaces, though, are always influenced by the events and experiences that take place on the local level; memory of the Great War cannot be seamlessly transferred from Europe to Newfoundland and Canada. Returned soldiers, homefront civilians, and the generations who come after the war have their respective places in Grand Falls, Portuguese Creek, and Unity, and each individual has his or her own understanding of the conflict. These multiple versions of the Great War both overlap and contradict one another making it impossible to create an all-encompassing story of war within these communities, let
alone the nation. By conceiving of memory as a metaphorical landscape, these “narrative reconstructions of memory are not so much managed as lived in – offering vistas that reveal and conceal. Others may dwell within the same landscape, though, inevitably, they see it from different vantage points” (Kirmayer 182). Through its self-reflective approach to narrating community stories, bio-geography acknowledges the fact that there are multiple perspectives on local and global events. To exist in any community, any landscape of memory, requires a personal narrative – a road map that makes sense of an individual’s position within his world and in relation to others.

Commenting on the power of remembrance in times of conflict and community transformation, Jeffrey Olick writes: “memory is the central faculty of our being in time; it is the negotiation of past and present through which we define our individual and collective selves” (15). Each narrator in The Danger Tree, Broken Ground, and Unity (1918) is in the process of negotiating a place for himself or herself in the community through the writing, remembering, and recording of personal experience. The locally situated narrator is positioned at a particular moment in history where he or she as bio-geographer actively negotiates a place for himself or herself in the ongoing stories of his or her community. Investigating the bio-geographer’s sense of being in the three community-based narratives about the Great War requires a multi-faceted approach. Working with memory in an academic and theoretical sense often relies on spatial metaphors – Kirmayer’s “landscape of memory” and Nora’s “lieux de mémoire” and “milieux de memoire” – to describe a sensory process.¹ Referring to a physical space allows us to investigate

¹ Underlying Nora’s distinction between sites and environments, lieux and milieux, is a rupture between the collective agreement about what happened in the past and the individual’s ability to determine his or her own history through archived material. Between the past and the present lies a deep chasm of division that firmly separates the lived experience of the past and the archival representation and preservation of history. Nora champions French nationalism by glossing over regional differences and national conflicts to emphasize that the unity of the state depends on the “conservation of collectively remembered values” (7). Nationalism and memory in this description are a closed system. The lieux de mémoire he describes are shadows of actual memory and I think he fails to
particular sites as narrative starting points. Once we have a base, a locally situated presence, we can see how memory travels beyond the geographical boundaries of a designated site, environment, or landscape, but this home base, as it were, provides the crucial physical and social matrix for the mental journey. Susannah Radstone notes that critical work involving memory “occupies liminal spaces [and] demands liminal practices” and that memory work tends to reside “between disciplines and deploys not just combinations of, but, more accurately, hybridized methods” (13). Bio-geography constitutes a hybridized theoretical approach to the interdisciplinary study of self, place, and memory in literature that enables me to identify the liminal spaces portrayed in the texts and examine them as sites of memory within the larger memory environments that are described by the authors. I argue that the memory of Great War trauma can and does return to Canada in these places because it becomes part of an ongoing narrative about these particular communities.

PAST PLACES IN CANADIAN GREAT WAR LITERATURE

A number of Canadian writers have turned a critical eye towards Canadian communities when relating the Great War experience. Two particular examples, Timothy Findley’s The Wars and Hugh MacLennan’s Barometer Rising, show us that depicting particular Canadian communities during war-time can serve a number of purposes. First published in 1977, The Wars describes the 1914-1918 conflict through the experiences of Robert Ross. Findley makes use of a variety of narrative devices to cross the boundaries of space and time and shift from Ontario to Alberta, across the country and ocean to France and then England. As Ross travels account for the fact that lieux de mémoire are powerful places where individuals and communities do important identity work. I argue that lieux de mémoire are inseparable from the larger milieux de mémoire of lived experience; sites of memory are firmly embedded in environments not as approximations of an imagined unity, but as purposeful acts of commemoration and remembrance by local populations that are affected by global changes not immediately visible on the macro level.
through these different places, different voices relate his story and provide a complicated and always incomplete depiction of the Canadian soldier. While The Wars does employ archival memory in an interesting way when the anonymous compiler sorts through Ross family photographs, the reader is always kept at a distance from the writing persona; we are never sure who this storyteller or story compiler is or where he comes from. The Wars does mention specific Toronto locations, but refuses to attach itself to a particular Canadian community as part of an ongoing narrative about that place.

MacLennan's Barometer Rising offers a more straight-forward chronological narrative of the week of December 6, 1917 and the Halifax Explosion. Writing in 1941, MacLennan asserts that “Canadians are apt to suspect that a novel referring to one of their cities must likewise refer to specific individuals among its characters” (n.p.). By alerting readers to the fictional nature of his writing, MacLennan challenges his reader to see beyond the social politics of Halifax and begin to question, as Neil Macrae does in the text, what Canada’s role should be in the world and what the experience of war has done to change the nation’s position and expectations. Asking these questions of national prerogatives and obligations is provoked by a local crisis, an event that threatens an individual’s home. The barriers of class, language, and wealth that separate Haligonians can be transcended when a disaster strikes without regard for the social hierarchies. The local trauma of the Halifax explosion unites the community in a way the Great War never does because it focuses on the local experience, the human geography of the Nova Scotia capital. Barometer Rising, however, does not fulfill the self or “bio” qualification part of bio-geography to be classified as such. Yes, the novel does contain memory and it does focus exclusively on Halifax, but the critical self-examination through the process of narrative creation is missing. Neil Macrae is not a writer. This important element of a narrating persona who actively shapes
the story himself or herself makes *The Danger Tree*, *Broken Ground*, and *Unity* (1918) different from past literature about the Great War.

**NARRATIVE JOURNEYS**

Kirmayer tells us that "narrative is an insufficient container or organizer for traumatic experience" that is simultaneously a "conveyor of structure, smoothing, and holding [while] also creat[ing] crevasses, ruptures, emptiness, and deep wells of non-being" (186). Despite the limitations of narrative, the discursive communication of ideas requires a familiar form to relate one's personal experience to another. The texts I examine take three different approaches to representing the memory and the trauma of the Great War. *The Danger Tree* is the autobiographical memoir of the Goodyear family of Newfoundland. *Broken Ground* is a historical fiction that switches between compilations, letters, and biography as it depicts the returned soldier settlement on Vancouver Island. Finally, *Unity* (1918) is a drama based on the fictional diary of a young woman in a small Saskatchewan community. There can be no narrative, no sufficient literary container, to hold a "Canadian" understanding of the Great War that represents the experiences and memories of an entire nation. The texts I have selected depict three communities from across the country, three points on a larger map of identity and remembrance. From a broad perspective, the individuality of these Canadian communities and the specific traumas that shape particular lives in Newfoundland, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan are lost. "Narrative," in the work of Macfarlane, Hodgins, and Kerr relies on the "recognition of a shared past, a sense of history, a mutual understanding that [one's] place is assuredly not interchangeable with countless other places" (Archibald 147). The writing self at
the center of these three texts understands the world through the experiences they share with and in the local communities, landscapes, and environments they inhabit.

Gérard Genette proposes a method of analysis in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* that is helpful in describing the self-writing, the biographic element, of bio-geography that operates in *The Danger Tree, Broken Ground* and *Unity* (1918). The three writing personas in these works, David Macfarlane, Charlie MacIntosh, and Beatrice Wilde are “intradiegetic” narrators: the stories they relate are internally focalized *through* their respective consciousnesses rather than externally *on* a character’s consciousness (10-11). In effect, the reader perceives the communities of Grand Falls, Portuguese Creek, and Unity through the personal reflections of the narrators. The intradiegetic narrators in each text give way to other voices, metadiegetic narrators, within the ongoing stories of Macfarlane, MacIntosh, and Wilde. These internal storytellers appear within the interdiegetic narrators’ bio-geographies and represent other vantage points on the landscapes of memory, while the overall compilation of each text occurs at the hands of an extradiegetic actor who resides outside the narrative, someone like an author or a playwright. However, Genette cautions against equating the voice within the text with the name on the cover of the novel or the play. The confusion of intradiegetic and extradiegetic operators is “perhaps legitimate in the case of historical narrative or a real autobiography, but not when we are dealing with a narrative of fiction, where the role of the narrator is itself fictive” (213).

While the events depicted in each work that I examine are based on actual events, I am not overly concerned with historical accuracy. I am more interested in how these three fictive intradiegetic narrators create what Peter Archibald calls “good narrative,” which derives value not from “its historical consistency, but rather [from] its ability to create common identity and shared values and facilitate survival” (92).
The narratives created by the writing personas in each of the texts do express a sense of common identity based on shared values, but these accounts are literary creations and not historical depictions. The sites and environments described in the texts are fictional landscapes of memory, but they are landscapes nonetheless. David Macfarlane, Charlie MacIntosh, and Beatrice Wilde are affected by the physical and social dimensions of the environments they inhabit and these environments shape their individual understandings of the world. When we consider that each work depicts a *milieu de mémoire* that describes the lived experience of an individual in a particular location, the texts themselves can be viewed as *lieux de mémoire*: *The Danger Tree*, *Broken Ground*, and *Unity (1918)* reflect how the memory of the Great War in Canada is interpreted and represented at a particular moment in history. Published at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, the three texts speak to the desire for locally-based narratives about the conflict. Readers enter into the imagined environments created in *The Danger Tree*, *Broken Ground*, and *Unity (1918)* and engage in imaginative and memorial work of their own. These texts are physical objects, *lieux de mémoire*, that are handled, read, and archived within the larger *milieux de mémoire* of the reader’s lived experience.

Macfarlane’s family memoir, Hodgins’ historical fiction, and Kerr’s period drama can be broadly classified as narrative texts which Genette defines as a “succession of events, real or fictitious that are the subjects of discourse” (25). While the three texts take three different literary forms, the presence of an intradiegetic narrator who draws attention to the “‘here’ and ‘now’ [of] the spatio-temporal circumstances” of his or her narrating is a common aspect shared by the memoir, the novel, and the play (Genette 25). David Macfarlane, Charlie MacIntosh, and

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2 Here, I am referring to *Unity (1918)* as a literary text. The complexities of sites and environments when staging a play are of course different from a solitary reader turning pages and I will address some of the characteristics of performers and audiences in my specific discussion of Kerr’s play.
Beatrice Wilde narrate their lives and the stories of their communities from defined physical locations. The spaces and places described in the three texts are sites within a larger environment, a built world created by the communities of Grand Falls, Portuguese Creek, and Unity. In her essay that investigates place and memory, Molly P. Rozum argues that “not all local landscapes are carried forward; only those landscapes that become bound to identity through the process of re-remembering, again and again, survive over time” (120). The small towns depicted in *The Danger Tree, Broken Ground*, and *Unity* (1918) are environments, landscapes of memory, that expand to include the memory of the Great War as the intradiegetic narrators engage in the process of remembering and imagining the conflict as it affects their lives. The 1914-1918 conflict, both in the realities of the men who experienced combat in Europe and in the imaginations of those left behind, becomes a subject of discourse in these Canadian communities when it can be framed in a local context. The intradiegetic narrator’s ordering of events in a larger narrative is dependent on his entry point in the process of re-remembering.

**SITES AND ENVIRONMENTS – BIO-GEOGRAPHY AND MEMORY**

Nora makes a critical distinction between history, as an event that takes place at a particular site, and memory as an ongoing relationship with the past that is experienced through one’s environment. Nora sees the disjuncture between history and memory as occurring with the “disappearance of peasant culture, that quintessential repository of collective memory” (7). With the breakdown of cultural transmission via educational, religious, and familial systems, Nora suggests that the individual becomes divorced from shared memory and the experiences of previous generations. What becomes of the shared memory and past experiences? They are
made archival, separated from daily life as history and made manifest in *les lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory that are constructed specifically for remembrance and activated only by bouts of nostalgia and annually mandated commemoration. For Canada, obvious *lieux de mémoire* created to celebrate the Great War include the Vimy Monument in France, the new Canadian War Museum in the nation's capital, and the National Cenotaph in Ottawa. Canadians do visit these places and reflect on the nation’s involvement in the 1914-1918 conflict, but these visits are usually extraordinary and not part of an individual’s everyday environment. The *lieux de mémoire* that David Macfarlane, Charlie MacIntosh, and Beatrice Wilde visit are not monuments of marble and bronze; the sites of memory constructed in their respective environments are local responses by specific individuals whose lives are changed by the war. Powerful sites of memory in these three texts, the family veranda in *The Danger Tree*, the movie theatre in *Broken Ground*, and the mortuary in *Unity (1918)*, can be designated as such only when looking back at the events which take place in these locations.

Even though the Great War has no physical presence in the three communities, each population finds it necessary to establish *lieux de mémoire* for the men who never return from the war. In *The Danger Tree*, a physical object – the petrified Great War sandbag that Joe Goodyear returns to his local Legion – serves this purpose, and the family story about the object circulates in the narrator’s environment. The characters in *Broken Ground* erect a memorial cairn composed of stones from farmers’ fields in remembrance of men who fell in the Great War, men who would never inhabit the returned soldier settlement at Portuguese Creek. At the Unity cemetery, Beatrice and her sister hold a funeral in absentia for a soldier who dies overseas. The women have no physical body to inter in the community, but it is important that they repatriate Richard Stone, Beatrice’s would-be brother-in-law, and include him in the history and memory
of Unity. These examples show how communities untouched by the physical destruction of war still want physical reminders of the conflict in their everyday environments. The desire for lieux de mémoire in these texts is the desire to "establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial... all of this in order to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs" (Nora 19). These constructed lieux de mémoire mirror the work of the narrators who compile and relate their lived experience, their milieux de mémoire, via a literary form. The biogeographic narratives establish a way of telling the local story of the Great War by providing a fixed order of events. This narrative ordering never changes; each re-reading of the text leads us through the same situations. We can revisit these texts as we would a cenotaph or war memorial – the fixed form remains the same while our perspective on the site changes with our own lived experience.

*The Danger Tree, Broken Ground,* and *Unity (1918)* are "post-memory" texts, the designation Marianne Hirsch uses to describe a "very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated... through an imaginative investment and creation" (22). Macfarlane, Hodgins, and Kerr write about the Great War from a generational distance. Their textual creations are the result of historical and familial research that is then imaginatively constructed to relate events that took place long before the authors themselves were born. *The Danger Tree* is the most autobiographic of the texts, but Macfarlane weaves together information from family legends, news reports about early twentieth century events, and the imagined lives of previous inhabitants of Newfoundland. Portuguese Creek and the returned soldier settlement at Merville on Vancouver Island were affected by a serious forest fire in 1922, but disclaimers on the preliminary pages of *Broken Ground* remind the reader that the novel "is a work of fiction. Characters, places, and events are the creation of the author's
imagination” (n.p.). Finally, *Unity (1918)* is based on actual events during the autumn of 1918, but like *Broken Ground* the characters and action portrayed in the text are fictional. The author, even in the case of *The Danger Tree*, is removed from his text. Smaro Kamboureli describes this phenomenon as a “text fold[ing] upon itself and reinscrib[ing] the character as writer.” As Kamboureli argues, this process of textual folding draws attention to the “writer [within the text and] subverts the authority of the author. The author, having prepared the textual stage for the writer, falls back” (84). The writing persona within the narrative, the intradiegetic narrator, takes control of relating the story and is separated from the post-memory work done by the author.

The status of a post-memory text as a second-hand imagining means that there will always be gaps in the narrative. The narrative folding described by Kamboureli provides a visual metaphor that helps illustrate Genette’s concept of narrative metalepsis. Metalepsis, the “transition from one narrative level to another” (Genette 235), forms a system with narrative anachronisms – points of temporal discordance where a point in the narrative comes before its place in the story (36). We see a clear example of this in *The Danger Tree* when David Macfarlane refers to the deaths of his great uncles in the Great War: we know of their deaths before being told how they meet their respective ends. Here, the narrator is outside the story but telling it from within by calling upon “memories from earlier narratives” and telling a “whole story that took place before he was born” (Genette 241). Macfarlane and MacIntosh can make these narrative jumps between memories and the rearranging of the sequence of events to suit their narratives because they have the benefit of hindsight. In the act of recording their version of events from their locally situated perspectives, Macfarlane and MacIntosh are in the process of manufacturing textual *lieux de mémoire*. Beatrice Wilde’s diary in *Unity (1918)* similarly
functions as a site of memory a lieu de mémoire within her ongoing lived experience in the environment, the milieu de mémoire, of Unity, Saskatchewan.

A milieu de mémoire, what Nora terms a "real environment of memory," is at the heart of each literary work (7). These environments are shaped by shared experiences of real, not imagined traumas. The Danger Tree recounts a series of local disasters: a devastating sealing accident, a forest fire, and the eventual loss of sovereignty are all part of the environment that Macfarlane occupies when he returns to Newfoundland. In Broken Ground, the 1922 forest fire in the Comox Valley unites individuals in a common purpose and becomes an anchor for future stories about the community. For Beatrice in Unity (1918), the influenza epidemic that strikes Saskatchewan during the final year of the war alters her relationship to everyone in the community – she becomes a mourner, a nurse, a confidant, and an eventual casualty of the virus. Because Beatrice records these relationships in her diary, her writing preserves a memory of the community that endures past the local crisis of illness and her own death. History is not separated from memory in these moments of witnessing, reflecting, and writing about the traumas experienced in each location. The memory and actual experience of these local tragedies weigh on the respective narrators with a sense of obligation – if they are not the ones to write and record the events that happen in their communities, in their environments, how will anyone remember in the future? The narrating personas in each work feel the obligation to become "memory individuals" (Nora 16) who will carry with them the knowledge of what it means to declare oneself a descendant of Newfoundlanders, a son of a returned soldier, or a homefront prairie woman.

Just as bio-geography extends from a locally situated self, understanding the environment in which each work takes place helps to demonstrate how memory of the Great War, a global and
distant event for Canadians, comes to reside in individual communities. The texts themselves as physical entities are historical sites – the books are divorced from the communities that they depict when they travel as objects. However, within these textual historical sites are depictions of the memory environments where each narrator resides. The communities of Newfoundland, Vancouver Island, and Saskatchewan, as represented in the texts, can only exist as lieux de mémoire for their respective readers. As readers, and outsiders, we can never have the same perspective on these communities as the intradiegetic narrator, who is both a part of and participant in his or her community. Macfarlane, MacIntosh, and Wilde have ways of altering the outcome of the story by their actions because they live in the milieu de mémoire they depict. The reader is always removed from the environments effected by the Great War as they are portrayed in the texts. However, the writing personas never designate a particular addressee in their stories. Genette cautions against reducing the reader to a passive consumer of a narrative. “Like the narrator,” Genette writes, “the narratee is one of the elements in the narrating situation, and he is necessarily located at the same diegetic level; that is, he does not merge a priori with the reader (even an implied reader) any more than the narrator necessarily merges with the author” (259). If the reader occupied the same environment of memory as the bio-geographer, the reader would have his or her own perspective on the landscape of memory, and the ability to influence the events, that Macfarlane, MacIntosh, and Wilde describe. If we imagine that the intradiegetic narrators of these bio-geographic texts are situated within environments where they create and make use of lieux de mémoire to understand the Great War, the reader is then configured as part of a larger environment – his or her own milieu de mémoire – where The Danger Tree, Broken Ground, and Unity (1918) are lieux de mémoire that commemorate the 1914-1918 conflict.
LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY AND NARRATIVE REMEMBRANCE

The sites of memory, the lieux de mémoire, created in the three works represent physical reminders of the Great War for each community. These tangible practices of remembrance help to give shape to a war that for most Canadians and Newfoundlanders was an imagined conflict. Those who return from the war find that they must shape their stories and experiences of being overseas into the existing community narrative about the war. The shared experiences of hardship and loss in Newfoundland and Canada during and after the Great War provide a model for returned soldiers to speak about their memories of the conflict. When the narrators listen and bear witness to the returned soldiers' testimony, it can then be incorporated into a bio-geographic narrative because the soldiers communicate their experience within the storyteller’s community. If we consider the work of Laurence Kirmayer, who suggests that memory itself is a type of landscape, we can begin to see how the experience of conflict in Europe is projected onto Canadian spaces and how it is incorporated into the community when participants in the war return home. Kirmayer notes that “trauma shared by a whole community creates a potential public space for retelling. If a community agrees traumatic events occurred and weaves this fact into its identity, then collective memory survives and individual memory can find a place (albeit transformed) within that landscape” (189-190). The communities of Grand Falls, Portuguese Creek, and Unity have public spaces for the retelling of local catastrophes: verandas, general stores, and public dances. The three communities also agree that the Great War occurred, but the citizens who remain behind do not have the experience of conflict and cannot talk publicly about

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3 This concept of the imagined conflict comes from Robert Rutherford’s examination of homefront populations during the Great War, Hometown Horizons. His investigation of three communities, Lethbridge, Guelph, and Trois-Rivières, is a “study of locally situated evidence – of the settings and circumstances in which ordinary Canadians at home came to experience a distant war overseas. It is thus, in many respects, a study of a war imagined” (xiii).
the war as a shared event. In *The Danger Tree*, the reports that reach Newfoundland always describe the "regiment’s exploits" as "tales of bravery and comradeship and stout good cheer" (146). The imagined war of homefront civilians does not include strategic mistakes that cost men their lives or the mental trauma endured by soldiers suffering from shell-shock. Returning soldiers carry individual memories of the war but if they are to become re-integrated with their communities they must transform their retelling of the conflict to fit into the memory landscape of the imagined war created by those who remained behind.

Men who return to the communities of Grand Falls, Portuguese Creek, and Unity are aware of their expectations in the public sphere. In this role, the men tend to limit their war stories to light-hearted moments of physical comforts (or lack thereof) and sanitized versions of their time on leave. The stories related in Macfarlane’s narrative come years after the events of the Great War; the happy and humourous memories are those more likely to be repeated and as a way of sustaining the Goodyear family. The events of the Great War are much closer for the characters in Hodgins’ and Kerr’s works. In *Broken Ground*, set four years after the armistice, returned soldier Matthew Pearson is questioned by a visitor as to why the Great War is not a topic of general discussion for Portuguese Creek residents. Pearson replies that “[m]ost of us are trying to forget it. And, anyway, the others wouldn’t know what we were talking about” (91). The stories of fear and suffering do not surface in the public spheres, but they can be told in private dialogue between the narrator and the returned man. The inability to talk openly about the entire war-time experience reveals the "crucial distinction between the social space in which the trauma occurred and the contemporary space in which it is (or is not) recalled" (Kirmayer 189). Reconciling what happened in Europe with the imagined war taking place in the minds of those left behind takes time. For Beatrice in *Unity* (1918) the imagined vision of war as
solidarity, bravado, and noble sacrifice is broken when she tends to Hart, a returned soldier, who takes up residency in the town’s mortuary. Beatrice is the only witness to Hart’s dying declaration in which he reveals his war time experience, but she cannot find the words to express what Hart shares with her and their final scene at the mortuary becomes an unfinished diary entry in her journal. The narrators in each work contend with emotional catharsis in close quarters, personal letters from the front detailing crises of purposes, and the personal questioning of inherited memory. They then struggle with how these stories of personal suffering and devastating loss fit with the larger imagined version of the war as they have created it.

PLACING THE PAST: HISTORY AT THE SERVICE OF NARRATIVE

The Danger Tree, Broken Ground, and Unity (1918) provide different views of the Great War. The mid-life identity quest by Macfarlane, the community retrospective of MacIntosh, and the personal diary of Wilde are three different types of life writing in three very different locations. The three narrators are products of their environments and are shaped by local trauma as much as, if not more than, the tragedies of the Great War. However, each local event that alters their personal state leads back to the 1914-1918 conflict. Charlie MacIntosh loses his father in a forestry accident and experiences the 1922 forest fire in the Comox Valley precisely because the elder MacIntosh served in the war and was eligible for settlement in a returned soldiers’ camp. The influenza epidemic that claims the lives of Beatrice’s relatives and friends and forever changes Unity is circulated in part by the returned soldiers who arrive in Canada after the war. The shadow of the Great War that touches Macfarlane is an inherited absence; a pervasive sense of what might have been runs through his narrative as Macfarlane contemplates the decline of the Goodyear family following the conflict. Robert Archibald’s personal
experience in his community leads him to make the following assertion: “I am a product of this place. If I was raised somewhere else, I would be someone else” (39). Though these words are from a cultural historian, the narrators of the three works come to the same conclusion through the process of writing and relating a story of their lives in their respective communities.

To explore fully *The Danger Tree*, *Broken Ground*, and *Unity* (1918) as examples of biogeography requires identifying and investigating the communities presented in each text. For *Broken Ground* and *Unity* (1918) this connection to a social group is quite clear: the intradiegetic narrators create the stories of Portuguese Creek and Unity – the communities where they live. For David Macfarlane’s work, the narrator enters the text by relating a story about Hamilton, Ontario. Connecting Hamilton to Grand Falls, Newfoundland is possible because the community the narrator writes about is composed primarily of family members. The Goodyear family stories circulate on humid southern Ontario afternoons, but to put them in writing and commit them to narrative form requires that the writing persona visit Newfoundland and access the memory environment of the island province. Looking closely at the memory environments in which the three works are set we can see that the communities are familiar with trauma and that the locally situated narrating presence can speak with authority about the tragedies they witness and personally remember. Speaking about the Great War is an exercise in memory for the narrators because they have not experienced the historical events of the 1914-1918 conflict. The narrators imagine the war in different ways and have different reactions to the returned soldiers’ stories that circulate in Grand Falls, Portuguese Creek, and Unity. For Macfarlane, the Great War experiences of his great-uncles are a combination of legend and imagination. Charlie MacIntosh allows Matthew Pearson to speak for himself, six decades after the fact, in his letters from the front. Beatrice writes of her experience with Hart, but not what Hart tells her. The
passage of time allows Macfarlane and MacIntosh to reflect on local and global trauma, but for Beatrice the immediacy of the Great War and the ongoing influenza epidemic make it difficult to create a story when her focus is on mere survival. The carefully crafted narratives of Macfarlane and MacIntosh contrast sharply with the final frantic entries of Beatrice’s diary which relate her sense of uncertainty about the present and the future.

**MAKING SENSE LOCALLY**

On November 18, 1918 Beatrice writes in her diary: “[t]he war is supposed to be over, but the war is still on. I don’t know what to do” (111). The chaos of the influenza epidemic in Unity makes it impossible for Beatrice to reflect fully on the ending of the Great War. The imagined war is over, but the reality of living in a community plagued by influenza and the deaths of family members and neighbours takes precedence over returned soldiers’ remembrances of the conflict. Investigating how individuals remember major historical events, Marita Sturken reminds us that: “[m]emory is always about renarratization. Personal memory, cultural memory, and history are all shifting terrains” (40). In each of the texts I examine, the narrating presence engages in this practice of renarratization by consulting personal and shared memory to create a story about a community’s experience of the Great War. Memory of the 1914-1918 conflict is particular to a location, to a group of people who have endured local tragedies and then use those tragedies as a way to speak about trauma. The ability to incorporate returned soldiers’ narratives into the existing community stories about the imagined war takes time: Beatrice does not record what Hart tells her about gas attacks and the fear that strikes him before a battle – this memory of trauma is not allowed to take root in Unity while the civilian population is busy fighting the influenza epidemic. The audience witnesses the exchange
between Beatrice and Hart in the mortuary, but the record of the event in her diary is abstract and unfinished. In *The Danger Tree* and *Broken Ground* the narrators have the benefit of time to reflect on the stories of the Great War that are returned to Grand Falls and Portuguese Creek. Their relationship to locally situated trauma and the trauma of the Great War is filtered through a generational distance. From their post-memory perspectives within the text, the narrators of Macfarlane's and Hodgins' texts, unlike Beatrice, do know what to do. For these two men, the war is definitely over and by the end of the twentieth century when they relate their stories, the trauma of the Great War has settled into their respective communities. *The lieux de mémoire* constructed following the war have become part of the writers' environments, part of their landscape of memory that is consulted when a bio-geographic text is produced.

Considering the commemorative and bodily aspects of remembrance (two designations that correspond roughly to the imagined and the real experiences within communities), Paul Connerton suggests that the process of remembering has value because it brings forth potentially isolated events and arranges them in "meaningful narrative sequences" and allows for the integration of "isolated or alien phenomena into a single unified process" (26). *The Danger Tree*, *Broken Ground*, and *Unity* (1918) are narrative attempts to incorporate the isolated and alien phenomena of Great War trauma that occurred in Europe into ongoing stories of place in Canada. Created by named individuals in identifiable communities, the three narratives show bio-geography to be a new way of making sense of past events by examining the relationship between self, memory, and place within a text.
COME FROM AWAY

*The Danger Tree* is David Macfarlane’s autobiographical memoir of his maternal relatives, the Goodyears of Newfoundland. Macfarlane’s great-grandparents, Josiah and Louisa, had seven children. Six participated in the Great War and three died overseas. Newfoundland enlisted more than one third of its male population between the ages of 19 and 35; the residents of the independent colony rallied to support Britain in the 1914-1918 conflict, never imagining that it would send them on an inevitable path to confederation with Canada. The cost of equipping, training, and sending a fighting force to Europe was a significant financial commitment for the independent British colony. The human cost of the Great War, one in every five Newfoundlanders who served would die, was devastating for the island; those who perished overseas “were probably the best and ablest of the men from the communities around the island, probably the ones who would have been the leaders and active participants in the struggle during the depressed years after the war. This was Newfoundland’s ‘lost generation’” (Parsons 157). Hedley, Stanley, and Raymond Goodyear are three of the lost generation, three of Macfarlane’s great uncles whose absences shape the Goodyear family for decades after the Great War. All of the family’s stories circle around this loss, unable to fill the emptiness left by the young men whose military portraits still hang in hallways and bedrooms belonging to their relatives. David Macfarlane grew up in a house with these portraits, with this absence, but he did so in a community nearly 3,000 kilometers from Newfoundland. The stories of Great War and Newfoundland found their way to Macfarlane as a child in Hamilton, Ontario, and later as an adult in Toronto in the words offered by family members who lived through the conflict and the imagined versions of the war told by those too young to experience it first-hand.
In writing about Newfoundland, Macfarlane is both insider and outsider; he knows and can relate the stories of outport life and the building of Grand Falls, but he is always at a distance from these stories – they are his inheritance, not his experience. By the time Macfarlane was born in 1952, Newfoundland had only recently voted to join confederation; as an adult the narrator is acutely aware of the persistent tension between the island’s proud past and its current state as Canada’s newest province. “I am who I am,” Macfarlane writes, “because inside me is wedded the discomfiture of two societies as distinct from one another as night and day” (21). The narrator’s remembrance of his bio-geographic starting place, his childhood home, reflects this tension of being a Canadian of Newfoundland descent. From his position in the middle of the country, Macfarlane is always required to journey, both physically and mentally, to the place of his maternal relatives. His writing about the Goodyears who participated in the Great War thus reflects a narrative movement that has always been a part of how Macfarlane understands Newfoundland. Based in Southern Ontario, the narrator envisions his relationship to his great uncles as familiar but forever distant: “[t]heir deaths cast everything I would ever hear and learn about the Goodyears… into high relief. […] They were ordinary men from an old, lost world. I come to them from far away” (272). Macfarlane employs a variety of manoeuvres to cross this temporal and spatial divide as he (re)visits the stories of the Goodyear family.

Macfarlane arranges historical events, family legends, and autobiographical vignettes into a narrative that provides a matrix for the enduring absence left by the deaths of his great uncles. Macfarlane is both actor and narrator in *The Danger Tree*. In Genette’s terminology, Macfarlane is the intradiegetic narrator who is the main character of his own story, thus he holds an autodiegetic position. In this role, “the narrator’s relationship to the story is in principle invariable: even when [he] momentarily disappear[s] as [a character], we know that [he] will
reappear sooner or later” (Genette 245). The Danger Tree is autobiographical in the sense that Macfarlane, the author, is a descendant of the Goodyears and a professional writer in Toronto, but the story related about and through Macfarlane, the narrator, uses life writing as a conduit to speak about a past that precedes the narrator’s birth. Macfarlane the narrator can compress or expand time and re-order events to suit his narrative, rather than following a linear chronology that reflects historical accuracy. Moving between time periods, pre-war, post-war, during the conflict, Macfarlane does momentarily disappear, but he makes his return to the story by recalling memory places: the Macfarlane family home in Hamilton, the war memorial at Grand Falls, and the old-age hospital where his grandmother lives in Gander. These places are lieux de mémoire, sites of memory, that are a part of larger environments, ongoing milieux de mémoire (to use Nora’s terms) that act as points of departure and return for Macfarlane’s narrative.

This strategy of departure and return, of presence and absence, mimics the oral style of story telling that Macfarlane admires in his Newfoundland relatives. “What I liked best,” Macfarlane recalls, “was that they talked in great looping circles. [...] [O]ne story led seamlessly to another, spiralling like drifting pipe-smoke, farther and farther away from the conversation’s beginnings. Yet somehow without so much as a where-were-we, the stories found their way back, hours later, to where they had started” (41-42). Macfarlane employs this narrative looping in his own story of the Goodyears, Newfoundland, and the Great War. No matter how far Macfarlane’s story drifts from the discussion of the 1914-1918 conflict, the narrative always returns to specific sites and individuals who are shaped by the war. These narrative returns do not offer a resolution to the loss of the three Goodyear brothers; the stories contain silences and absences as they circle around the absence of the lost men because they can never capture the experiences of the fallen men. The repetition of stories is then a process of re-remembering
where the narratives of the Goodyears who survive the war are performed by their children at family gatherings that take place in Newfoundland and at the narrator's home in Southern Ontario. By definition, the narrative loop should return us to a familiar point, the place where the story originates. *The Danger Tree* begins in "[h]er room" (1), but Macfarlane requires that the reader travel through the entire narrative before fully revealing who and where this woman is. Only at the end of the memoir, in a chapter that shares its title with the first section of the work, do we learn that the disorienting description of "[h]er room" that opens the narrative is home to Macfarlane's grandmother, Gladys Goodyear, who resides in a Gander, Newfoundland old-age hospital. The actual activity of the narrator's present is extremely short: Macfarlane exits his rental car and enters the care facility. In between the two "The Danger Tree" chapters, the narrator offers multiple loops of memory, imagination, and experience that relate his attempt to speak about the rupture caused by the Great War.

**POINTS OF DEPARTURE AND RETURN**

In *Writing the Roaming Subject*, Joanne Saul argues that "there is no stable connection between the authorial subject and place; instead, this relationship is in process, in flux" (10). Macfarlane bio-geographic narration illustrates Saul's notion of a relationship in process through the ongoing negotiation between the writing subject and the environment he writes about. Macfarlane enters *The Danger Tree* as the representing "I" in the second chapter by describing his hometown: "Hamilton, Ontario, is an unexceptional place. I was always fond of it. I grew up there" (7). In these three short sentences, the narrator identifies a geographic starting point for his story, a place to be from. Macfarlane, the adult narrator of this autobiographical memoir, is certainly different from Macfarlane the child who grew up in an Ontario suburb, but there is an
enduring connection to this place of origin. According to Saul, the narrator’s relationship to Hamilton is in a state of flux because each time he returns to his parent’s home, Macfarlane brings a new set of experiences to this familiar place. The narrator’s accumulated life experiences influence his understanding of past events. Like the old-age hospital in Gander, the Macfarlane family home in Hamilton is a point of departure and return for multiple narrative loops. The narrator’s childhood home, unlike Gladys Goodyear’s room, is a milieu de mémoire, an environment of memory where the history of past generations is part of Macfarlane’s formative understanding of the world. Memory lives on in the Macfarlane family home because it is the place where stories are shared. Remembering the arrival of his Newfoundland relatives, Macfarlane envisions them fortified with provisions from their island home, taking up position on the front veranda in the sweltering humidity of a Southern Ontario summer (39-40). The conversations on the veranda include a variety of stories about Newfoundland that work together to create what Archibald calls “nascent narrative” (142). The physical space of the veranda is firmly situated in Hamilton, but it is outside the everyday domestic interior of the Macfarlane home; the stories about Newfoundland, as told by Newfoundlanders occur in a particular place in the narrator’s memory. Through these conversations in the liminal veranda space, the storytellers and the story-listeners are engaged in the process of community building where “trust develops, bonds are forged, [and] attachments to people and place are created” (Archibald 142). As Macfarlane ages, his connection to his Newfoundland relatives changes. The self-interested teenaged Macfarlane has little time for his great uncles, but these attachments to people and place persist and “find their way back to [the narrator], in Toronto, remembering” as he writes the family’s story (43).
Macfarlane’s memoir attempts to order the events of the 1914-1918 conflict and create a story that contains the experience and remembrance of the war in a narrative form. The journey Macfarlane begins as a child in Hamilton is the search for the missing pieces of the Goodyear family – the three brothers lost in the Great War. The narrator’s great uncles are both immortalized and inaccessible; Macfarlane notes that the “three dead brothers kept their places in the family – gaps among the three brothers who survived them – and the century that carried on past the moments of the deaths was not what it might have been. It was largely a makeshift arrangement, cobbled around their constant and disastrous absence” (191). These competing notions of permanence and instability are reflected in Macfarlane’s relationships to the Goodyears who live through the Great War, particularly his great aunt Kate who is the last living link to the missing pieces of the Goodyear family. The early chapters of The Danger Tree weave through stories about pirates, outport sealing, tuberculosis, and forest fires. These sections are marked by disjuncture, Genette’s narrative metalepsis, where Macfarlane incorporates historical information, newspaper headlines, and imagined experiences; the autodiegetic narrator does not personally experience these events and Macfarlane momentarily disappears from the telling of his own story when he relates the events that precede his birth. He is, however, noticeably present in the chapter devoted to Kate. Macfarlane’s great aunt has the potential to connect the gaps in the family history, but his attempts to elicit stories from Kate prove painful for both of them.

“Beer and Skittles” is remarkably linear in its presentation of Kate’s Great War experience and her life in the twentieth century. As an adult, Macfarlane can imagine himself in his great aunt’s position, and he comes to the “uncomfortable aware[ness] that [his] haphazard and carefree life, was to [Kate], a life that had been allowed to extend beyond August 22, 1918”
This chapter reveals the most about the narrator in his adult life; Macfarlane’s growth from disinterested teenager to a burgeoning writer corresponds to Kate’s movement from St. George, to Brantford, and finally Toronto. Macfarlane does not “come from away” to his great aunt; through the necessities of age and declining health, she comes nearer to him in the largest city in Canada. Kate does not talk about Newfoundland as the other Goodyears do. While she has a “great affection for Newfoundland... she [is] resolutely un-nostalgic about the place” (245). Kate is particularly interested in the happenings of Macfarlane’s life, his courses at the University of Toronto, his decision to become a writer, and the birth of his first child. These are major moments in the writer’s life that Kate is present for. Macfarlane and Kate inhabit the same city; she is closer, both in spatial and temporal proximity, to the narrator than any of the Goodyear brothers. Of the seven sibling, Kate’s experience of the Great War is perhaps the most difficult to represent because “there were no stories that she could possibly repeat. For her the war had been an unspeakable tragedy” (246). Kate travels to Ottawa in 1915 to become a nurse but the entire wartime experience of Macfarlane’s great aunt comes to be tied to the story of the young soldier at St. Luke’s Hospital. This is the first Goodyear family story that Macfarlane can remember and it is a story that is never, to his knowledge, offered by Kate. His mother and his aunts “tell this story particularly well because, by the time they get to the conclusion, it becomes unclear whether they are giving a dramatic rendition of their aunt’s struggle to fight back tears, or are actually in danger of crying themselves” (259). Kate’s story lives on in the re-enactment of her speech defending her decision to give a soldier a private room. Unsure of where her brothers are serving overseas, Kate makes space for the injured soldier in hopes that someone might do the same for her family. Kate’s story acts as a model for taking local action in the face
of global events, and the enduring presence of the tale in Goodyear family history offers evidence that the remembrance of the 1914-1918 conflict is not limited to European battlefields.

**TALKING WITH THE DEAD**

Kate’s death at the end of “Beer and Skittles” is told from Macfarlane’s perspective as a young man with a young family. The phone call that interrupts the organization of his music collection is an aural distraction between the smell of musty records and the strains of Abbey Road. The specificity of this scene is the remembrance of a complete sensory environment. Macfarlane remembers the “light from the bathroom falling across” his wife as she held their daughter at the top of the stairs, unable to articulate the information related in the phone call (263). This “memory of the body in space,” Marita Sturken notes, “is a kind of reenactment” (32). Even though he is not physically present at Kate’s death, “[t]his remembering of ‘where we were’ is a kind of witnessing” for Macfarlane (Sturken 32). While she passes from the narrator’s life, and he laments her loss, Kate is not a “missing piece” in the larger narrative of the Goodyears; her story is told by her nieces and remembered by her family; she is part of a larger memory environment, a milieu de mémoire. Macfarlane’s narrative loops about the Great War pass through Kate, but she can never articulate what it means to lose a cherished brother. Even considering the death of her older brother Hedley brings Kate to tears. This unexpected emotional response to a word or phrase that reminds her of Hedley is quickly swept aside by Kate “sniff[ing] her mourning back up to where she felt it belonged, lock[ing] it away, and, with an apologetic smile, continu[ing] with whatever story she’d been telling” (245). While she lives, Macfarlane can never access the memories Kate locks away. After her death, the narrator can
imagine and construct a story about Hedley in an effort to fill the unspeakable gaps in the family
narrative.

Macfarlane describes Hedley’s death from a sniper’s bullet with a clinical detachment
that contrasts with the personal “witnessing” of Kate’s passing. The narrator’s work here is a
type of what Susanna Egan calls “mirror talk.” Egan examines the dialogic process that occurs
in life writing where an author, an autobiographer, engages in a series of reflections and
distortions while creating a record of lived experience. Macfarlane performs one of his narrative
side-steps in the description of Hedley’s death: he becomes a heterodiegetic narrator, Genette’s
term for a “narrator who is absent from the story he tells” (245), who relates the events of an
August morning in 1918 by describing the actions of his great uncle, two Australian soldiers, and
a German sniper. The mirror talk in “Fire” is the dialogue between Macfarlane’s two roles as
intradiegetic narrator and heterodiegetic narrator. The account of Hedley’s demise illustrates the
discursive switching between narrative registers as writing persona and the imagined observer of
Hedley’s death encounter one another via “processes of reflection and commentary [that]
contribute to the narrative patterns of interaction – between people,... between incidents – and to
a balance and tension that create the illusion of immediacy, avoid singularity of perception, and
arrive at no judgment or conclusion” (Egan 181). Hedley’s death has already taken on a mythic
place in Canadian memory of the Great War – his letter home before his last battle was widely
circulated and had been read on a number of occasions of public remembrance. Hedley’s letter
of August 7, 1918, before the battle of Amiens is figured as a lieu de mémoire, an object of
archival memory to be called upon in times of need.4 Macfarlane’s description of Hedley’s death

4 As recently as November 1997, Hedley’s letter to his mother before the battle of Amiens on August 7, 1918, was
read in the House of Commons in Ottawa. Then Minister of Veteran Affairs, Fred Mifflin recounted Hedley’s
“hope for mankind and ... visions of a new world” which would follow shortly from anticipated victory on August
8. Mifflin concluded his recitation of the letter with the following: “[t]he next day 110 men would fall in this battle
talks back to the established story of his great uncle’s demise, but the narrator can never change the ultimate outcome.

Macfarlane’s position as narrator at the end of the twentieth century extends from a series of historical accidents and misfortunes, none with so large an effect as the Great War. His existence, his writing, recreates the moment of Hedley’s death, but it will never bring him back. The looping narrative style that Macfarlane employs repatriates the lost brothers into a single story about the Goodyear family, incorporating the brothers who lie buried in Europe into an ongoing narrative about self, place, and memory. As he reflects on the inherited absences of his three great uncles, Macfarlane comes to the conclusion that “the events we use to mark the passage of time – the wars, the assassinations, the revolutions – and that seem, from the perspective of the present to inhabit a natural and inevitable place in history, were at one time, unpredictable and preposterous” (244). The Danger Tree loops around the difficult subject of young men dying in war by relying on anachronisms; the narrative ordering that connects the loss of the three Goodyear brothers to the social and political changes in Newfoundland in the twentieth century seems natural to Macfarlane because he has heard the stories often and goes on to repeat them himself. The metaleptic shifts that juxtapose the Great War in Europe with Macfarlane’s contemporary understanding of Newfoundland bridge the chasm between the past and the present without attempting to fill the persistent spaces that endure after the deaths of Ray, Stan, and Hedley. Macfarlane’s looping style is a type of narrative matrix that supports his

and among the numbered dead was young Hedley Goodyear, in his early 20s”. In The Danger Tree Macfarlane notes that “it wasn’t true. He didn’t die,” or at least not on August 8 (287). While visiting his aunt and uncle in Gander, Macfarlane comes across a letter from Hedley dated August 17, 1918. Veterans Affairs Canada records August 22, 1918 as the date of Hedley’s death – more than two weeks after his oft-repeated letter. Macfarlane imagines his great uncle returning to the family home in Newfoundland to “take off his cap and undo his overcoat and tell us we’d all been mistaken” (290). In constructing his story of family, memory, and war, the author/narrator reflects on the persistence of useful, but not necessarily factual, narratives. The actual date of Hedley’s death makes little difference in the Goodyears’ larger story; his absence is what continues to loom large in the family’s imagination.
inherited loss – the empty spaces in the Goodyear family story that extend beyond 1918 to circle around the trauma of the Great War, imagining and mythologizing the conflict as a way of responding to events that were unpredicted and preposterous when they occurred.

LOCAL AND GLOBAL MEMORY

*The Danger Tree* is haunted by an event that takes place in the spring before the Great War begins. Macfarlane describes the deaths of 77 sealers in April 1914 that result in part from the miscommunication between the captains of the *Newfoundland* and the *Stephano*, the father and son pair Abram and Wes Kean. At the time of the disaster, Macfarlane comments that the reporting of the lives lost “had less to do with accuracy than with an attempt to impart some dignity to a senseless and stupid blunder” (142). Shifting between perspectives and time periods, Macfarlane cites the *Evening Telegram* description of the sealing accident and its praise for the “total absence of cowardice” among the men who each “played a man’s part heroically and well” (143). This type of language that extols the collective virtue of Newfoundland men, especially in the manner of their deaths, would be used to describe the losses suffered by the Newfoundland regiment in Europe. Exactly six months after the *Newfoundland*, the *Bonaventure*, and the *Florizel* returned to St. John’s with the bodies of the frozen sealers stacked on their decks, the *Florizel* was bound for England with “The First Five Hundred.” Louisa Goodyear, Macfarlane’s great-grandmother, had kept her sons safe from the sealing disaster by moving from the Ladle Cove outport to the security of Grand Falls where her youngest children would never go to the ice in the spring. She would not be able to stop them from going to war.

The greatest loss suffered by the Newfoundland regiment in the Great War occurred on July 1, 1916 at Beaumont Hamel. Of the 801 soldiers who left the trenches that day, only 68
were able to report for roll call the next morning. Divisional Commander General de Lisle
described the Newfoundland effort as a “magnificent display of trained and disciplined valor” by
soldiers who only failed to achieve their objective “because dead men can advance no farther”
(Cramm 60, Stacey 89). This way of describing a military event with a more than ninety percent
casualty rate gives no sense of what the battle might have been like for the Newfoundland men.
Similar to the account of the sealing accident in the Evening Telegram, no individuals are named
in de Lisle’s description of the Newfoundland soldiers. The April sealing accident and the July 1
disaster at Beaumont Hamel are historical events that Macfarlane’s narrative loops must contend
with; the disasters that occur on the ice and on the muddy slope in France are not points of
narrative departure or return for the Goodyears’ story because the family is spared from direct
involvement in the two events. Macfarlane approaches these tragedies from an emotional, but
impersonal standpoint – his narrative loops (re)visit the personal experiences of family members
in particular places. The loss of men on the ice and at Beaumont Hamel are well documented
and deeply embedded in the memory landscape of Newfoundland: no story about trauma,
memory, and the Great War involving the island would be complete without their inclusion.
Macfarlane steps back from his own story to quote a soldier who remembers the
Newfoundlander on July 1, 1916 “[i]nstinctively... tuck[ing] their chins into an advanced
shoulder, as they had so often done when fighting their way home against a blizzard in some
little outport in far-off Newfoundland” (303). Here, a familiar physical action of advancing in
the face of an Atlantic storm is transposed onto the Western Front. Few of the men who venture
into No Man’s Land on July 1 ever return; their personal experiences and their individual
memories of the war are lost forever.
FINDING A PLACE PAST THE LANDMARKS

The end of the memoir returns us to Gander where Macfarlane reflects on visiting his grandmother. Here, the title of the last chapter “The Danger Tree” echoes the first chapter of the work. The narrator comes to the realization that while his journey to Newfoundland has led him to various sites of memory, the Goodyear family home on Junction Road and the war memorial in Grand Falls, he cannot follow his grandmother into the territory she now inhabits. For Gladys Goodyear, the memories of the Great War, of her husband, and her life in Newfoundland have become disconnected from her current state. She is without a place to call home. Her descent into dementia is described as a foray into “No Man’s Land. She went over the edge, down to an empty place she didn’t know” (295). This loss of memory is another trauma visited on the Goodyear family. Gladys’ mental decline takes her to a place that Macfarlane can only imagine, not unlike the sloping hillside of Beaumont Hamel that the Newfoundland regiment faced on July 1, 1916. Returning to Grand Falls in hopes of witnessing the July 1 Memorial Day parade, Macfarlane finds the community preparing for a Beach Boys concert – Memorial Day was celebrated on the Sunday before July 1 so as not to interfere with Canada Day celebrations. The memory environment that Macfarlane envisions in Grand Falls on July 1, the environment he had hoped to visit at least for a short time, no longer exists. In his work Voices of Collective Remembering, James Wertsch reminds us that “the negotiation of a usable past is seen to change with the demands of the present” (45), and Macfarlane’s disappointment with how July 1 is remembered in Grand Falls is tempered by the realization that times have changed. The narrator himself is actively engaged in the construction of a past that can suit the needs of his present.
As the narrative circles through Grand Falls, Hamilton, and Toronto, Macfarlane demonstrates how memory is portable – it moves with individuals who witness, listen, and (re)tell the stories. To the narrator’s childhood ears, the stories about the Great War are part of a collection of Newfoundland tales. As an adult, Macfarlane comes to understand that the 1914-1918 conflict changes everything. The Great War plays a role in the narrator’s very existence – had Ray, Stan, and Hedley survived, the Goodyear family would be different, Macfarlane’s mother would have experienced life differently, and Macfarlane’s life would be different too.

The past cannot be changed, but it is possible to change the way one conceives of the past. Macfarlane is in transit, between stories, between places, and yet the entire narrative present of the memoir can be reduced to the narrator’s preparing to visit his grandmother in a Gander old-age hospital. Susanna Egan argues that many types of life writing are predicated on an instability or crisis that spurs a writer to create a textual record of existence. “Death,” she notes “is life’s ultimate crisis.” Through language though, a biographer can “create the life of the moment over and over… marking time as [a] present, liminal space rather than in terms of past or future” (225). In reliving the moment just prior to visiting his grandmother, Macfarlane still has hope that her memories can inform the story he is trying to tell. The narrator reaches a point in his life when he can and wants to talk about the Great War, but the people who comprised his community on the summer days of childhood are gone. His grandmother, who “must have known… all the stories [Macfarlane is] looking for” (3, 294), has lost the ability to communicate her own memories as she moves further into the realm of dementia at the end of her life.

Memory is portable, circling through locations as it travels with people. Memory can also be lost. As readers, we return to the place where the memoir starts and Macfarlane draws attention to the looping narrative once more. While the loop has carried us through the lives and
deaths of the Goodyears, the entire narrative structure reveals a lacuna at its core: Macfarlane can never know what the Great War was like and tightening his narrative around one of his great-uncles or focusing solely on the events at Beaumont Hamel will not bring him closer to understanding the 1914-1918 conflict. Circling too tightly around the deaths of the three men means the loss of essential context. Hedley’s passing, for example, devastates his sister Kate for the rest of her life; Macfarlane, however, views Hedley’s death as a fundamental part of a larger memory environment. Born long after Hedley’s death, Macfarlane is not shocked by the absence of his great uncle – the missing pieces of the family story were gone long before the narrator even conceived of a world outside of his Hamilton home, and yet the gaps caused by the Great War have always been present in Macfarlane’s life. His bio-geographic memoir is then an exercise in describing how the long shadow of the conflict shapes his understanding of the world from his earliest days on the veranda in Southern Ontario to his middle-aged journey to Newfoundland in hopes of discovering some vestige of memory that might be communicated by his grandmother.

The full title of Macfarlane’s memoir is The Danger Tree: Memory, War, and the Search for a Family’s Past. The text represents this search, which is an active process, to address the missing pieces of the Goodyear family story. Macfarlane can never “find” the pieces he is looking for, but his narrative provides a framework for the continued absence of his great uncles. In Mirror Talk, Egan cautions against concentrating solely on the product of any autobiographical writing because this focus can distract from the processes taking place within and through the text itself (28). Macfarlane’s practice of narrative looping succeeds because the gaps created by the deaths of his great uncles refuse to be filled – the losses of Hedley, Stan, and Ray are constantly revisited, but there can be no resolution. From his second-generation, post-
Great War perspective, the “there and then” of the Great War resists incorporation into the narrator’s present because he is so distant from it. The only way to access the stories of the 1914-1918 conflict is to engage in these memory manoeuvres that circle out and return to defined places. By the end of Macfarlane’s memoir the “interval that… separated the reported action from the narrating act becomes gradually smaller until it is finally reduced to zero: the narrative has reached the here and the now, the story has overtaken the narrating” (Genette 227, emphasis in original). The narrator circles back to his starting place, but the stories of the Goodyears and of Macfarlane himself continue past the final page of The Danger Tree. The text stands as a testament, a lieu de mémoire which contains the memory environments of four generations that will endure past the author’s own lifetime.
Set primarily in Merville, British Columbia, Jack Hodgins’ *Broken Ground* is a fictional account, created by an elderly Charlie MacIntosh in the late 1990s, of the returned soldier settlement on Vancouver Island and the forest fire that threatened the community in 1922. Created to provide returning Canadian servicemen with farming opportunities following the Great War, the Returned Soldier Settlement Act provided loans for veterans to purchase land for agricultural use or to lease a lot in an area designated specifically for returned soldiers. Two such areas were created in British Columbia, one on the East Coast of Vancouver Island and one in the Central Kootenay region (see appendix). While actual government support for the two settlements was extremely limited, the Soldier Settlement Board expected a great deal from the men who applied for loans: a key feature of the land settlement scheme, as noted in a 1921 government report, was “preserving the initiative and personal responsibility of the settler with respect to his undertaking” (*Soldier Settlement on the Land* 13). The report goes on to emphasize this personal responsibility: “[t]he board does not insist that any man take any particular land and does not ‘place’ him on land. The settler places himself” (13). Despite this individual act of placing oneself, soldier settlers could not survive unless they worked together as a community. The only common attributes among residents of the Portuguese Creek in *Broken Ground* are the Great War and the clearing of land in the new settlement. Learning to live as a community in this new place takes time; residents bring their own traditions, their own stories, to Portuguese Creek and it will be a generation before Charlie MacIntosh is informally designated the town’s historian.
*Broken Ground* introduces characters from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities and suggests that no one perspective can provide an authoritative account of life in the Portuguese Creek settlement. Hodgins’ historical fiction is composed of three different types of storytelling: the multiple local perspectives in “Voices from Portuguese Creek 1922,” a collection of letters in “The Fields of France 1918-1919” from Matthew Pearson to his wife Maude, and the remembrances and post-memory reflections of Charlie MacIntosh in “A Helmet for the Bees 1996.” Pearson and MacIntosh are two of the eleven voices that open the first section, “Voices from Portuguese Creek,” and it will be their bio-geographic stories that provide the lens through which we view the events of the Great War and the local disaster of the fire. Unlike the backtracking and empty spaces that are woven into each of David Macfarlane’s narrative loops in *The Danger Tree*, the metaleptic shifts in time in *Broken Ground* are clearly marked; the narrative order of events begins with the local fire, moves to Europe and the events of the war, and lastly brings us almost to the present day by providing a late twentieth century representation of Portuguese Creek history. The three sections demonstrate Egan’s concept of mirror talk because each part focuses on the “intense involvement of [a] narrator with [a] subject or [a] self-recognition in terms of the imagined perceptions of others, but also of co-respondance, in which two or more voices encounter one another, or interact” (3). Pearson and MacIntosh are the primary voices of interaction in *Broken Ground*, but there are members of the community who never speak, who lack the ability to encounter others in the narrative created about trauma and memory.
A PLACE TO CALL HOME

The Great War is rarely an explicit topic of discussion for the residents of Portuguese Creek. While a quiet word between returned soldiers late at night hints at the lingering traumatic effects of the conflict, the public conversations about the 1914-1918 conflict tend to focus on the local and sometimes petty realities of life: criticism of government policies and the Land Settlement Act or the power struggle between women over the display of an embroidered picture celebrating peace and victory in 1918 (Hodgins 40). These are safe topics for discussion about the war and they fit into a shared understanding of what the conflict means for Canada in the post-war era. Jonathan Vance speaks to the creation of a dialogue between homefront civilians and returned soldiers in *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*; he suggests that the two groups were able to construct a shared narrative of sorts from their different understandings of the conflict, but it is a story that diverges along experiential lines: “[e]x-soldiers and non-combatants were not speaking different languages; rather, their discourse took them from the same starting point to the same destination along two different routes” (110).

The community of Portuguese Creek is a literal destination point where a group of diverse people from similar starting points must find a way of working through the challenges of the present, clearing old-growth forest and farming on glacial till, before they can begin to talk about their differing conceptions of the conflict. Kirmayer argues that “[r]econstructions of traumatic memory involve the building up of a landscape of local coherence to better manage or contain it, to present it convincingly to others and, finally to have done with it” (182). In “Voices from Portuguese Creek,” set only four years after the 1918 armistice, the upheaval of returning from Europe and then moving to the East coast of Vancouver Island means that the settlers have not
had the time to settle, to think of Portuguese Creek as home. For these early residents, the memory landscape, the *milieu de mémoire*, is still in the process of being built.

A child’s voice open the first section of *Broken Ground* as Charlie MacIntosh recounts the arrival of a stranger in Portuguese Creek from his vantage point in the attic of his family’s home. From his position at the attic window, Charlie describes the main road, the general store, the blacksmith shop and the residents of Portuguese Creek who are busy with their daily routines. Looming over this opening scene from “Voices from Portuguese Creek” is the forest fire that will shape the future of the community. When Charlie begins his story “the air [i]s still blue with the smoke that wouldn’t leave” (9). This disaster, compounded by an arid summer and a logging train mishap that brings the fire directly into the settlement, destroys buildings, kills livestock, injures many, and claims the lives of two residents. This shared moment of local catastrophe overwrites the individual Great War experiences of a soldier settler like Matthew Pearson who is in the process of constructing his own landscape of memory about Portuguese Creek. Pearson’s singular perspective on the war is at the heart of *Broken Ground*. The central section of the work, “The Fields of France 1918-1919,” is composed of Pearson’s letters to his wife and excerpts from his notebooks during the war years. These first-person accounts of life in Europe during and shortly after the war are separated from the descriptions of life in Portuguese Creek offered by the multiple voices in the first section and the autobiographical memory work of Charlie MacIntosh in the final section. While Pearson’s account of his wartime experience resides between the two descriptions of the soldier settlement, the memories of his infidelity in France and his inability to comfort a condemned man continue to haunt Pearson in his new environment. However, Pearson’s personal concerns about his past actions only reveal
themselves when the three sections are examined as part of a varied and shifting landscape of memory that relies on multiple narrators in dialogue with one another.

Educating Portuguese Creek children about the local fire in 1922 and the global conflict from 1914-1918 involves two different types of dialogue – personal performance and impersonal recitation of an established historical narrative. When Matthew Pearson becomes the settlement’s school teacher, Charlie MacIntosh tells the reader that while “[Pearson] considered the fire an important part of the curriculum... he preferred to say little about it himself, but formed the habit of inviting people from the community to tell it, a different group every year of folk competing to relate the most thorough, dramatic, hair-raising, or comical version of the great disaster” (Hodgins 328). This education of school children is exactly the type of institutionally inherited *milieu de mémoire* that Nora claims has been lost with the disappearance of a peasant culture (7). The forest fire has attached itself via memory to Portuguese Creek and is related not from a textbook or as a lecture, but as a story told by those who lived through it. James Wertsch, in attempting to theorize how forms of collective remembrance are mediated, writes that collective memory emerges when “members of a group all have participated in the event being remembered and hence have memories of it based on their individual experiences. The existence of similar memories across individuals in such cases is simply a reflection of the fact that everyone in the group happened to have had the same experience individually” (25). Wertsch notes that this phenomenon of seemingly homogeneous collective memory rarely exists because each individual has a different understanding of the same event, especially when a narrative or “textual resource” is used to remember a shared experience (7). Certain narrative elements like the fire occurring in the summer and the evacuation to the beach persist, but the stories of the forest fire are embellished with each annual telling and by each subsequent generation. This
seemingly competitive storytelling, which marks the transmission of information about the forest fire, is distinctly different from the manner in which the 1914-1918 conflict is communicated to students in the settlement: “[w]hen the History curriculum dictated that he could not avoid the Great War, Pearson confined himself to facts and figures” (329). This recitation of textbook information does not present the opportunity for dialogue. By refusing to enter into a dialogue about the war, Pearson’s personal memories remain outside the ongoing community narrative of Portuguese Creek.

STORIES FROM THE FRONT

Pearson is most candid about the war in the fading light of evening in the privacy of his own home. Having invited newcomer Wyatt Taylor for dinner, Pearson is surprisingly open about the events that led up to the execution of Hugh Corbett, a former student and fellow enlisted man. Here Pearson, in the presence of his wife, is relating a story that he has told before. At the end of his tale, Pearson critiques his performance: “I haven’t been able to tell you even this one small episode without leaning on the passive voice and that faceless ‘they’ for support. And you wonder why you don’t hear me telling tales of my ‘war experiences’? I would be ashamed of the words I would have to use” (101). Matthew Pearson can only say so much about the war in front of his wife in a house that includes his veteran invalid brother-in-law Donald McCormack. Taylor’s question about what Donald would make of the settlement spurs Pearson to rail against the false promises of “adventure and heroism” that resulted in Maude’s brother being wounded on his first day in the line (93). Donald is well looked-after by his sister and makes regular appearances at community events in Portuguese Creek, but he is a silent presence who spends most of the day sleeping in his wheelchair with his face half-hidden behind
a prosthesis. Both Maude and Matthew wonder what, if anything, Donald is capable of experiencing or what he remembers about the war. When Pearson begins his story about Corbett, he tells Taylor that Hugh’s “story is nearly as short as Donald’s,” implying that whatever narrative his brother-in-law might have been a part of during the war does not extend to his present condition in a returned soldiers’ settlement (93).

Laurence Kirmayer writes that “[w]hen the costs of recollection seem catastrophic for self or others, memory may be sequestered in a virtual (mental) space that is asocial, a space that closes in on itself through the conviction that no telling will ever be possible” (189). Pearson’s retelling of Corbett’s execution, the version he shares with Maude and Taylor, is a remembrance of a past event that has a place in the narrative of Portuguese Creek – Corbett and Donald were best friends; to talk about one man requires mention of the other. If Matthew Pearson were to disclose his wartime experience fully, it would mean acknowledging his affair with a young woman in France – something that would significantly alter his position in the settlement as devoted husband and family man. In the returned soldiers’ settlement, the memory of this experience is outside the realm of telling. Pearson can only reflect on his relationship with the young French woman when he is outside the social landscape of the Portuguese Creek community. The “false ruin” of an abandoned sawmill on the outskirts of the settlement allows Pearson to journey back in memory to a “shelled and ransacked village church in France” (Hodgins 103-4). The ruined church marks the site of Pearson’s and the young French woman’s

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1 Canadians who remained at home during the Great War had their own expectations about what returned soldiers would do when they made their way back to Canada. In his September 1918 pamphlet, “After Hell – What?”, W.D. Cowan imagined that war veterans would disappear back into the landscape from whence they came: “[h]ow many thousands of our soldiers have come from western farms I do not know, but there are many, and every one of these, except the cripple, when the war is over, will melt back to his own home, and be mighty glad to do it. They will vanish as in a night, and again become the best of citizens in the best of pursuits” (7). According to this classification, Donald resists reincorporation into the community because of his disabled status; Cowan suggests that only those in sound physical condition, saying nothing of their mental condition, would be able to carry out this disappearing act.
relationship; the church becomes a *lieu de mémoire* for the woman who refuses to abandon her town, hoping that her community will return. The sawmill becomes a *lieu de mémoire* for Pearson where the memories of his time in France are translated onto, and yet held separate from, the local landscape of Vancouver Island.

A child, Elizabeth, results from Pearson’s relationship and she returns with Matthew to Canada following the war. The mere fact of Elizabeth’s existence is a constant reminder of Pearson’s infidelity and complicates the notion that what occurred overseas can be kept separated from what happens in Canada. However, Elizabeth does not enter into her father’s memories of France that are prompted by the abandoned sawmill. Pearson’s motivation for his late-night visits amongst the industrial debris is the hope “that the ruin would offer something of what the girl had claimed for her shelled church – the past, the future, the heart and soul of the village” (116). This hope reflects what Nora would call a moment of “historiographical anxiety” (10); Pearson is desperate for some sense of history in Portuguese Creek, some ancestral referent that would provide proof that it is possible to make a life in this inhospitable environment of Vancouver Island. Badly injured in his search for Elizabeth during the fire, Pearson is drawn back to the sawmill, at which point the distinction between the settlement and the abandoned French town disappears: “this,” Pearson knows, “is what [he has] been traveling towards all along” (181). Before Pearson can make sense of what happens during the fire, of life in general in Portuguese Creek, the sequestered memories of France must be brought to light in Canada if they are ever to become a part of the ongoing narrative about himself, his family, and the settlement.

Matthew Pearson’s solution to the devastation of the fire and Elizabeth’s death is to leave Portuguese Creek. While Maude refuses to leave, claiming the settlement as their place:
“[w]e’ve made this ours. We’ve done too much here now. It’s home” (254), the trauma of the fire and loss of his daughter are too much for Matthew Pearson and he leaves his wife and surviving children to return to Europe. Although this second trip to Europe is an attempt to create a personal narrative and order the events of his life, “Matthew Pearson didn’t know what his story was” (303). Pearson accumulates more lived experience on his return trip to France, but there is no cathartic redemption in his travels. There is no place in Europe that accounts for who he has become in the years following the war and Pearson comes to the conclusion that “[w]hatever he had yet to find out about himself and his life... he would have to find out, like everyone else, at home” (315). It is only from a distance that Pearson conceives of Portuguese Creek as home, not because of any enduring hereditary connection to the place, but because his family, his community resides in the settlement. When he returns to Vancouver Island, Pearson becomes an active social participant in the life of the community where he attends local events, and returns to the profession that he held before the war as the settlement’s school teacher. In his first attempt at settlement in Portuguese Creek, Pearson brings boxes of books from Ontario – the tools of his original trade – but he has no time for the volumes of Chaucer, Tennyson, and Hardy after the war (54). Pearson’s second sojourn in France provides the necessary distance to return to these texts as an educator and “to see them with new and more modern eyes” (328). Instead of viewing the literary works as incapable of addressing the condition of the post-war world, Pearson’s new perspective accommodates these past modes of expression, just as he learns to accommodate his past sense of self as a teacher. However, he is never able to fully relate his personal experience of the war, and the troubling and untellable events that take place in Europe are confined to the letters and notebooks that are stored away while Matthew deals with the trials and triumphs of being at home.
Years after Matthew Pearson’s return, Maude relates her version of events to Charlie MacIntosh – it will be MacIntosh’s bio-geography, where he acts as a metadiegetic narrator who provides a frame for the events of the story (Genette 228) that finally brings together Pearson’s wartime experience in France and his life in Portuguese Creek. Maude reveals that Matthew blamed her for Elizabeth’s death and she tells Charlie how difficult it was to come to terms with her husband’s adultery (Hodgins 243). MacIntosh describes the moment of Maude’s disclosure in the same manner that David Macfarlane writes of Kate Goodyear’s death in The Danger Tree: the minute details of the “cool parlour” and the “curled and twisted shapes of verandah honeysuckle vines shift[ing] in the patch of autumn sunlight on the painted floor” relate Charlie’s lived experience of hearing Maude’s story. Maude’s description of Matthew as a bitter and reproachful man in the aftermath of the fire that takes Elizabeth’s life is difficult for Charlie to reconcile with his vision of Matthew Pearson: “I found this hard to imagine,” Charlie writes, “[e]ven hearing it years later I didn’t want to believe it” (243). Despite his disbelief, MacIntosh’s narrative provides a sense of order for the Pearsons’ experience; because Charlie is distanced from the trauma of the war, the pain of Matthew’s betrayal of Maude, and the loss of Elizabeth, he can view these events as related points on a landscape of memory. Matthew Pearson never achieves this distance – his knowledge of events is always that of primary experiential memory, never the post-memory position that Charlie MacIntosh occupies.

REPRESENTING THE PAST

In the third section of Broken Ground, “A Helmet for the Bees 1996,” Charlie MacIntosh is the sole intradiegetic narrator who switches between heterodiegetic narration, where the storyteller is within the story but outside the events, and homodiegetic narration, where the
storyteller relates an autobiographic narrative in which he is always present (Genette 248). This final section of the novel engages with previous representations of the settlement at Portuguese Creek and focuses on a late twentieth century film adaptation of the 1922 fire. As an elderly man in “A Helmet for the Bees,” MacIntosh has the benefit of hindsight that those who relate the events of the fire in “Voice from Portuguese Creek” lacked. Having spent almost his entire life in Portuguese Creek, MacIntosh is looked to as a local authority when Jeff Macken arrives to make a film about the forest fire of 1922. MacIntosh comments that “[a]fter a lifetime of ‘Getting the Story Straight,’ as my newspaper column claimed to do, I can take advantage of an opportunity I could never hope for as a newspaperman – to add to what I remember seeing and hearing myself, and to what I’ve been told by others, the product of my own imagination” (283).

Egan argues that this compulsion to set the record straight and avoid the misinterpretation of past accounts is a common theme that haunts the autobiographical genre because the writer knows that his life and his storytelling will one day cease (196). Taking advantage of this opportunity near the end of his life, MacIntosh is critical of contemporary representations that reflect an outsider’s need to tell an interesting story rather than respecting the lived experiences, the biogeographies, of Portuguese Creek.

Commenting on media, performance, and audience, John Ellis argues that the “cinema in smaller communities tends to perform a different function [from that in an urban center] where most of the audience are acquainted with each other. Here the entertainment is related to particular characteristics of individuals or the place itself. The film comes from outside, the cinema belongs to the particular place” (qtd in Bennett 110). Jeff Macken’s film premieres at the twin cinema in Courtenay, not far from Portuguese Creek. Here, the movie theatre is a lieu de mémoire, a site outside the everyday lived experience of local residents, yet it is a place where
important memory work takes place. The assembled audience is made up of a few of the original residents, family members who have gathered for the occasion, and contemporary citizens of the area – the film premiere is a shared experience that will become part of the ongoing *milieu de mémoire* of Portuguese Creek. The film itself blurs the boundaries between *lieu* and *milieu*: the film was shot on location in Portuguese Creek, but the resulting representation of local history is focalized through an outsider’s perspective. The Macken film is not bio-geography because the creative persona who constructs this particular version of the past does not have an ongoing personal connection to the community he depicts. The Macken depiction of the 1922 fire revolves around the director’s great aunt Nora, a woman who Charlie MacIntosh has viewed as "an easily dismissed stock figure" for most of his life (324). While particular members of the early settlement are given a prominent role in the film, the version of history presented at the twin cinema can never encompass the *milieu de mémoire* of the actual events of the fire and some important elements and people will ultimately be excluded from this cinematic representation.

Charlie MacIntosh’s account of the premiere is the only report we have of the events that take place during the 1996 screening. The multiple perspectives of “Voices from Portuguese Creek” have given way to one voice, one representing consciousness, who relates his own sense of “being there,” both at the screening and during the events that inspire it. He relates the moments of foreignness that highlight Nora Macken’s perspective on the fire, but he finds a way to identify with the film when it illustrates moments that are a part of his own understanding of the past; here, Charlie notes that we are back on “familiar ground” or back in “familiar territory” (324). The metaphor of a story as a recognizable and negotiable terrain endorses the notion of personal and collective memory as a type of landscape that contains a variety of vantage points;
events that seem natural to MacIntosh in his own remembrance of the settlement may seem entirely contrived and artificial to another settler who occupied the same social and physical landscape. MacIntosh sees a version of himself portrayed on screen as a young boy atop a giant root mass watching Wyatt Taylor make his way into the settlement. In this sense, Jeff Macken’s film echoes the beginning of “Voices from Portuguese Creek” where a young MacIntosh peers out an attic window – the basic premise of Charlie as witness to events remains, but the film version of MacIntosh does not mirror Charlie’s own recollection of Taylor’s arrival.

Sitting in the dark of the movie theater, Charlie reflects on a problem that any post-memory representation, including Macken’s film, faces when trying to portray events that the creator or director was never alive to see:

I wondered what effect this movie would have upon future accounts of the War’s survivors and the Fire of ’22. Was this the “true” story we were witnessing now in this world of popcorn and rustling candy wrappers? Would it become the true story, erasing from our memories the versions we’d heard a thousand times from those who’d been there and from those whose parents had been there? Had we been honoured and celebrated and immortalized by celluloid, or had something been stolen from us that we would never get back. (329-30)

Charlie MacIntosh’s musings on memory in the twin cinema brings back the notion of a virtual environment of memory. Unlike the abandoned sawmill that prompts Matthew Pearson’s memory journey to the ruined French church, the “world of popcorn and rustling candy wrappers” (329-30) is contrived and uncomfortable. Where Pearson went in search of a feeling of hope he once experienced, MacIntosh begins to wonder if anything that he personally
experienced as an early resident of the settlement will endure past Jeff Macken’s representation of events.

Charlie grows nostalgic for the stories of those who lived through the 1922 fire and begins to compare his own lived experience with the event depicted on screen. This sentimental longing for dialogue with those who have passed away is interrupted by circumstances in the present when Donald MacCormack begins to distract the audience with an incoherent grunting that refuses to be silenced. Thinking back to this moment when the present interrupts the representation of the past, MacIntosh writes: “[w]e’d gone through the entire film and not seen a glimpse of Donald MacCormack. It must have occurred to him that we were never going to see Donald MacCormack in this world. No Donald MacCormack lived there” (333). Excluding Donald from the story of the 1922 fire glosses over the trauma of the Great War that lingers in the returned soldier settlement – other returned men become farmers, loggers, machinists, and settlers, but Donald can never participate in these activities. He remains the severely disabled war veteran of the Great War, outliving many of those who returned from the war with their physical faculties intact. His increasing agitation at the twin cinema in 1996 climaxes in a burst of physical exertion when “[t]he hand shot out, jerked back, slapped at its own face, and shot out again with something it then flung over the heads of the others” (333). The use of definite, not personal, articles here emphasizes the seemingly inhuman qualities of these actions on the part of a man whom MacIntosh is familiar with only as a nodding body in a wheelchair.

Throwing off his mask, Donald reveals a “collapsed hole in the middle of a face where a nose ought to be … a mouth that falls inward shapelessly like the crumbling entrance to an abandoned coal-mine shaft” (334). MacIntosh reports that “[i]t was hard to believe this calamity had been amongst us all these years without our seeing it” (334). Donald’s lived experience of
the Great War can be approximated we know he was injured by shrapnel on his first day in the line, but his voice is always absent. MacCormack embodies the trauma of the Great War; his experience is that which can never be told, an absence that can be covered up by the necessities of getting on with life in Canada, but it is a void that can never be filled. Theorizing how trauma is related in narrative, Cathy Caruth writes that trauma is “always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (4). The presence of a wound, or of the wounded in Donald MacCormack’s case, only tells us that trauma has occurred; we see evidence of an event, but the lived experience of trauma, as Caruth points out, requires articulation. Donald’s attempt at speech is incoherent, sounding like “the language of same race that had learned to talk without benefit of teeth or lips or maybe even tongues” (Hodgins 333). This of course is not Donald’s description, but Charlie MacIntosh’s attempt to write about what takes place during the screening of Jeff Macken’s film. Lulled into a state of personal contemplation by the events depicted on screen, MacIntosh is increasingly concerned with his own life story and how he fits into the returned soldier settlement. Donald’s “voice” in the movie theatre is a “plea by an other who is asking to be seen and heard, this call by which the other commands us to awaken” (Caruth 9).

GETTING THE STORY RIGHT

Donald’s plea marks the chronological end of Charlie MacIntosh’s story, but the narrative of “A Helmet for the Bees” continues on with MacIntosh’s remembrance of when Matthew Pearson returned from France. Donald’s cries impel MacIntosh to revisit his own version of events and we see that the story of the returned soldier settlement is never complete, but it can be reimagined, rewritten, and (re)remembered. He addresses the reader in the final
pages of this section when he writes: “I could not have imagined… that at this ridiculous age of eighty-four I would feel compelled to sit on my backside day after day for the months it would take me to hammer out these pages” (345). The composite creation that is *Broken Ground* relies on MacIntosh’s commitment to producing a coherent narrative while taking into account existing interpretations of the past in “Voices from Portuguese Creek,” Matthew Pearson’s letters from France, and Jeff Macken’s 1996 film. In the final section of the novel we learn that “Voices from Portuguese Creek” is actually the 1970s work of Corky Desmond’s grandson who interviewed the early residents of the settlement and “then wrote it up the way he imagined [they] might have told it if [they] had told it all at once quite soon after the fire” (256). Desmond’s grandson is the extradiegetic narrator who exists outside the story being told but creates and organizes “Voices from Portuguese Creek.”

The conclusion to this first section is unsatisfying and open because we do not discover what happens to the settlement or its residents after the fire. Arbitrary and inconclusive as this ending might be, it does point to the impossibility of telling such a personal and site-specific post-memory story. The virtual invisibility of Desmond’s grandson in the text, he never speaks and the reader does not learn of his existence until late in the novel, points to his functional role in the compilation of Charlie’s own bio-geography: “Voices from Portuguese Creek” is revealed to be a *lieu de mémoire*, a representative text, within the *milieu de mémoire*, the personal lived experience, that Charlie describes in the final section. Genette argues that the designations of a narrator within, intradiegetic, or outside, extradiegetic, of the story being told refer “not [to] individuals, but [to] relative situations and functions” (229). MacIntosh’s ongoing story is in literal and situational dialogue with the story created by Desmond’s grandson – the two accounts of Portuguese Creek history enclose the Great War experiences of Matthew Pearson and this
tripartite compilation becomes a *lieu de mémoire* in its own right. The three accounts of personal 
lived experience, both the real and the imagined *milieux de mémoire* described by Desmond’s 
grandson, Pearson, and MacIntosh, overlap and intersect and are ultimately held together by the 
bio-geographic framework of self, memory, and place that Charlie MacIntosh creates.

Anthony Paul Kerby, writing on conceptions of narrative and identity, argues that “t]o 
understand a life is to trace its development upon a narrative thread, a thread that unites 
otherwise disparate or unheeded happenings into the significance of a development, a 
directionality, a destiny” (40). MacIntosh’s own narrative thread incorporates past 
representations of the Portuguese Creek like Desmond’s grandson’s account and Macken’s film, 
but neither of these two stories includes the key moment in the twin cinema; for Charlie, all 
narrative threads in the history of the settlement lead to the moment of Donald MacCormack’s 
unmasking. This moment of revelation in the twin cinema, a *lieu de mémoire* within the *milieu 
de mémoire* of Portuguese Creek, mirrors thefiguring of the Great War in *Broken Ground* as an 
event that must be recognized and acknowledged as part of the ongoing lived experience of the 
settlement. MacIntosh’s bio-geography bears witness to these traumatic events without 
attempting to force them into a definitive and all-encompassing story. The life story that Charlie 
offers, his *lieu de mémoire*, is always entangled with the memory of the Great War despite the 
fact he was too young to have primary memories of the conflict. The personal experiences of 
Matthew Pearson and Donald MacCormack are given space in MacIntosh’s bio-geography as 
*lieux de mémoire*, important representations and reminders of a past that cannot be glossed over 
and erased from the *milieu de mémoire* of Portuguese Creek. Charlie sees past his initial 
skepticism about Maude’s stories of Matthew Pearson’s infidelity and recognizes the 
impossibility of Matthew Pearson relating this story to his fellow settlers. MacIntosh’s account
of Donald at the twin cinema does not capture the injured man's war experience, but describes his rage at being left out of a representation that purports to depict the Portuguese Creek community as it was in 1922. In his role as bio-geographer, Charlie presents a story that weaves together the multiple threads of lived experience in his community and presents his representation of Portuguese Creek as one that is forever in process, reflecting the ongoing negotiation of the Great War in local memory and history.
The events of *Unity (1918)* take place in the final months of 1918 as the residents, immigrants, travelers, and returned soldiers who assemble in a small Saskatchewan town struggle to come to terms with the global changes of the Great War and the local disaster of the influenza virus that indiscriminately claims lives. Hart Thorson, blinded by a gas attack in the war, arrives in Unity with word that an illness is circulating in Eastern Canada. His arrival is greeted with polite wariness by a local man who extols the virtues of living in the rural prairie because “[y]ou can see things coming from a long ways off” (38). However, the perceived distance from the conflict in Europe and the spreading illness in Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada does not protect the residents of Unity; their lives are irreparably altered by these global disasters that are made manifest in the return (or in the failure to return) of soldiers to the small Saskatchewan town and the subsequent deaths of local residents who fall victim to the virus.

These changes to the local memory landscape of Unity are recorded by Beatrice Wilde, who acts as the bio-geographic focal point for the prairie community. Beatrice’s journal, which provides the opening and closing lines of the play, is the primary bio-geographic record at the heart of the drama, reflecting a locally situated perspective on the conflict from the Canadian homefront. However, Beatrice’s geographic isolation – she can see things coming from a long ways off – does not mean that she can preserve the landscape of memory that exists in Unity while the war drags on in Europe. Her view of the war is shattered when soldiers return with stories and experiences that challenge her imagined version of the conflict. Beatrice lives and dies on the stage and her bio-geographic account of the life in Unity concludes without resolution. The
opportunity to construct a reflective memoir about the Great War’s impact on her community is
denied by the catastrophe of the influenza epidemic that claims Beatrice at the age of twenty-one.

The autobiographical memoir of *The Danger Tree* and the historical fiction of *Broken
Ground* are novel-length bio-geographical representations of their respective communities’
response to the Great War. These two works are sites of memory that provide a fictional account
of an environment of memory. With *Unity (1918)* the distinction between the *milieu de mémoire*
described in the text and the text as a *lieu de mémoire* in the twenty-first century world is further
problematised by the play in performance. Beatrice and her community are made present and
visible on stage – the performers and the audience are real people who are participating in an
event in a space that is specifically designated for a particular activity. The theatre, like the twin
cinema in Charlie MacIntosh’s representation of Portuguese Creek, is a *lieu de mémoire* that is
differentiated from the everyday environment, yet is firmly located within the larger *milieu de
mémoire* of a community’s lived experience. When *Unity (1918)* is performed, the audience and
the actors are witnesses to enacted bio-geography. The play captures Beatrice in the act of
writing in the first scene and she returns to her diary throughout the play. Her diary is the bio-
geographic text at the centre of the play and rather than offering a summary account of her life in
Unity, Beatrice’s journal is a work in progress. This singular perspective on life in Unity is
complemented by the depiction of the community on stage: while some voices elude the
representative work offered by Macfarlane and MacIntosh, the audience sees all of the
individuals who make up Beatrice’s community, even if she neglects or is unable to mention
them in her diary.


REPRESENTING THE WORLD: RECORDING LIFE IN UNITY

_Utity (1918)_ opens with Beatrice Wilde recounting the events of her twenty-first birthday on October 15, 1918. Beatrice’s words create the world of the play as she duly notes how her day has been spent. She frames the first mention of the war in the voice of her sister who relates a letter from her fiancé serving in France:

BEA: ...Richard says,

MARY: We’re going to win.

BEA: Richard says,

MARY: He killed a German with his bare hands!

BEA: Richard says,

MARY: He’s now in bed with the flu and when he’s better he’s coming home. (12)

While Beatrice imagines herself as a bystander in this epistolary exchange between Richard and Mary, her community – made up of her fellow residents in Unity and those away in Europe – is beginning to take shape. Richard’s letter offers news from the outside world and a promise that he will return to Saskatchewan soon. His current illness is but a slight delay prior to his homecoming that will reunite him with Mary. In this exchange between the Wilde sisters, Beatrice is both a participant in and observer of the conversation – the distinction between the action of the dialogue and the recording of the event is blurred. This short diary entry introduces three of the major issues of the play: the war as it is imagined by the homefront population, the influenza virus that will be carried by war veterans, and the long hoped for return of the men fighting overseas.

Beatrice is engaged in “performative auto/biographics,” the process Sherrill Grace describes as the “practice of creating a life story in a script and on stage that becomes a version
of that life” (67). Grace’s examination of performative auto/biographics builds on Phillippe Lejeune’s notion of an “autobiographical pact” that is created between a writer who produces a life narrative and a reader who takes the narrative to be an authentic and accurate description of the author’s life. The very nature of a play taking place in the constructed environment of the theatre with actors, costumes, sets, and lighting, being performed for an audience draws attention to the artificiality of the material being presented. The theatre is a lieu de mémoire, a site of representation, but the theatre is also part of the performers’ and the audiences’ lived experience, their milieu de mémoire.  

When Unity (1918) is performed, the audience is not witness to Saskatchewan at the end of the Great War any more than The Danger Tree transports the reader to Grand Falls, Newfoundland. What is revealed is a representation, a version of a life story. While the text of Unity (1918) remains the same, each performance of the work differs depending on the environment in which it is staged, the actors who portray the characters, and the audience who observes the production.

The complications of the theatre as a lived experience and memory environment, a milieu de mémoire, and as a designated place set aside for representation and reenactment, a lieu de mémoire, suggests that places and spaces of memory are not entirely disconnected in the way that Nora proposes. In his study of theatre performance, “In Comes I” Performance, Memory and Landscape, Mike Pearson examines the connection between performance, space, and audience. He writes that “[a]lthough the theme [of a play] may be fictional, the place is never so: performers do not experience it metaphorically. The constructed setting of performance may be

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6 While Nora might argue that the theatre can only be designated as a lieu de mémoire (a functional site where rituals of a society lacking the institutional rituals of church, state, and family can take place), I suggest that the theatre blurs the boundaries between lieu de mémoire and milieu de mémoire. The performance of a drama requires participants who collaborate in the transitional space of the theatre in the staging of a story; when the performance ends and the audience and the actors leave the theatre, the remembrance of the performance becomes part of their ongoing lived experience.
active, and environmental conditions, the ecology of this special world – surface, climate, illumination, temperature – may be much better or worse than in everyday life” (220 emphasis in original). The locations depicted in Unity (1918): the Wilde family home, the train station, the mortuary, the cemetery, and the dispatch office, make up the fictional community of Unity in the winter of 1918. While these places comprise the “special world” that Pearson describes, they are the total social and physical landscape of the play; characters make important references to Saskatoon, Halifax, and Europe, but these places are never depicted on stage. The various locales staged in Unity (1918) are limited to Beatrice’s known world – this is her bio-geography. In the upheaval of the influenza epidemic, returning soldiers, and the ending of the war, Unity is in a transition period. Beatrice, however, is excluded from this transition; her role is that of diarist and witness to the events that take place in her small Saskatchewan town.

Set designer Robert Gardiner’s virtual model for the 2001 Touchstone Theatre of Unity (1918) (see figure 1) emphasizes the seemingly contradictory tropes of stasis and change in the play. This representation of Unity depicts the train station stage left and an interior space stage right divided by train tracks. People come and go from Unity, but Beatrice never leaves; she crosses back and forth between the public space of the train station and the enclosed spaces of her home and the mortuary. The platform stage right doubles as the domestic space of the Wilde home and the private space of the town’s funeral home, where the returned soldier Hart Thorson resides upon his arrival in Unity. In the public sphere, Beatrice is a passive watcher and witness – in the more private realms of her family’s home and at the mortuary, Beatrice is an active agent: knitting, preparing meals, and tending to Hart’s wounds. However, the activities that are given prominence in Beatrice’s diary are the events that take place in the public sphere where she is often configured as a bystander. Gardiner’s virtual model provides a sense of the physical
setting for imagining Unity as a place that is both isolated and in transition: the sites of memory – the cemetery and the mortuary in particular – reveal themselves as temporary spaces activated by the performers who inhabit the constructed environment of memory depicted on stage.

BRINGING THE WAR HOME

Beatrice dutifully notes the events of the day in her diary, recording the important news from the Saskatoon newspaper, local happenings, and the gossip passed along by Doris and Rose at the dispatch office. Robert Rutherford writes that this type of local communication, shared via “public events and information flows... produced novel emotions and ideas as people imagined,
felt, and invented interpretations of how the war was affecting them and how it might shape their future" (xiii). Beatrice’s two sisters, Mary and Sissy, have definite ideas about what their futures hold after the war. For Mary, this means that Richard will come home, they will be married and the war will be remembered as a short interruption in the ongoing story of their lives. Sissy’s version strays into the absurd, no less imagined than Mary’s ideas about the war, when she predicts an apocalyptic reckoning. Though these two anticipated outcomes from the 1914-1918 conflict are conversely hopeful and pessimistic, both result from information that comes from outside Unity: Mary’s imaginings are based on Richard’s letters that arrive from France and Sissy’s ideas about the end of the world come from a “strange book” given to her by a soldier on her trip to Edmonton (13). Beatrice’s understanding of the world outside of Unity and the events of the Great War comes primarily from the Saskatchewan newspaper – a publication that takes liberties with the truth in its “stories of Canadian bravery” (96). Mary and Sissy receive information directly from men in uniform, but Beatrice only has the impersonal newspaper to satisfy her need for a story about the war. While Mary and Sissy are participants in the flow of information from Europe and the stories circulating in Canada, Beatrice is a static receptor of news – she has no personal connection to events that are happening outside of Unity. Beatrice’s diary writing represents her imagined version of the war as she chronicles the changes she sees taking place in her community.

Exploring the notion of place in Canadian Prairie literature, Deborah Keahey reflects on the importance of configuring one’s home from a distance. She comments that “while individuals’ readings of the land or ‘place’ may be overdetermined by their own history or cognitive structures, to the point that their readings appear transparent or ‘natural,’ the significance of the land or place itself is relatively unrestricted, open to multiple and various
readings” (6-7 emphasis in original). Beatrice’s perspective on life in Unity is very much overdetermined – the small Saskatchewan town is her place and her existence is largely shaped by the domestic responsibilities of the Wilde household. Beatrice is constantly looking out at the world, imagining what life outside of Unity might be like, but she lacks a critical self awareness of the place she has occupied during her formative years. Stories, for Beatrice, come from the outside world, not from the mundane existence of a young woman in a farming town on the Canadian Prairie. The arrival of a returned soldier brings with it the promise of a first-hand account about life in Europe during the war. “A soldier,” Beatrice says in an aside to the audience. “A wounded soldier. So beautiful, so horribly beautiful. And we all wanted from him something we had been waiting so long for – contact with that other world. A story. A war story. But instead he just talked about how everyone in Halifax had the flu” (37). Beatrice already has an imagined place for Hart Thorson when he steps off the train in Unity, but he fails to live up to her expectations. Beatrice records the event in her diary, noting that “[t]oday, on the train, the world started to return. But not like I thought” (46). The image of the returned soldier that Beatrice has cultivated in her mind is far different from the blind man who stumbles off the train in an army uniform.

For Hart, this new landscape is one that must be traveled with caution; Thorson comes to Unity for the first time as a blind war veteran greeted by people whom he has never met before. Entering this new environment, Hart makes a concerted effort at politeness and thanks people profusely for assisting him as he disembarks from the train. The Unity residents assembled at the train station are not sure what to make of Hart at first: one of the first questions posed to Thorson is “[d]o you mean to be here?” (35). Hart is designated as an outsider by the homefront population and his personal reaction to Unity is overshadowed by the resident population’s
response to his arrival. In *Hometown Horizons*, Rutherford describes a negotiated relationship between the homefront and the returned soldier as one of skeptical protectionism and changed expectations: “unemployed veterans [were viewed] not as heroes, but as potentially idle, restless and unproductive.” For those who returned to Canada, “[s]o often home seemed changed to the men, and the men had been profoundly altered by their experiences, even more than their illness, disabilities, or nightmares made obvious” (225). In his disabled state, Hart is judged to be a burden on the community, especially when it becomes known that returning veterans are likely the ones spreading influenza. While Hart is not a carrier of the virus, he is still ostracized by the community and the only home he is begrudgingly accepted into is attached to the mortuary.

Keahey comments that “[i]f, as the cliché has it, you can’t go home again, you can always create a new one. If you can’t quite make it home in the sense of a physical journey, you can always make it home in the performative sense” (xii emphasis in original). Hart travels to Unity in hopes of finding his father, but arrives to find Hjóttur recently deceased and the Thorson family mortuary being run by Sunna Gudmundsdóttir, a teenaged cousin from Iceland. For Hart, the arrival in Unity is not a homecoming; any conception of this Saskatchewan town as his home will have to be constructed, performed, and created. Unlike the soldier settlers in *Broken Ground* who bring their individual traditions to a seemingly empty space to make a home, Hart enters into an existing social landscape where a discourse about the war is already well-established. If Hart is ever to be accepted into the world of Unity, he must carefully navigate the pre-existing discourse about the war in Europe, regardless of his personal experiences overseas.

In Act One, Scene Fourteen, titled “Over There,” Beatrice finds herself at the mortuary in an awkwardly polite conversation with Hart. Blind as he is, Hart is lost in this unfamiliar
environment and while desperate for conversation, he is not quite sure how to respond to Beatrice's inquiries about the war:

BEA: So how long were you overseas?

HART: I went right at the beginning.

BEA: You did?

HART: Yep.

BEA: How was it?

HART: Oh, it was good enough. (61)

In time, Hart reveals more about his lived experience of the Great War in Europe through conversation with Beatrice, but these dialogues are always confined to the space of the mortuary – a private, yet shared place that is the ultimate liminal site which blurs the boundaries between the living and the dead. The mortuary can never be made into a home, but it does provide a transitory space for dialogue about self, memory, and the war.

VOICES IN CRISIS: CONVERSATIONS IN VIRTUAL SPACES

At the height of the influenza epidemic, two residents from Unity discuss the possible origins of the virus:

MAN 2: I read that this flu is uh ... might be the Germans

MAN 1: Is that right. It thought it might be the germs.

A little laugh

MAN 2: No really, though, some secret weapon they planted on the coast. (85)

There must be some explanation for the virus, some way to accommodate the local crisis of illness and death, which relates to the larger global crises of the Great War. The talk between the
two men happens in the middle of a street and while there is a degree of levity in the discussion between the acquaintances, the articulation and circulation of this seemingly implausible idea helps explain the arrival of the flu in Unity. In his discussion of how homefront populations configured the war as part of an ongoing narrative that related to their particular communities, Rutherford comments that "what was sensed and what was believed circulated first through the most usable, local vehicles, the most understood and thus vernacular of situations or cultural spaces" (278). The more the story was repeated, the more feasible it sounded. However unlikely the German secret weapon explanation may be, it does provide a way of relating what is happening locally to what is happening in Europe. Hart, the only individual in Unity who knows of the realities of the war in Europe, never returns to the public realm of rumour and gossip after his initial arrival in the small Saskatchewan town; his personal stories never enter the vernacular of Unity because of his isolation in the mortuary.

While Hart is cut off from the Unity population in the mortuary, he is never completely alone. The recently deceased share Hart’s living quarters, but there can be no dialogue with these occupants of the funeral home. In Act Two, Scene Three, Hart searches for the source of a leak. As he investigates the dripping sound, Hart bumps into his fellow inhabitants at the mortuary: "Hello, sir. Oh, sorry, I mean ma’am. No, don’t worry I didn’t see anything" (82). With the stage in darkness, neither Hart nor the audience can perceive the setting that he stumbles through, breaking glass and crashing into objects as he moves across the stage, but he carries on a one-sided dialogue in an effort to reassure himself: "[o]kay, okay, okay, let’s get our story straight. Cat snuck in, did cat things, blind man sat helplessly by. Don’t blame the blind" (83). However, this humorous self-talk does not enter the territory of mirror talk that Egan
describes because the necessary "encounter of two lives" is lacking (Egan 5). When Hart finds his seat and becomes quiet, a second voice announces its presence:

VOICE: Shhhhh.

HART: Who is it?

VOICE: She told me I could come.

HART: For me?

VOICE: No, for someone else. (83)

This disembodied voice, this presence of a (presumed to be) living other who answers, changes the dynamic of the mortuary – Hart is suddenly transformed into a self-conscious performer as he attempts to establish himself in relation to a voice that defies definition. The audience, like Hart, is unable to place this voice as belonging to a particular individual. The unidentified voice can be understood metaphorically as death or the influenza virus speaking, but it is an entity who is not interested in a dialogue with Hart. The lived experiences of the blind veteran mean nothing to this spectre and it is only through conversation with an engaged listener that Hart can begin to tell his story.

In *Broken Ground*, Matthew Pearson has a specifically designated space in which to remember his relationship with the young French girl. Pearson’s visits to the abandoned sawmill always occur at night when he can be sure that his remembering will be undisturbed by fellow settlers. For Hart Thorson in *Unity* (1918), “[t]ime makes no difference. It’s always just after dark” in his world. (114). With his lack of sight, Hart is unable to engage fully with his environment, thus his milieu de mémoire of ongoing lived experience will always rely on his imagination. Hart’s memory of his wartime experience, though, is very clear; his anger at how Beatrice imagines the war reflects his frustration with homefront constructions of the conflict in
Europe. On her second visit to the mortuary, Beatrice offers to read Hart the war stories from the Saskatchewan paper:

HART: They’re not true.

BEA: They’re not?

HART: No. [...] They’re always some stupid story about some stupid guy who’s run out of ammunition and wounded in every part of his body, who takes over command after his captain’s been killed. [...] But they’re never about the guy sitting in the trench with his lousy jammed up standard issue rifle. (97)

His personal experience of the war is not reflected in the representations that are circulating in Canada and his frustration with the grandiosity of the war as it is depicted in the newspaper comes to a head in his lengthy outburst in the mortuary. But the funeral home is a place removed from the public eye and Hart does not confront an assembled populace who take the stories from the newspapers as truth. Though his outburst is spatially confined to the mortuary in Unity, Beatrice is witness to the anger and frustration of Hart’s lengthy diatribe that condemns the popular media’s inability to reflect his personal experience of the war.

Caruth suggests that at the heart of any narrative involving the revelation of trauma is “a kind of double telling, [an] oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life” (7 emphasis in original). The mortuary is a liminal space between the living and the dead which provides a definitive place, a lieu de mémoire, for Hart’s revelation about his lived experience of the war. Outside the mortuary, Unity is struggling with both the crisis of death and the crisis of life: dealing with the deaths of residents while trying to prevent the spread of the virus. Beatrice’s final visit to the mortuary happens after the war has ended and after Hart has contracted the spreading virus; the crises of life and death in Europe are in the past, replaced by
the crises of the local community. Hart begins to tell Beatrice about the last girl he saw in France and how he believes his blindness to be a result of gazing upon the body of this woman and seeing “through to the other side” (123). Hart goes on to describe the battle the next day: “I thought I saw the guns, the fire, the men falling around me, and the gas, the green-yellow fog ... but it was a dream. I had already seen the other side and could see no more. Are you there?” (124). Hart’s question seeks to confirm Beatrice’s presence and acknowledge her as a recipient of his life-story. In Beatrice’s and Hart’s last moments together, there is no oscillation between life and death, memory of the war and the imagined war, there is only the shared experience of a kiss. The crisis of life and death lasts only a few days longer for Beatrice as she, like Hart, falls victim to the epidemic.

SPEAKING FOR THE DEAD

The last lines of *Unity* (1918) belong to Sissy as she reads the final entry in Beatrice’s diary. Had she lived, Beatrice had the potential to become Unity’s Charlie MacIntosh – a locally situated writing persona who reflects back on a lifetime in a particular place. While MacIntosh in *Broken Ground* and Macfarlane in *The Danger Tree* engage in the process of mirror talk with their younger selves, Beatrice never has this opportunity. Her diary writing can be examined as a type of mirror talk, however, because Egan’s concept of reflexive and reflective dialogue is “multi-faceted” and “reflects the very indeterminacy of life in crisis” (226). Beatrice’s diary entry on November 18 epitomizes this sense of a life in crisis – “[t]he war is supposed to be over,” she writes, “but the war is still on. I don’t know what to do” (Kerr 111). The anxiety about the imagined war in Europe and its possible effects on life in Unity are transferred to the anxiety about the influenza epidemic, which seems to go on without the potential for resolution.
If we focus on the possibility of recovery in *Unity (1918)*, we lose sight of the processes underway in the play; in the act of story-telling, recording her version of events, Beatrice is participating in "[t]he drama of self-reconstruction, of insisting upon an originary person at a certain point in history, [whose life] plays out as drama, whether literally on the stage ... or within the covers of a printed text" (Egan 227). The text, the *lieu de mémoire* that contains Beatrice’s life story, becomes a focal point on stage in the penultimate scene where Beatrice ceases to be an active agent in the telling of her own narrative: as a funeral procession passes by, Sissy steps out and removes the diary from Beatrice’s hand (Kerr 126).

Beatrice’s diary is the raw material for the bio-geographic representation of life in Unity at the end of 1918. While the narrative of the play is “focalized,” in Genette’s terminology, through Beatrice’s perspective, the fact that the drama continues after her death suggests that another narrating entity is holding the lens through which the audience perceives Beatrice and the story she is telling. The extradeiegetic presence, someone like the playwright, who creates the narrative framework around Beatrice’s diary, is never identified in the play. While we might imagine Sissy in the role of extradeiegetic compiler of *Unity (1918)* because she survives the epidemic and is the one who salvages Beatrice’s diary, there is no definitive evidence within the text that can confirm this hypothesis. The audience witnesses far more than Beatrice ever records in her diary: the multiple subplots of the play include Beatrice’s infatuation with Glen Brambley, Sissy’s relationship with Michael, and the ongoing story of Sunna Gudmundsdóttir — all of which are depicted on stage, but escape inclusion in Beatrice’s chronicle of life in Unity.

The extradeiegetic compiler includes multiple vantage points in the memory landscape that contrast with the focalized bio-geographic writing of Beatrice. The cause of Hart’s blindness, the metaphysical connection to another state of consciousness via a physical
relationship, is the revelatory wartime experience in *Unity (1918)* similar to Matthew Pearson’s infidelity in *Broken Ground*. There is no space within either text that can fully accommodate Thorson’s and Pearson’s actual experiences and the two returned soldiers must rely on approximation and memory to describe an episode that has no place in the Great War as it was imagined by the homefront populations that they return to. Charlie MacIntosh has the benefit of a lifetime to reflect on Pearson’s motivations and to create a narrative that frames Pearson’s description of his time in France and the imagined representation of that experience created by Corky Desmond’s grandson. Beatrice Wilde’s diary is forever in progress as she leaves her final entry on November 28 unfinished: “[w]e won the war, so quite a few people feel a little bit relieved about all of that. […] I kissed a boy a few days back. I still feel him on my lips. He was very, very…” (127). Here, Beatrice’s attempt to approximate her experience with Hart is incomplete; she dies before she can fully articulate and incorporate what Hart has told her into her chronicle of life in Unity. With no documentary basis in Beatrice’s diary, the final scene at the mortuary is then an imagined (re)creation of the last meeting between Beatrice and Hart.

In this fictional depiction of post-war Unity, Beatrice’s diary is the primary record of life. However, the diary only exists when the play is performed: Beatrice’s journal is a real object on stage and the actors playing Beatrice and Sissy use the diary to open and close the action of the drama. The *lieu de mémoire*, the site of memory, that is Beatrice’s life writing changes with each production of *Unity (1918)* as each director determines how the *milieu de mémoire*, the lived memory environment, of 1918 Saskatchewan will be depicted. Similarly, *Unity (1918)* as a text frames Beatrice’s inaccessible life writing – the reader holds a copy of Kerr’s drama rather than Wilde’s autobiography. Working through the multiple levels of representation in the play reveals a complex nesting arrangement where the play and the performance of the play are sites
of memory (Beatrice’s diary), within a lived environment (the theatre) that in turn reveal themselves as other sites of memory set apart from the everyday lived experience of audience members who assemble specifically to witness a fictional representation of a life story. In her concluding comments on performative auto/biographics, Grace reminds us that “when the lights come up nothing remains except the remembered experience” (76). Each version of Beatrice Wilde’s bio-geography differs in performance and when the actors and the audience leave the theatre, their shared time together exists only in memory. Nora argues that a lieu de mémoire can be “double: [a] site of excess closed upon itself, concentrated in its own name, but also forever open to the full range of possible significations” (24). While the audience and the actors are participants in the same performance, each individual has a particular perspective that results in the differential distribution of memory among the collective (Wertsch 21); when the people assembled at the theatre leave the designated space of performance, each person remembers his or her own version of the production. Unlike the fixed textual creations offered in the biogeographic memoirs of Macfarlane and MacIntosh that present the possibility of (re)consultation, returning to the text to clarify the order of events or the particulars of a phrase, Beatrice’s on-stage bio-geography eludes our grasp because it will never be embedded in the milieu de mémoire of life outside the theatre; her diary remains forever out of the audience’s reach.

Mike Pearson, writing in “In Comes I” Performance, Memory and Landscape, suggests that an “inciting incident,” such as a death, prompts a coalescence of “people, places, and pathologies around the [act of dying],” and he goes on to define inciting incidents as “those changes of crisis, consequence and innovation, those sudden shifts in direction, emphasis, orientation, those irrevocable acts, those irreversible transformations that are inevitably followed by repercussions, by trajectories of implication and by periods of resolution or elaboration” (27).
In *Unity (1918)*, the inciting incident of the Great War has tremendous repercussions for the inhabitants of the small Saskatchewan town that Beatrice Wilde chronicles in her diary. The future of Unity is irreparably changed by these repercussions, but the audience is denied a period of resolution or elaboration. Both Charlie MacIntosh in *Broken Ground* and David Macfarlane in *The Danger Tree* have the opportunity to reflect on and elaborate how their communities have been shaped by the 1914-1918 conflict. While the trauma of the war lingers in Portuguese Creek and in the Goodyear family, the post-memory perspective of these two works suggests that while resolution may be elusive, documenting and acknowledging the past can help to address the needs of the present. In *Unity (1918)* there is no elaboration or resolution: the bio-geographer dies before the end of the narrative. A song closes the play and it, like Beatrice's final diary entry, ends abruptly: "Oh, Canada! / Oh, Canada! / Oh—" (128). This last episode is unfinished; the ending of the performance interrupts the conclusion of the song. Life in Canada, like the microcosm of life as presented in this depiction of Unity, continues on from the unfinished trauma of the Great War – Unity, like Portuguese Creek, and Grand Falls are depicted in the three bio-geographies as communities in transition. The lack of definitive conclusion suggests that there will be other stories to tell, other lived experiences of life in these communities that provide alternate perspectives on the memory of the Great War.
The bio-geographic memoirs produced by David Macfarlane, Charlie MacIntosh, and Beatrice Wilde provide three very different views of Canadian communities dealing with the immediate and ongoing effects of the Great War. These three writing personas act as lenses through which the communities of Grand Falls, Portuguese Creek, and Unity are focalized. Macfarlane, MacIntosh, and Wilde are subjects within the stories that they tell, shedding light on the particular landscapes of memory that they occupy. Susanna Egan comments on this notion of autobiographical subjectivity, noting that “[i]nsofar as subjectivity is a central organizing principle in acts of interpretation, subjectivities conflict within each text, producing affirmative but also alternative perspectives, polyphony rather than reiteration” (227). The three bio-geographic works I examine create spaces for the multiple voices, the polyphony, of lived experiences in their respective communities; however, a single representing persona, the individual who records his or her personal account, is required to provide a supportive framework for the multiple and ongoing stories present in each milieu de mémoire. The intradiegetic narrators of The Danger Tree, Broken Ground, and Unity (1918) recognize that there are many different interpretations and imaginations of the Great War and each narrating persona employs a type of life writing for his or her respective work. This range of life writing takes different forms: Macfarlane includes historical information and second-hand stories in his autobiographical account of the Goodyears. MacIntosh engages with previous representations of Portuguese Creek in an effort to tell the neglected stories of the returned soldier settlement. Finally, Wilde’s chronicle of life in Saskatchewan, her fictional diary at the centre of the drama, describes only a portion of action that is portrayed on stage. Each work accommodates the
diversity of lived experiences by acknowledging the presence of alternate perspectives that complement and contradict the bio-geographer’s account of history and memory.

The three texts reflect and refract the relationship between sites of memory and environments of memory, lieux mémoire and milieux de mémoire, in an ongoing dialogue between remembrance and experience. The texts are representations of a past that is now virtually inaccessible via primary experience – there are very few who have personal memories of the Great War – in this sense the three works are disconnected from the ongoing lived experience of contemporary Canadians, but in reading these works or attending a performance of Kerr’s drama, the audience interacts with these representations as lieux de mémoire. However, one is never entirely divorced from his or her milieu de mémoire when interacting with lieux de mémoire; sites are inexorably embedded in the ongoing lived-in environments of the participants. *The Danger Tree, Broken Ground*, and *Unity (1918)* draw attention to the ongoing relationship between distant trauma (in both the chronological and geographic senses) and the present response to local crises. The communities described in the three works are actively engaged in finding a place for the Great War in their local landscapes in the weeks, years, and decades after the conflict.

Egan’s notion of mirror talk as a way of theorizing autobiography attempts to account for the fact that representation is never separated from experience and that an autobiographical narrative is never a replication (or duplication) of a life story, but an exchange between parties that shifts according to the needs of storyteller and story listener. Just as the three narrating personas in the bio-geographies I examine rely on different forms of life writing, three different narrative frameworks are used to tell the story of the Great War within their respective communities: for David Macfarlane, the narrative loops of his maternal relatives’ oral stories
provide a model for his version of the family’s history. Charlie MacIntosh is both an
intradiegetic narrator of his personal lived experience and an extradiegetic compiler of Broken
Ground’s three sections. Beatrice Wilde, represented as both writing persona and on-stage
character, enacts a complex nesting arrangement between witnessing and participating in the
events that take place on stage and recording those same events in her diary. In each case, the
narrative model offers a structure that alleviates some of the narrating personas’ anxieties about
being able to depict accurately his or her lived experience. By proposing bio-geography as the
foundation for these stories, I suggest that it is the very process of working through a version of
one’s life story in relation to a particular community at a particular time that demonstrates the
possibility of incorporating global events into local discourse; lived experiences continue to
accumulate and any representation of one’s life requires a narrative (re)organization that takes
into account the narrator’s current relationship to his or her community. The stories created by
Macfarlane, MacIntosh, and Wilde are necessarily incomplete in that they fail to account for
every aspect of the bio-geographer’s lived experience. The texts are comprehensive records of
specific moments: waiting in a Gander parking lot, watching the premiere of a movie, detailing
the arrival of a soldier, but they are not exhaustive autobiographies that relate the entirety of the
writer’s lived experience. As bio-geographic texts, the three works speak specifically to the
triangular relationship of self, place, and memory that is shaped by the global conflict of the
Great War and the local disasters that affect each individual’s community.

REFLECTIONS ON MIRROR TALK AND UNFINISHED ENDINGS

Nora is critical of historical representations, lieux de mémoire, that draw attention to
particular events and segregate them from an ongoing lived experience informed by memory,
what he designates *milieux de mémoire*. While I suggest that *lieux* and *milieux* are never mutually exclusive and that memory and history in bio-geography work together in a negotiated dialogue, Nora argues that archival history, separated from lived experience, becomes a device which masquerades as memory and mimics the known, rather than providing a window to meaningful exchange: "[w]e could speak of mirror-memory if all mirrors did not reflect the same – for it is difference that we are seeking, and in the image of this difference, the ephemeral spectacle of an unrecoverable identity. It is no longer genesis that we seek but instead the decipherment of what we are in the light of what we are no longer" (17-8). While *The Danger Tree*, *Broken Ground*, and *Unity* (1918) do seek to represent the past that no longer exists, the narrators at work in the three texts are concerned with how their communities will remember the Great War in the future and how they, as individuals, will look back on the moment of creative construction. When gazing into the mirror of memory and representation Macfarlane, MacIntosh, and Wilde will always be confronted with an image of difference because their relationships to the Great War and the respective local tragedies that shape their lived experiences are in constant negotiation. The absences inherited by the post-memory generations who come after the conflict persist as gaps in memory and experience. The bio-geographers' reflections on their lived experiences in these three works are distorted by the Great War and their respective local crises; the life stories that Macfarlane, MacIntosh, and Wilde create are always refracted through the global and local disasters and say more about the narrating persona at the time of his or her writing than about any attempt at recovering an identity untouched by the knowledge of the Great War.

At the heart of each work is the unexpressed experience of those who directly participated in the Great War. The motivations and memories of Hedley Goodyear, Donald
MacCormack, and Hart Thorson can only be accessed through the imagination, approximation, and acknowledgment of the narrating personas. For Macfarlane, creating a version of Hedley’s life requires engaging in a dialogue with an absent figure who haunts the family stories he hears on the veranda of his parents’ home in Hamilton. Donald’s presence in Portuguese Creek is a constant reminder of the trauma of the Western Front, but his experience is locked behind a prosthesis that covers his disfiguring wound and obscures his ability to communicate with residents of the settlement. MacIntosh’s description of this voice and the calamity of the wound that has existed in the community for decades is not an attempt to create a story for Donald, but a recognition of the unspeakable. Here, MacIntosh’s bio-geography is a “commemorative gesture” that “finds itself compelled to name the unnameable again and again” (Cobley 9). While Beatrice is the direct recipient of Hart’s wartime experience, her commemorative gesture, her diary entry, reflects her struggle to relate her own understanding of their final meeting at the mortuary – the last entry in Beatrice’s journal is abortive and unfinished; the corresponding scene on stage can then be imagined as a fleeting recreation of a shared experience that resides only in the memory of the participants.

The unfinished nature of these works, their reliance on a variety of narrative devices to bridge the gap between the inaccessible primary experience and the imagined representations offered by the local life stories, returns us to the idea that the bio-geographies of Macfarlane, MacIntosh, and Wilde are three of many vantage points in the Canadian landscape of memory about the Great War. No one story can represent the diversity of Newfoundland and Canadian experiences and subsequent memories of the conflict. When examined together, The Danger Tree, Broken Ground, and Unity (1918) provide a sense of the local differences that make it difficult to develop a comprehensive over-arching national narrative. Bio-geography avoids the
complications of constructing a national story because it features an identifiable writing persona who is firmly situated in a particular location. The three narrators of the works I examine never claim to represent Canadian experience; instead, they describe their daily response to life in communities that can only commemorate the Great War with lieux de mémoire – consciously constructed sites and spaces that speak to a local desire to imagine and account for how the distant events in Europe are felt on the homefront and continue to be felt in the generations after the war.

The three bio-geographies refuse to provide definitive resolutions for the experience of Great War in Canada: Macfarlane leaves the reader with an image of a Newfoundland train "pulling up its own tracks" (304), MacIntosh’s last words describe Wyatt Taylor’s battered coat hanging outside his family’s home as the forgotten disguise of a “family member gone out to wander around in the world” (Hodgins 357), and the curtain falls on Kerr’s play in the middle of a song. These inconclusive endings draw attention to the constructed nature of the texts: the works are lieux de mémoire, episodic versions of history that are meant to be accessed in the specially demarcated time and space of a reader’s relationship with a text or an assembled audience’s connection to a performance. The texts function as entities within the milieux de mémoire of the audience’s ongoing lived experience. With each (re)reading of the autobiographical memoir and the historical fiction and each (re)performance of the play, new versions of Grand Falls, Portuguese Creek, and Unity are created that depend on the audience’s ongoing accumulation of lived experience. While Egan argues that the dialogic process of storytelling in autobiography emphasizes polyphony over reiteration, the bio-geographies I examine are both polyphonic and reiterative; the three texts open themselves to new and diverse interpretations with each (re)reading.
At the end of his influential volume on Canada’s memory of the Great War, *Death So Noble*, Jonathan Vance concludes that individual and collective memory of the conflict was not “conferred on the [population] from above; it sprouted from the grief, the hope, and the search for meaning of a thousand Canadian communities” (267). While the texts I examine were produced several generations after the Great War, the very fact of their creation suggests that Canadians are still looking back to the 1914-1918 conflict in a search for meaning. These contemporary explorations of the past also spring from a need to speak to the particular circumstances of individual Canadian communities. *The Danger Tree, Broken Ground, and Unity (1918)* reflect the seemingly oppositional attributes of grief and hope that characterize the repercussions of the Great War. The physical memorials described in the three texts: the war memorial in St. John’s, the cairn at Portuguese Creek, and the funeral for Richard Stone in Unity, are *lieux de mémoire* that commemorate the grief of the respective communities – these are sites that mark the absence of men who will never return home. Life, albeit irreparably changed by the events that take place in Europe, carries on in Newfoundland, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan. The ongoing lived experience of the three communities depicted in these texts, the *milieux de mémoire*, takes into account secondary and tertiary relationships to the war: the bio-geographers who represent their communities in writing never experience the war first-hand, but create their own versions of the conflict from the information that is transmitted to them via returned soldiers, news sources, gossip, historical accounts, and family stories. The three texts are *lieux de mémoire* in their own right as purposely created representations of the past that seek to memorialize the memory of the Great War at various times in the twentieth century. As contemporary works of literature, *The Danger Tree, Broken Ground, and Unity (1918)*, circulate
within the ongoing Canadian experience, the *milieux de mémoire* of twenty-first century life that keeps returning to the Great War in search of local and personal meanings.
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APPENDIX

In the summer of 2007 I traveled to Merville, the Vancouver Island community originally designated as a returned soldier settlement following the Great War. I visited several of the sites described in Hodgins’ novel including Portuguese Creek and Kitty Coleman beach where the residents of the settlement sought refuge during the 1922 fire. I was particularly interested in two scrapbooks held at the Courtenay and District Museum that commemorate the war-time service of local residents and provide insight into the founding of the settlement. From the information contained in these scrapbooks I learned of a second British Columbian returned soldier settlement in the Central Kootenays. I was interested to learn more about this community and if there were any local accounts of the Great War produced by the settlers in the years following the war. I visited Lister in November 2007 to investigate the similarities and differences between the two British Columbia settlements and to examine any bio-geographic accounts of life in the Creston Valley held by the local archives.

The Creston Valley and District Museum and Archives holds a variety of material related to the Lister settlement including newspaper clippings, photographs, correspondence, maps, and informal histories compiled by local residents. From these holdings I was able to further understand local practices of commemorating the Great War and learn more about the man for whom the settlement was named. Known as Camp Lister until 1984, Lister was named for Lieutenant Colonel Fred Lister who served with the 102nd Canadian Infantry Battalion (North – British Columbians) from its inception in 1915.\footnote{Lt. Col. Lister also appears in David Macfarlane’s \textit{The Danger Tree}. Though Hedley Goodyear was a Newfoundlander, he enlisted in Toronto with a Canadian regiment while attending university. Macfarlane describes}
common with the Vancouver Island settlement at Merville; poor soil conditions, lack of irrigation, forest fires, droughts, and severe winters made it almost impossible for returning soldiers to establish themselves at Lister. The 1921 Soldier Settlement Board report notes that the West Kootenay region “is the most difficult part of the whole Dominion to appraise from a soldier settlement point of view. An inspector, to do the best work, must shut his eyes to the residential, speculative, and scenic advantages, paying attention chiefly to the productiveness of the soil and the marketing facilities” (129). Despite the “scenic advantages” of the region, the economic and agricultural difficulties faced by the settlement led many of the war veterans to seek work in mining operations in British Columbia and Idaho. By the middle of the twentieth century, only four settler families remained in the area.

One returned soldier, John Bird, was recognized as a local authority on life in Lister. His newspaper articles share similarities with the fictional account of Portuguese Creek offered by Charlie MacIntosh in Broken Ground. Unlike MacIntosh’s version though, Bird has very little to say about the Great War itself; the story of Lister begins in 1919 with a meeting aboard the Empress of Asia on her way from Europe to Vancouver. Near the end of his life, Bird began writing a weekly column in the Creston Review detailing the history of the settlement. In his first column, printed on January 4, 1968, Bird writes: [t]ime is getting short and so much of the history of settlements in B.C. is lost because no one puts down on paper the earlier doings of the pioneer settlers. This is an attempt to keep alive for those who come after the why and wherefore of the coming existence of the settlement of Camp Lister.” At the time of publication, the events that lead up to Hedley’s death by drawing on one of Lister’s phrases: “the 102nd had been suffering from what their commanding officer, Colonel Fred Lister, called ‘a match famine’ since the fifth of August” (266). Lister’s writings about the Great War are not held by the Creston Archives and while John Bird’s accounts of the settlement laud Lister’s leadership and concern for his men there is little information about their time in Europe. I would not expect to find mention of Hedley Goodyear in the Creston Archives, but Lister would have undoubtedly known Goodyear as one of the junior officers in his battalion.
Bird was in the penultimate year of his life and his writing reflects the need to "get the story right" and to set down in print an authoritative history of place before the last of the original settlers passed away.

Robert Millner’s handwritten memoir "History of Lister B.C.,” like Bird’s articles, begins with the founding of the settlement in 1919. The Great War experience is again secondary to the difficulties of life in the settlement and the complications of dealing with provincial and federal governments. Only once does Millner use a personal pronoun in his description of Lister’s history: “[t]he S.S.B. (Soldier Settlement Board) never did take over any of the settlers. I believe they have some of the of second world war veterans under the D.N.A now” (2). This speculative paragraph has been struck through and the first person “I” does not appear again in the “History of Lister B.C.”. This extradiegetic positioning of writer as local historian rather than biogeographer also occurs in Bird’s Creston Review articles where he writes in the third-person, referring to himself and his wife as Mr. and Mrs. John Bird. These historical descriptions of the settlement provide important information about Lister’s past, but the memoirs, articles, and photographs in the Creston Archives are divorced from the actual community of Lister in 2007 – they have become lieu de mémoire detached from the milieu de mémoire of lived experience that continues in the former settlement today.

The only lieu de mémoire within the larger lived experience, the milieu de mémoire, of Lister in the twenty-first century are found in the community’s cemetery. Considering the social and historical importance of cemeteries, Doris Francis, Leonie Kellaher, and Georgina Neophytou write that collective spaces of interment “are liminal places where geography and chronology are reshaped and history is spatially spread out, offer[ing] diverse and relatively unexplored localities for examining the processes involved in the contemporary reconstitution of
memory of self, family, and group” (96). The first burial in the Lister All Saint’s Anglican cemetery occurred in 1938, one year after a church building was donated by the Hushcroft family who had settled south of Lister before the Great War. Lt. Col. Lister, John and Miriam Bird, and Robert and Clara Millner are buried in the cemetery. These early settlers who struggled and survived in Creston Valley are now a permanent part of the landscape that they praised as scenically beautiful and criticized as agriculturally deficient. Clara Millner, Robert’s wife and the last of the “old-timers” (a designation that Bird clarifies in his final article), died in 2004, but her personal experience of life in Lister goes unrecorded in the Creston Archives. She is, however, the only individual recognized with a commemorative bench in the Lister cemetery (see figure 2): the bench celebrates her status as “Resident of Lister since 1924, Mother of Ten, Granny to the Family and the Community.” This lieu de mémoire, erected to commemorate

Figure 2. Clara Millner’s Memorial Bench at All Saints’ Cemetery, Lister. Photograph by the author. Nov. 2007.
Millner's one hundredth birthday, is one of the few memorials in Lister. Lt. Col. Lister is remembered at the Creston Legion with a plaque marking his service in the Boer War, World War One, and his contributions as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for 13 years (figure 3).

![Figure 3. Memorial Plaque at the Creston Legion. Photograph by the author. Nov. 2007.](image)

At the time of my visit, shortly after Remembrance Day, Lister's grave in the Lister cemetery was marked with a wreath of poppies and a Canadian flag (figure 4). While none of Lister's descendants live in the community today, he is still remembered in the Creston Valley.
Figure 4. Lt. Col. Lister’s Grave, All Saints’ Cemetery, Lister. Photograph by the author. Nov. 2007.