

**PERFORMING HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AT THE CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM:
SPACE, OBJECTS, AND BODIES AS PERFORMERS**

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ABSTRACT

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Pursuing stimulating discussions between theatre/performance studies and other disciplines is becoming more and more common. This thesis, “Performing Historical Narrative at the Canadian War Museum: Space, Objects, and Bodies as Performers,” explores the symmetry between a theatre and a museum, and investigates how a museum experience is similar to a theatrical event. Particularly, this project examines how the Canadian War Museum performs historical narrative through its use of the following three performative elements of a theatre production: *space*, *objects* and *actor’s body*.

Firstly, this thesis analyses how creating a historical narrative is similar to fiction writing and play writing. It follows the argument of Hayden White and Michel de Certeau who recognize a historical narrative as a performative act. Accordingly, this thesis examines the First World War exhibit space at the Canadian War Museum as a *space* of performance. As its first theoretical lens, this thesis uses Lubomír Doležal’s literary theory on possible worlds; it illustrates how a museum space can create unique characteristics of a possible world of fiction and of history. Secondly, this thesis employs Marie-Laure Ryan’s theory of narrative to discuss how museum objects construct and perform their stories. I argue that the objects in museums are

presented to the public in a state of museality that is similar to the condition of theatricality in a theatre performance. Lastly, this thesis investigates the performance of *people* through the application of various theories of performance, such as Michael Kirby's non-acting/acting continuum, Jiří Veltruský's concept of the stage figure, and Freddie Rokem's theories of actors as "hyper-historians." In this way, this thesis explores concrete case studies of employee/visitor interactions and expands on how these communications transform the people within the walls of the museum into performers of historical narrative.

Moreover, according to Antoine Prost, the museum as an institution is an educational and cultural authority. As a result, in all of these performative situations, the Canadian War Museum presents a historical narrative to its visitors with which it can help shape a sense of national identity, the events Canadians choose to commemorate and their personal and/or collective memories. In its interdisciplinary scope, this thesis calls upon theories from a variety of academic fields, such as performance studies, history and cultural studies, museology, and literary studies. Most importantly, however, this project is written from a theatre and performance studies' viewpoint. It aims to offer a new perspective on the performative potentials of a national history museum.

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Introduction

Performing Historical Narrative at the Canadian War Museum: Space, Objects, and Bodies as Performers

“Making sense of what has happened is how we live. We do it in all sorts of ways. We sing it, we dance it, we carve it, we paint it, tell it, write it. We find different ways to make sense of what has happened according to the different occasions of our telling and the different audiences to which we tell it.” (Denning *Performances* xiv)

I have worked for the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa since 2005. My duties have included the delivery of historical presentations to groups of school children on their trips to the museum. During these presentations I acted as though I was a person from the First World War. I shared “my” experiences about the war in the first person with the visiting students. One performance in particular stands out in my memory. The children were around the age of ten, which is perfect for this type of presentation. It has been my experience, that children of that age are young enough to believe me when I pretend to be a veteran of the First World War. It was May or June 2007 and the energy in the room was ideal. I knew I had them in the palm of my hand as I described the difficulties and the adventures “I” (Madeleine) had experienced during the Great War. At the end of the performance, I explained that my name was Ashlee and that I was an animator who worked at the Canadian War Museum, but that the experiences I shared with them were all based on real facts. There was a thoughtful silence. Suddenly, a boy raised his hand eagerly. “So... That was like a play?” he asked. I answered that it was and the room erupted into applause.

This memory stays with me as one of my favourite performances because I know that I shared a powerful moment with those students and with that boy in particular. The story that I performed appeared to move him, and by the way he asked his question, I understood that he had

not expected to see a performance that reminded him of being in a theatre *in a museum*. At a very basic level, he realized that a theatre space was not the only location to see a play and that, in fact, performances happened in museums too!

In his book *The Birth of the Museum: History, theory, politics*, Tony Bennett states that museums were initially elite locations to display objects of curiosity and rarity (39). According to Bennett, in Western society, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, public museums were developed by various governments to extol influence and control the general public (18-19). Museums aimed at exposing the working class to civilizing influences and imposing appropriate social behaviour on the lower social class by providing them with a space for emulation. The elite wanted to create what they believed to be an appropriate environment in which the lower-class people were expected to observe the refined social elite and be educated through a regulated narrative (T. Bennett 24, 93). “The birth of the museum [as we recognize it today] is coincident with, and supplied a primary institutional condition for, the emergence of a new set of knowledge – geology, biology, archaeology, anthropology, history and art history [...]” (96). This new interest grew when an issue was raised by the cultural bourgeois reformers in the 19th century concerning “the nature of the museum as a space for *representation*. Rather than merely evoking wonder and surprise, [museums should seek to instruct by displaying artefacts]” (24, emphasis mine).

We can detect this didactic function in modern museums. Today, the International Council of Museums, founded in Paris in 1946, is a unique organization that brings together museums and museum professionals to help promote the institutions and knowledge associated with museums. It defines a museum as:

[...] a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. (Lewis)

This definition of the purpose of a modern museum is apparent in the Canadian War Museum's mandate to *educate, preserve, and remember* ("Backgrounder" 1). The Canadian War Museum, a museum affiliated with the Canadian Museum Civilization Crown Corporation, is located in Ottawa and functions as a national history museum that presents Canada's military history. In this role, the Canadian War Museum acts as an authority on Canada's military past and thus carries a significant responsibility to represent Canada's historical war narrative.¹ Although it is impossible to showcase everyone's personal stories, and although Canada's historical make-up is complex and controversial, because of the Canadian War Museum's unique position in Canadian society, it is the location where Canadian citizens expect the military history of Canada to be represented. Whether or not the museum meets that expectation is not the focus of this thesis (although it is discussed in some examples in Chapter Four). The important element here is simply that the Canadian War Museum presents Canada's national war narrative. Through showcasing the lives of ordinary people who were asked to do extraordinary things, the museum relates Canada's military history from the earliest conflicts that took place on Canadian soil to modern day military and peace-keeping engagements ("Backgrounder" 2).

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD OF THEATRE STUDIES

The Canadian War Museum presents a historical narrative in a performative and stylized manner. There is, however, little written on the subject of museums as performing agents from a

theatrical and/or performative perspective. In Scott Magelssen's book, *Living History Museums: Undoing History through Performance*, the question of the use of performative and theatrical elements in interior history museums remains unanswered. This is because he uses historical outdoor sites with living history performances as his case studies. Both history museums and historic sites operate with items and/or information intended for public display. This echoes Patrice Pavis' key characteristic of theatrical performance. Whatever is being performed, shown or exhibited is intended for public viewing (*Dictionary* 346). Ergo, the fact that museums intend for their displays to be viewed by an audience, their visitors, makes the museum exhibit(s), at the base level, a performance.

Erika Fischer-Lichte, states in her book *The Semiotics of Theater* [sic] that theatre is the only artistic genre that requires both an actor and a spectator. She explains that

[...] a theatre performance that does not take place before an audience, i.e., cannot be received, is not a theatre performance. The audience is in fact a constitutive part of theatre – without an audience there can be no performance. In other words [...] performances are characterized substantively by their public nature. [...] By virtue of these two features [actor and spectator], each of which comprises quite specific factors determining the process of the constitution of meaning, theatre as a cultural system contrasts fundamentally with all other cultural systems which create meaning on the basis of an aesthetic code. For these two characteristics are not to be found in such a combination in any other artistic genre. (Fischer-Lichte 7)

By their very nature, however, museums also require these two characteristics. For it to exist, a museum requires a performer (the institution) and a spectator (the visitor) (Falk, *Identity* 20).

As Anthony Jackson, Helen Leahy and their research team suggest in their article “Seeing It for Real?... Authenticity, Theatre and Learning in Museums,” and as this thesis will argue, museums are performative *and* theatrical. In their 2001-2002 research project based on two UK museums,² Jackson and Leahy proved that children at least viewed “the role of a museum [as] a source of legitimacy and truth” (303, 319).³ Contrary to an audience member in the theatre who enters into a willing suspension of disbelief, a museum visitor enters with a willingness to believe. In his 1995 article “L’exposition, un theatre,” Frank den Oudsten suggests that an exhibit space is theatre. Den Oudsten explains that the interest in using theatrical techniques in an exhibit had already been a topic of discussion amongst Western European museum professionals for a decade. There is no convention that automatically makes a museum a performance space. However, because of a combination of techniques used to organize the exhibit space and the audience’s reception of those techniques, a communication and a performative practice exists in a museum. This practice is similar to the phenomenon of a theatrical event. In fact, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett is quoted by Richard Schechner as saying that

“[...] performance studies is more than the sum of its inclusions. [...] presence, liveness, agency, embodiment, and event are not so much the defining features of our objects of study as issues at the heart of our disciplinary subject. While some may address these issues in relation to plays performed on stage, others may address them in relation to artifacts [*sic*] in a museum vitrine.” (*Studies* 3)

It is in the interest of broadening the discussion on what is considered theatrical and performative in our postmodern society that I have pursued this project.

By looking into the various aspects that make the Canadian War Museum a theatrical venue for performing historical narrative, I plan to explore the commonalities between a museum and a theatre, between the experience of a museum visitor and that of a theatre spectator. Particularly, this thesis “Performing Historical Narrative at the Canadian War Museum: Space, Objects, and Bodies as Performers” explores how the Canadian War Museum performs Canada’s military narrative and thus contributes to creating Canadian national identity, the commemoration of artefacts, people and events, and the memory of museum visitors and employees. I examine how a museum performs narrative and I focus on the theatricality of museum space, museum objects and the live bodies within the museum, be they the museum’s employees or visitors.

2. OBJECT OF STUDY: THE CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

The Canadian War Museum “traces its origins back to 1880, when it consisted primarily of a collection of militia artifacts. In 1967, it moved to an old archives building on Sussex Drive in Ottawa, with most of its collections stored in a converted streetcar barn in west-central Ottawa” (“Backgrounder” 2). It opened at its new location in May 2005, commemorating not only the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe, but also the 125th anniversary of the Canadian War Museum itself. I have chosen this museum as the primary object of my study for three reasons.

Firstly, it is the latest museum to open in the National Capital and the last national museum to open in Canada. It is considered to be a well-respected museum on the international playing field alongside the Imperial War Museum in London, England, and the Australian War Memorial museum in Canberra, Australia.

Secondly, the Canadian War Museum is a history museum. There are many other types of museums, such as science museums or art museums. Although many museums have narrative, as a history museum, the Canadian War Museum displays and represents a *historical narrative*.

Thirdly, as I have been an employee with the Canadian War Museum for the past six years, I bring considerable practical experience as a performer in museums to the theatre and performance theories I use in my research. I have worked in museums for nine years at a variety of locations: the Canadian Museum of Civilization (Gatineau, QC), the Canadian War Museum (Ottawa, ON), Vimy Ridge National Historic Site (Vimy, France) and Dundurn National Historic Site (Hamilton, ON). My professional experience encompasses a number of positions; in each capacity, I have needed to interact with the public. More often than not, in these interactions, my manner has been didactic yet engaging, as I have provided visitors with historical information. I have performed countless historical presentations, both in and out of costume. At the Canadian War Museum, as a tour guide, I provided historical interpretive tours for school groups and adults. As an animator, among other responsibilities, I performed the role of a First World War nursing sister named Madeleine Marchand in historical costume and performed short non-costumed presentations for museum visitors. Today, I am the Training Coordinator and Supervisor at the Canadian War Museum, responsible for training all museum interpreters on

historical content and delivery methods, responsible for supervising the team of animators, and responsible for overseeing the museum's team of volunteer interpreters.

As Jackson and Leahy point out, a museum “can itself be seen as a performative space that invites comparisons with more obviously theatrical settings. This is often embodied in the building itself, but even more so in the spatial deployment of collections within vitrines, dioramas and room sets, frequently enhanced by lighting and sound, designed to catch the attention and draw the audience” (304). With multiple mandates to meet, financial elements to balance and displays to build, a museum must put proper thought and planning into creating the final product of an exhibit space. The object of my study is the Canadian War Museum, which provides an evocative performance of historical narrative for its visitors with innovative exhibits, and depicts itself as a “must-see attraction” on its website (warmuseum.ca).

In order to analyze the Canadian War Museum as an institution that performs historical narrative, I engage with the theories of Erving Goffman, Lubomír Doležal, Marie-Laure Ryan, Hayden White, Greg Dening, Michel de Certeau, Roland Barthes, Marion Hirsch, Freddie Rokem, Michael Kirby, Richard Schechner, Patrice Pavis and others. I argue that a museum experience is similar to a theatrical experience because it performs historical narrative in the presence of a spectator/visitor who is actively engaged with this performance and who might even become a performer him or herself. In my study, I explain the theories behind the notion that the writing of history can itself be seen as a performance, the subject of Chapter One. I develop this idea further by demonstrating that the Canadian War Museum is similar to theatre when I discuss the performance of the exhibit space in Chapter Two, the performance of the exhibit's objects in Chapter Three, and the performance of people in Chapter Four.

In my analysis I focus on the exhibit on the First World War in the Canadian War Museum gallery *For Crown and Country*.⁴ Many historians acknowledge that the Great War contributed significantly to Canada's development as a country (Cook *Clio*, Gillis *Commemorations*, Hayes, Iarocci and Bechthold *Vimy*). In his foreword to *Vimy Ridge: A Canadian Reassessment*, A.M.J. Hyatt points out that military scholars and historians have long said that Canada's participation in the Great War, in battles such as Vimy Ridge, "awakened a sense of Canadian nationalism" (Hayes, Iarocci and Bechthold xi). In a collection of essays, editors Geoffrey Hayes, Andrew Iarocci and Mike Bechthold, explore the affect of the historic battle of Vimy Ridge in 1917, which is popularly understood to be a pivotal event in the formation of Canadian identity. They explain that the event has military and cultural significance and that "Canadians gave the Battle of Vimy Ridge such an important place in their collective memory" (3). The Battle of Vimy Ridge marked the first time in history that Canadians from coast to coast were gathered and attacked simultaneously along a single front (xi).

This battle belongs to a larger narrative, that of the Great War; however, it also has a narrative of its own, a narrative that many historians call epic. Hyatt turns to the basic definition of epic in the Oxford English Dictionary, which explains that an epic embodies "a nation's conception of its own past or of the events in its history which it finds most worthy of remembrance" (qtd. in Hayes, Iarocci and Bechthold xii). By placing such significance on one battle, Canadians have welcomed it into their national commemoration of the Great War⁵. Today there is a spectacular monument erected on the ridge overlooking the Douai plain in France, honouring the Canadians who fell, in France, in the First World War and who were buried with no known graves.⁶

Created by sculptor and architect Walter Allward, the monument was unveiled in 1936. It is made of Croatian limestone and has 20 sculpted figures that adorn two 27-metre pylons and the base of the monument (“The Canadian”). Half-size plaster models were used to help shape the figures during the monument’s construction and 17 of the models are now on display at the Canadian War Museum in Regeneration Hall. In addition to the plaster maquettes, information about the battle of Vimy Ridge and the memorial can be found in the museum’s permanent galleries.

The Great War historian at the Canadian War Museum and curator of the First World War exhibit, Tim Cook writes that:

The two world wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45 weave through Canada’s history like threads through a tapestry, stitching together myriad experiences to form our identity and culture. There are few aspects of Canadian society that have not been shaped by these wars, from politics to family, from the role of government to the formation of social policy, from the status of women to the French-English relations. The loss of more than 102,000 Canadians in these two conflicts caused incalculable grief. Yet Canada emerged a nation transformed in their aftermath.

(Clio 3)

In particular, Cook argues that although “Canada was formed in 1867, [it was] forged during the Great War” (253). Clearly, the Great War has a significant place in the construction of Canada’s national identity, in the events Canadians choose to commemorate and in the collective memory of the nation.

At the Canadian War Museum, the period of the Great War is showcased in *Canadian Experience Gallery 2 – For Crown and Country*. David Williams compares the Canadian War Museum’s *For Crown and Country* exhibit to the two French military history museums on the Great War: *le Musée de l’Infanterie* in Montpellier⁷ and *l’Historial de la Grande Guerre* in Péronne. Williams concludes that the Canadian War Museum offers a “hybrid experience” because it blends traditional museum techniques, such as the use of displayed artefacts, with postmodern interactive elements that offer the museum visitor a “more dialogical engagement” with the information presented (282). In addition to representing a historical narrative, the First World War exhibit also incorporates interesting postmodern and interactive techniques in its displays.

I employ the *For Crown and Country* exhibit as the primary object of study.⁸ I chose this exhibit as my case study, firstly, because of its content. The exhibit displays the First World War’s historical significance to Canada as a nation and, as such, it is in a unique position to influence national identity, commemorative acts and personal/collective memory. Secondly, I chose this exhibit because of its composition. Its interactive display elements are organized in a linear fashion to illustrate the historical information displayed in the exhibit. This layout echoes a closed structure of a dramatic plot with a clearly identified beginning, middle and end. This compositional resemblance between the exhibit’s layout and a dramatic play allows me to apply the Freytag Pyramid to explain how this particular exhibit creates and performs a historical narrative, an activity similar to a presentation of a well-made play in theatre.

3. METHODOLOGY: ON HOW MUSEUMS PERFORM

In order to prove that a museum can function as a theatre performance, it is important to investigate the appearance and the functions of theatrical elements within a museum context. The methodology of this project is rooted in semiotic and phenomenological approaches of performance and drama analysis. This project requires a necessary balance to walk the interdisciplinary tightrope between theatre theory and museum studies. Therefore, the proposed methodology for this project is two-fold. I am approaching this project academically, as a researcher of performance and theatre studies, and practically, as an employee and a performer at museums. This dual perspective provides me with the advantage to be able to analyze and bring in the necessary theory in relation to its actual use in the field of museum interpretation and exhibiting.

3.1 Museality, Theatricality, Performativity

There are three important concepts that come together and form the crux of the argument in this thesis. They are *museality*, *theatricality* and *performativity*. In some respects, museality and theatricality are more similar than different. However, they are two different terms rooted in their respective fields of study. Performativity is recognized as a more general and accepting term than theatricality. That which is theatrical is performative, for example, but that which is performative is not necessarily theatrical. Because this thesis deals with space, objects and people, I feel that it is important to use and explain all three of these concepts. Objects transform into objects of *museality* or objects of *theatricality*, depending on their setting and other elements that are discussed immediately below. Although one can perhaps speak of the theatricality of space, in this context the words *performativity* or *performance* are more accurate because,

ironically, they are less specific. These terms are growing and “have acquired a wide range of meanings. Sometimes they are used precisely, but often they are used loosely to indicate something that is “like a performance” without actually being a performance in the orthodox or formal sense” (Schechner, *Studies* 123). For these same reasons, I turn to concepts of performativity when analyzing how people perform historical narrative.

3.1.1 Museality

In their article “Sur la muséologie” André Desvallées and François Mairesse propose various definitions for the neologism *museality*, explaining that it relates to the relationship between man and object, and the distinct characteristics that museum objects have (141-42). The term museality describes the state of an object that is positioned in a museum to be viewed by a spectator, the visitor. Museality is characterized by a similar semiotic process as the theatre’s sign-of-sign phenomenon, because museum artefacts also become signs. The object when put on display automatically becomes a sign. For example, if a visitor were to see a musket displayed in a museum, the result of *seeing a musket displayed and its effect on the visitor’s cognitive baggage* is known as museality. It is that distinguishing aspect that allows the visitor to recognize that what he or she is looking at is what a musket from 1763 would look like. Museality is the term attributed to the new reality of the musket, because although in 1763 it would have been used to fire a musket ball during a battle, today, in 2011, it is no longer used to fire, it is used to *represent* a 1763 musket. Additionally, museality, although typically associated with museums because of the word’s etymology, is not relegated to a museum, because an object can represent something from another time, even if it is not showcased in a display case (Maroević 131).

In museums, an object is usually only a representation of itself or others of its kind: they do not typically represent an abstract emotion or a feeling of expectancy as an object might on stage. For example, a Ross rifle on display in the First World War exhibit represents one type of rifle used during the First World War. It was notoriously unreliable in the non-optimal fighting conditions of trench warfare because the firing mechanism jammed frequently in the wet and muddy trench conditions.⁹ Therefore, whereas a Ross rifle on stage might be used metaphorically to represent the concepts of war or unreliability, at the museum, a Ross rifle is typically just a rifle. However, it does stand as a representation of all First World War rifles of its type. It encourages the visitor to think about the size of the men who fought in the war, the type of wounds the soldiers might suffer from or the lack of understanding of the officers in charge.

Anja Barbara Nelle explains that “museality describes a condition that results from a transformation process [and in order for an object to undergo this process, one or more of the following three characteristics must occur: a ‘loss of function’ or an ‘alteration of function’; an ‘alteration of context’; and ‘a new relation between the subject (viewer) and the object, whereby the viewer takes on a posture of admiration’]” (Nelle 154).

Any one of these characteristics can transform a daily object into an object of museality. In the first characteristic, as I described with the representation of the musket, an *alteration of the function* occurs when the object no longer performs in its original capacity: “they acquire the function of representing” (154). Secondly, the *alteration of context* can affect an object’s museality when the object is taken from its place of origin and showcased in a museum setting. Thirdly, Nelle explains that the presence of a visitor can automatically engender such a

transformation. A visitor will adopt a *posture of admiration*, to varying degrees, and as such force upon the object a sense of museality (155-56). At the museum, the musket cannot be picked up by the visitor and used as per its original purpose, instead it is gazed upon. Therefore it functions as a representation of a 1763 musket. This new reality presents the same estrangement effects that Silviya Jestrovic speaks of when she refers to the essence of *theatricality*.

3.1.2 Theatricality

In her article “Theatricality and Estrangement of Art and Life in the Russian Avant-garde,” Jestrovic explains that “there are at least two kinds of theatricality” (44). Firstly, she writes on what Pavis also calls re-theatricalization, which is a movement that came into play as a response to naturalism. Instead of maintaining the fourth wall to the extreme, as in realism and naturalism, re-theatricalization uses “the rules and conventions of the stage, presenting the performance as playful fiction only” (Pavis, *Dictionary* 395). Most importantly, she underlines what Vsevolod Meyerhold holds to, which is that theatre “does not “copy” reality, but represents it” (Jestrovic 44). This statement echoes Aristotle’s views of mimesis. According to Richard Janko’s translation of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, Plato stressed the concept that art copies life whereas Aristotle explained that art *represents* life (xv). “Epic and tragic composition, and indeed comedy, dithyrambic composition, and most sorts of music for wind and stringed instruments are all, [considered] as a whole, representations” (Aristotle 1).

Secondly, Jestrovic explains that “theatricality functions as a distancing device when it foregrounds what is immanent [*sic*] to the theater [*sic*], calling attention to the fictionality and incompleteness of the representation” (42). Like re-theatricalization this element of theatricality

calls upon the use of metatheatrical devices in order to establish an understanding that what is presented to a spectator is not real life, but an allusion of reality.

Theatricality differs from performativity in that it does not have the range of meaning that performativity seems to convey today. I employ the word theatricality the way Jestrovic uses the word. Firstly, if something is *theatrical*, that implies that it has a certain level of pretend or “make-believe” attributed to it. Secondly, because that something is theatrical in nature, or has theatrical characteristics, there is an implied distancing effect between it and the viewer. Both of these elements of theatricality are useful when looking at how museum spaces and artefacts defamiliarize a visitor by showcasing a representation of reality and not the real thing.

3.1.3 Performativity

According to Schechner, *performativity* is a broad term that points to a variety of topics in performance studies. It is often used to describe something that is “like a performance” (Schechner, *Studies* 123). In defining performance, Marvin Carlson uses “two rather different concepts [...]; one involving the display of skills, the other also involving the display, but less of a particular skill than of a recognized and culturally coded pattern of behavior [*sic*]” (4). In other words, performance can denote one’s intentional expression of certain signs or skills as well as the idea of *restored behaviour* that Schechner defines as “physical, verbal, or virtual actions that are not-for-the-first time; that are prepared or rehearsed” (*Studies* 29). There are various situations in which one can find this type of rehearsed behaviour: plays, dance performances, rituals. Practising a speech can fall into restored behaviour and can be considered a type of performance. In some cases, the individual may not even be performing this type of behaviour consciously (Schechner, *Studies* 29).

Just as there are many different types of performance, there are also different types of performers. Schechner differentiates between a “professional performer” and a “Goffman performer”; one “who masters the techniques of performance” and the other who is unaware of the fact that he or she is performing (Schechner, *Theory* 300-301). For example, actors hired to perform at the National Art Centre, Ottawa, are considered “professional performers.” They have received training and gained significant experience to perform in a theatre production. With regards to a “Goffman performer,” any one person can become one, whether he or she realizes it or not. In his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Ervin Goffman defines performance as any “activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (22). For example, when having guests over most hosts and hostesses will try to make their guests feel welcome, without necessarily being aware that they are performing hospitable acts. Carlson points out the dangers of seeing a social event as performance. He states that “the recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behavior [sic] raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as “performance,” or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself” (4-5). This last clarification, indicating that intention is required for an action to be considered a performance, echoes Pavis’ thoughts on the matter as well.

For Pavis, performance exists as long as there is “the object of the gaze” (*Dictionary* 346). A performance is something that can be seen or viewed and performativity is something that denotes a level of performance attributable to an action or to displayed objects within the museum intended to be viewed by the public and exert some degree of influence over them (Schechner, *Studies* 168). At the base level, Pavis outlines the elements of a theatre performance

as a performer, a space, and a spectator. These three elements are also present in a museum, where there is a performer (the institution, the curators, the designers, the objects, the staff, etc), a space (the building) and a spectator (the visitor).

3.2 Stage Components: Space, Objects and Body as Museum Performers

In order to prove that a museum can function as a theatre performance, it is important to investigate the appearance and the functions of theatrical elements within a museum context.

The methodology of this project is not only rooted in the terms *museality*, *theatricality*, and *performativity*, it also relies on semiotic and phenomenological approaches of performance and drama analysis. I use Pavis to outline the elements of theatre performance that he proposes to focus on in his book *Analyzing Performance*. In order to practice and apply semiotic strategies of performance analysis, for the purposes of this project, I rely on the following three Components of the Stage: *space*, *objects*, and *actors* (Pavis, *Analyzing* 55-191).

3.2.1 Space as Performer

Writing on space in theatre performance, Pavis states that there are two “possible kinds of spatial experience”:

1. Space is conceived as *an empty space* to be filled as one fills a container or an environment that has to be controlled, filled, and made expressive. [...]
2. Space is conceived *as invisible, unlimited, and linked to its users*, determined by their coordinates, movements, and trajectory: space as a substance not to be filled, but expended and extended. (*Analyzing* 151, emphasis mine)

De Certeau terms the first experience as *place* and gives the term *space* to the second one (*Practice* 117). “In short, *space is a practiced place*” (*ibid*). I argue that these two types of experiences can occur within a museum setting and are unique to each visitor.

The Canadian War Museum was once *an empty space* (Pavis’ first point). The building was designed by renowned architect Raymond Moriyama who searched “to embody the soul of a nation” by creating the building that is the Canadian War Museum (3). Permanent and temporary display galleries took shape after the building was completed. Each of these display rooms was constructed to contain museum artefacts, interactive displays, paintings and other items. Each of these exhibits was set-up to display historical information. And each of them was created for visitors to walk through and look upon the museum’s collection of objects. This type of space refers to an *external space* (Pavis, *Analyzing* 150).

A museum, like a theatre, has a *site*, a *stage space* and a *liminal space* (Pavis *Analyzing* 151). That is, firstly, it is a building and is located geographically in our tangible/material world. It contains different interior spaces, such as the lobby, the boutique, and the cafeteria. Secondly, it also has its own type of performance space, its *stage space*. Moriyama envisioned that the dramatic slopes of the museum’s textured walls would represent the instability of war (69). In the following, I will refer to the galleries in which a historical narrative is performed for the visitors and a unique type of possible world is created. In these galleries the *stage space* is made expressive, the *place* as de Certeau would say, is the sum of when “the elements taken into consideration are *beside* one another, each situated in its own “proper” and distinct location, a location it defines [...] It implies an indication of stability” (*Practice* 117).

Thirdly, there is a *liminal space* (“more or less clear, but always irremovable”) that occurs between the exhibits and the “behind-the-scenes” of the museum (Pavis, *Analyzing* 151). Visitors can sometimes get a glimpse of this type of space when employees use short cuts, access hidden storage places and disappear behind sliding doors. For example, in the hallway leading to the map at the centre of the permanent galleries, there are larger than life photos printed on scrim-like canvases. What is imperceptible to the museum visitor is that one of these prints is mounted on a movable track. At times, members of the museum staff will slide this “door” open, allowing passersby to catch a glimpse of the interior workings of the place. In this example, visitors may feel as though they too are privy to what goes on “behind the scenes.”

This activity is in fact more in tune with the second definition provided by Pavis, which is that space is invisible and *linked to its users*. This type of space Pavis calls *gestural space* and de Certeau simply calls *space* (*Analyzing* 151, *Practice* 117-118). De Certeau explains that “in relation to place, *space* is like the word when it is spoken [...] (*Practice* 117, emphasis mine). Like de Certeau’s *space*, Pavis’ *gestural space* has to do with movement and presence (Pavis, *Analyzing* 152). Museum employee behaviour can affect a visitor’s sense of space and remind him or her of the “meta-like” characteristics of the Canadian War Museum. Many of the physical elements used in creating and building the exhibit are visible to the visitor thus reminding the visitor that he or she is in a constructed space.

In addition, the de Certeau *space* of the First World War exhibit is affected by the lights and sounds from other exhibits because the walls of the First World War exhibit do not reach the ground or touch the ceilings. The presence of people can also influence one’s sense of de Certeau *space*. This happens because another person automatically makes us occupy space

differently, than if we were alone in an exhibit, for example. We define our location in space according to another's location in that same space (this will further be discussed below in section 3.2.3, as it refers to how people can become performers for one another).

3.2.2 Objects as Performers

Pavis specifically veers away from calling objects "props," because he feels the latter is often attributed to a "secondary tool belonging to a character" (*Analyzing* 184-86). He does, however, explain that any material item on stage that is not the actor can function as an object. Objects can range from costume pieces to set elements depending on the context (*Analyzing* 186). Moreover, he adds that "in theatre the object is always a sign of something" (Pavis, *Dictionary* 240). In museums, objects, most commonly referred to as artefacts, are also signs of something.

One way in which a museum performs is by showcasing objects and thus turning them into signs the same way as objects become signs of objects (or even of signs) when placed on stage. In his article "Costume as a Sign," Petr Bogatyrev explains that "any item of nature, technology, or everyday use can become a sign whenever it acquires meaning beyond the bounds of its individual existence as a thing in and of itself" (14). In this, one understands that an object can come to represent something else. One of the examples that Bogatyrev uses is the placement of a stone as a marker between two plots of land (13). In this instance, a stone becomes more than itself; it also represents something, a landmark, and thus becomes a sign. When placed in a theatrical context, this object as a sign gains an extra dimension; an added meaning. The object on stage becomes "not only [a sign] of an object but also [a sign] of a sign" (Rokem, "A Chair" 280).

Bert O. States explains that in theatre “anything deliberately put [on stage] for artistic purposes becomes a sign when it enters illusionary space and time” (373). The distancing that occurs between an audience member and an object on stage is created when a regular item is placed on stage specifically for it to be *viewed* by a spectator. In this new position that object becomes a sign of a sign. This is the fundamental condition of the semiotic nature of theatre performance; everything we see on stage is a sign of a sign. In this manner, in addition to the actor, the object too becomes a performer for the spectator. In fact, an object can represent more than itself while on stage; it “can be transformed into something additional” (Rokem, “A Chair” 278). For example, an empty chair can represent more than itself. It can represent the expectation of a guest who has yet to arrive.

A museum space is similar to a theatre space because it can turn the historical objects into signs that serve several functions in the museum’s performance of narrative. In a museum setting, displayed objects necessarily become signs. Most artefacts showcased in an exhibit come to represent more than their individual selves. They become the symbols of something else. The artefact’s placement in a museum gallery transforms this artefact into a representation of all similar objects of its original time period and material specificity. For example, a First World War uniform, on display at the Canadian War Museum, represents all First World War uniforms worn by the average Canadian foot soldier during the Great War.

Additionally, the museum artefacts can become the signs of people. Sir Isaac Brock’s military jacket has come to represent the British General from the War of 1812. It shows his physical shape, military ranking and cause of death (a bullet hole through the chest). Various museum objects can become signs of battles. For example, there are maquettes used to display

particular attacks such as the Battle of the Plains of Abraham in the Seven Years War. Finally, artefacts can transform into signs of signs, such as the piece of the Berlin Wall, representing the end of the Cold War, displayed in the gallery *A Violent Peace*, etc. In the field of museum studies, this state of transformation is called *museality*.

3.2.3 People as Performers

Pavis explains that it is difficult to establish a theory of the actor, but that ultimately the actor can be described as someone who “seems to speak, not in his own name, but on behalf of the character he imitates or pretends to be” (Pavis, *Analyzing* 56). He does maintain that having an actor is vital to creating a performance.

Within an exhibit space there are not only artefacts and displays, there is also the presence of people. Museum employees are present in the exhibit space and influence the visitors around them. The influence can be unintentional, as was discussed previously in the section of the stage component of space (3.2.1). Employees can access the “behind-the-scenes” sections of the museum and remind visitors that there is more to the building than the exhibits or the other areas they have access to. On the other hand, the influence can also be strongly intentional. Museum staff can offer various performances for visitors, such as guided tours, for example, or Group Animations, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

In addition to museum employees, visitors can perform subtle influences on other people in the exhibit. Individuals rely on their shared experiences with others to form a sense of cultural or national identity (Cane 6). If a visitor looks up from having just finished reading an information panel and notices that another visitor is already in position reading the next panel, he

or she might decide to skip that section, or he or she might decide to wait unobtrusively nearby, then again he or she might share the space with the other visitor. As Barbara Stratyner explains, a visitor “controls his/her pace and route inside the performance space or among gallery scenepoints” (41). This varied behaviour can have an influence on the other visitors in the space, by forcing them to modify their own behaviour. Goffman states that “a performance may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to *influence in any way* any of the other participants” (Goffman 15, emphasis mine). In fact, de Certeau goes so far as to say that by the very steps we take, we are performers.

In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau compares the walking of pedestrians in a city and their movements to speech acts. The cityscape is the text and the pedestrians are performers, their steps, the choices they make in getting from an implied here to there (de Certeau, *Practice* 99). Each visitor in the museum chooses the direction in which he or she will walk. Although there is an implied chronological path, because of the way the narrative is displayed in the museum, visitors are still free to roam the museum at their own pace and the permanent galleries are purposefully laid out so that if someone wanted to visit the gallery containing information on the Cold War, for example, he or she could easily make his or her way to that gallery’s entrance without visiting the First World War exhibit or the other areas of the museum. The place is constant (with the exception of changes made to keep exhibits up-to-date); the space is ever-changing. “[*Place*] implies an indication of stability. A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables” (117). The visitors, wandering through the museum exhibit at different speeds, transform it into a *space*.

When someone is walking, he or she is in transition from here to there. In fact, every step is a step away from here. De Certeau says that “[to] walk is to lack a place” and in these intangible places, we are open to influence by whoever is in our space (*Practice* 103). It is only after we have arrived that we can speak of what we have just experienced. As Denning suggests, “[l]ife experienced is always in the moment after, textualized in a story, an explanation, a recounted myth” (“Enigma” 214). It is then remembered, stored and assimilated to our understanding of our national identity, our personal memory, and the way we commemorate past events or people.

4. LAYOUT

Chapter One explores the theories of certain historians (White, Kellner, Denning and de Certeau) who see the act of writing down history in narrative format as a *performative* act. I will apply the Freytag Pyramid for a well-made play to the historical narrative represented in the First World War exhibit and explain the layout of the exhibit space in detail as it is the main focus of this academic analysis. Also, as discussed, the First World War played a significant role in Canadian history. In fact, the Great War continues to influence Canada’s national identity, the way Canada commemorates historical events and people’s individual and collective memory. Chapter One explains how the Canadian War Museum’s performance of historical narrative influences these three social elements.

As I have previously mentioned the following Components of the Stage, as described by Pavis, are important to the structure of this thesis: space, objects, and actors. The museum space constructs national identity, the objects displayed signify what events become commemorated and the people in the museum shape personal and collective memory. I have matched these

social elements with the three stage components I will be using for the semiotic analysis (see fig. 1).

	Stage Component	Social Element
Chapter 2	Space	National identity
Chapter 3	Objects	Commemorative Acts
Chapter 4	Actors	Memory

Layout of Thesis

Figure 1

In Chapter Two, I discuss how the use of the museum space, which creates a possible world, contributes to constructing Canadian national identity. In Chapter Three, I examine how the display of artefacts and objects engenders commemoration. Lastly, in Chapter Four, I analyze how the interaction between people (performers and visitors, and visitors themselves) in the museum affects visitors' personal and collective memories.

History is strongly connected to memory and both influence the recollection or representation of the other. Memory is the act of storing information and experiences, and being able to recall them. Paul Ricoeur explains that “every act of memory is thus summed up in recognition” (Ricoeur, *Memory* 495). In fact, Kendra Cherry explains that “there are three major processes involved in memory: encoding, storage and retrieval” (“Memory”). These different stages essentially delineate one's ability to understand something new and “make” a memory, to then file that information away in his or her unconscious brain, and, finally, to retrieve that information and bring it to the surface of his or her mind in a conscious state. Although each stage is at some point explored in relation to the Canadian War Museum's performance of historical narrative, memory is not the focus of this thesis. It is, however, an indispensable element worthy of discussion as the telling of history and memory itself are both intricately

linked, and perhaps inseparable. Therefore, I will use the works of Ricoeur, Pierre Nora and Maurice Halbwachs, for guidance.

Chapter Two looks at the element of space and analyses how a museum space performs historical narrative and in turn influences national identity. This chapter focuses on how the space of the First World War exhibit builds narrative flow and juxtaposes the dual presence of fiction and reality. I rely primarily on Lubomír Doležel's literary theory of possible-worlds, as described in his book *Heterocosmica*. "Possible worlds," he explains "do not await discovery in some remote or transcendent depository, they are constructed" (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* ix). The purpose is to discuss how the choices made by the curatorial and interpretive team contribute to the creation of a possible world in the space itself.

Chapter Three focuses on how historical narrative in the First World War exhibit is constructed through the use of displayed objects and images. I turn to Roland Barthes and Marion Hirsch to discuss how we make meaning without words. The showcased narrative is analyzed in relation to Marie-Laure Ryan's eight conditions of narrativity. The chapter argues that the display of specific artefacts places a certain level of importance on the objects, which, as a result, can transform them into objects of commemoration. The concepts of museality and theatricality mirror one another in this chapter. The interpretation that the visitor leaves the museum with is what ultimately determines the power an object has to influence the commemoration of events or people.

Chapter Four discusses Freddie Rokem's theories on actors as "hyper-historians." Using the theories of Jiří Veltruský and Michael Kirby, this chapter casts the museum interpreter as a special theatrical performer. By extension, I discuss how the museum interpreter/performer

becomes a witness and thus a “hyper-historian.” I demonstrate that as a result of this interaction, the museum visitor becomes a secondary witness to history. The visitor’s experience of the performance in the museum affects his or her personal memory. Moreover, the visitor him or herself can become a performer of history for other spectators and this phenomenon is also presented in this chapter. The examples used in Chapter Four are pulled from a variety of locations within the museum, but share as their unifying thread staff and visitor interactions.

CURTAIN CALL

I have worked for the Canadian War Museum since it opened in 2005. Since that time I have met thousands of museum visitors who have wondered about the museum, its exhibitions, Canadian history, but also, about me; my education and my work in the museum. Their most common assumption is the following statement: “You must have a degree in History.” For the past six years, my reply has always been: “No, actually, I studied Translation and Theatre.”

Visitors’ reactions have ranged from general interest to surprise. Many said that they could see how being a translator would influence my ability to work in a bilingual environment in a positive manner. Most, however, asked how my academic past in theatre was relevant to working in a museum about war. Even after a guided tour, during which I would have spent 45 minutes as an entertainer and educator, most visitors did not see the interaction as a performance. That is until I explained the similarities. Time and time again I have had to validate my choice to work in a national museum with an academic background in theatre.

Yet the museum is a space that is constantly performing. The space itself performs, the objects perform and the people within its walls perform. It even has an audience, an ever-

changing audience: the museum visitor. This visitor does more than just visit the museum. This visitor also watches, learns and bears witness to the historical narrative performed. Sometimes this visitor even performs a historical narrative of his or her own. In each of our societal roles, we can perform different responsibilities, different actions, etc. This thesis explores how the Canadian War Museum pushes the traditional concepts surrounding its role as an institution with a collection of historical artefacts and casts itself onto a new stage. A stage where any *space*, any *thing* and any *one* can become a performer.

ENDNOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

¹ On the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website, new immigrants are encouraged to read the ministry's online study guide *Discover Canada*. For additional information on Canadian history, the ministry provides a link for new immigrants to visit the Canadian War Museum's website (at the time this thesis was submitted, October 2011). It is interesting to note that there is no mention of the Canadian Museum of Civilization (cic.gc.ca).

² In their article "Seeing it For Real...? Authenticity, Theatre and Learning in Museums," Jackson and Leahy published the results of a survey they conducted at the People's History Museum in Manchester and the Imperial War Museum in London, England.

³ It has been my experience, that adults also view museums in this way.

⁴ Gallery 2, *For Crown and Country*, covers both the South African War and the Great War.

⁵ An excellent example of this is Vern Thiessen's play *Vimy* which was performed at the Great Canadian Theatre Company (GCTC) in November-December of 2010. This production was a combined effort between the National Art Centre (NAC) and the GCTC. I had the honour of being the Assistant Historian to the production under the supervision of Dr. David Dean, NAC English Theatre Company Historian associated with his SSHRC-funded project "Performing History, Making History."

⁶ It is also of significance to understand, as Jean Martin explains in his article "Vimy, April 1917: The Birth of Which Nation?" that the "myth that Vimy represents the birth of a nation" is a rather English Canadian one, and that "to claim that the nation was born on 9 April 1917, [...] is to deny more than three centuries of history during which the ancestors of millions of Canadians devoted their lives to building this country" (32).

⁷ Le Musée de l'Infanterie closed its doors in December 2009.

⁸ Although there are examples from other areas in the museum, particularly in Chapter Four, the First World War exhibit is the focus of this study.

⁹ Although the Canadian Ross rifle was an excellent marksmanship weapon, it was notoriously unreliable once introduced to the conditions of the trenches and was replaced by the Lee-Enfield Rifle by July 1916.

Chapter One

A Stage for Three Muses, Clio, Thalia and Melpomene: The First World War exhibit at the Canadian War Museum

“[...] I do not believe that there are “stories” out there in the archives or monuments of the past, waiting to be resurrected and told. Neither human activity nor the existing records of such activity take the form of narrative, which is the product of complex cultural forms and deep-seated linguistic conventions deriving from choices that have traditionally been called rhetorical [...]” (Kellner, vii).

Although this thesis stems from an academic interest in theatre and performance studies, the focus of its analysis is not typically associated with theatre. One could speculate, that I was inspired not only by the two Greek muses of drama Thalia and Melpomene (muses of comedy and tragedy respectively), but also by Clio, the muse of history. Like theatre, historiography (the writing of history) is primarily a form of communication. As a history museum, the Canadian War Museum presents a historical narrative. The piecing together of historical narrative has been considered by some, such as historians Hayden White, Hans Kellner, Michel de Certeau and Greg Dening, as a performance in and of itself. Chapter One will provide a brief overview of what these historians view as the making of historical narrative and how the art of historiography can be seen as a performance similar to the making of fictional narrative, and by extension play-writing.

Additionally, the section on the First World War in the Canadian War Museum exhibit *For Crown and Country* will be thoroughly described as it acts as the primary object of study for the theories presented in this thesis. By describing the content and layout of the exhibit, this chapter will demonstrate how the narrative it performs meets the key elements necessary in writing a well-made play. With a better appreciation of the First World War narrative and the

exhibit's layout at the Canadian War Museum, Chapters Two and Three will be more easily understood. As the final chapter deals with more specific experiences of visitor and employee interactions, each case study will be described when appropriate in Chapter Four.

1. HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY AS PERFORMANCE

History, as Aristotle explains, “is not the exposition of a single action that is required [in epics], but of a single period, and of everything that happened to one or more persons during this period, however unrelated the various events may have been” (qtd. in Rokem 10). History is the study of humanity's past. It is most often recorded by historians in a narrative format. Canadian military history recounts anything to do with armed conflicts affecting Canada or Canadians in any way. Military history covers the social, economic, political and geographical consequences of war and other types of armed conflict. It also interprets the events of conflict themselves. Aristotle mentions that all events are worth recording ‘however unrelated’ they may be. Modern historians, such as White and Denning, attempt to clarify the cause-and-effect relations between historical events in order to create some type of flow and to engage their reader(s) and in so doing arguably *perform* (White *Content*, Denning *Performances*). In his 2000 book *Performing History*, Freddie Rokem argues that writing history is a type of performance. Rokem further explains that “any process of telling or writing a version of what has happened is a form of performing history and of resurrecting that past” (*Performing* 10).

White presented a controversial position with regards to the writing of history, also known as historiography, in his 1978 book *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. He states that “[m]any modern historians hold that narrative discourse, far from being a neutral medium for the representation of historical events and

processes, is the very stuff of a mythical view of reality [...]” (White ix). In this statement, White begins a trend that acknowledges that writing history is in itself like writing fiction.

Historiography even when based on primary sources remains a representation of what *might* have happened in the past. There is no way of knowing anything *for sure* because short of having lived during the period in question, historians must rely on primary, secondary, tertiary, etc, sources, which are always interpretations of the moment or time past. In fact, even if one had lived during the period under research, a historian is always tainted by his or her own limitations, be they a result of his or her perspective or capacity for interpreting and retaining information. Echoing this idea, de Certeau explains that there are always at least two variables that cannot be ignored with regards to writing history:

[...] the situation of the historiographer makes study of the real appear in two quite different positions within the scientific process: the real insofar as it is *known* (what the historian studies, understands, or “brings to life” from a past society), and the real insofar as it is entangled within the scientific operations (the present society, to which the historians’ problematic, their procedures, modes of comprehension, and finally practice of meaning are referable). (*Writing* 35)

In other words, de Certeau is referring to what can actually be known about human events, and through which scientific lens historians use to look back at these events. Similarly, Kellner ascribes to the belief that no historian is completely bias-free regardless of his or her level of professionalism. The historian is influenced by the conventions of his or her society. Moreover, like White, he believes that “neither human activity nor the existing records of such activity take the form of a narrative” (Kellner vii). Both authors acknowledge that most historians will

attempt as much as possible to “tell” a narrative versus “create” a narrative based solely on their imaginations. By this they mean that historians will put together a historical narrative based on honest research, which in turn is rooted in real-life happenings. However, events in real life are not laid out as if in a story and, therefore, any attempt to make these events understandable in a coherent manner is not necessarily against, but certainly not accurately representative of all real-life happenings. Denning, a historian who believes in writing while wearing the glasses of an anthropologist and an ethnographer, writes in *Performances*, that in presenting the past we can never replicate it, we can only represent it, shape it, stage it, and perform it in some other way than it originally existed (xiv). When working on a given project, a historian must make choices regarding what information can be kept and what information is deemed expendable. In these types of situations, because choices are made an action is *performed*.

Denning eloquently describes the need for historians to perform when writing history texts: “[to] make our utterance an experience we have to discover ways to make silences present. The silences must be there, not as emptiness, but, in Paul Valéry’s words (1970), ‘the active presence of the absent things’” (Denning, *Performances* 116). When he interprets the silences, when he translates and listens to the silences of another culture, Denning explains that as a historian he becomes a conduit for those silences to perform through him (*Enigma* 211). De Certeau calls these silences *lacuna*, and explains that “[historical] narrativity, the metaphor of performative discourse, finds its support precisely in what it hides [...]” (*Writing* 101-02). In other words, historians perform when there are silences to be interpreted, and because there *are* silences to be interpreted, historians *must* perform. Kellner explains that historians are the creators of narratives, because narrative “is the product of complex cultural forms and deep-seated linguistic conventions deriving from choices that have traditionally been called rhetorical

[...]” (vii). The historical documents do not make narrative on their own. It is as de Certeau explains “[a]s a substitute for the absent thing, [...], the historical text plays a performative role” (*Writing* 101). This historical text is written by a historian.

Like most performers, who presumably want their creative work to be well-received by their audiences, historians want their research to be appreciated by their readers. In order to achieve this, the historian must rely on his or her ability to interest the readers through an engaging writing style. However, it still remains up to the reader to create his or her own meaning from that interpretation. White and Kellner would agree with de Certeau, who believes that reading is not a passive consumption (*Practice* 167). The responsibility of making meaning lies with the reader, who must contribute to making narrative by *not* taking the content for granted. The reader must research anything that he or she might feel compelled to verify or pursue out of personal interest. As F.R. Ankersmit suggests, “[only] the existence of competing views makes possible the perception of any view of the past at all” (qtd. in Kellner 39). Although this proviso does not absolve the historian of accountability with regards to presenting history accurately, it does entail that the reader become responsible for the accuracy of the information he or she uses when accumulating his or her own personal *cognitive baggage*. Anne Ubersfeld, theatre theoretician, calls this concept *encyclopaedic universe*. She describes it as including “the totality of [a person’s] historical knowledge [and also encompassing] all that belongs to his or her own universe” (Ubersfeld 115). In this way those who receive information—the readers, the spectators, the visitors—are responsible for the manner in which said information influences their future choices. That said, the way in which historical information is performed will ultimately sway the museum visitor in some way or another. The visitor might modify his or her sense of identity according to information that is presented about his or her

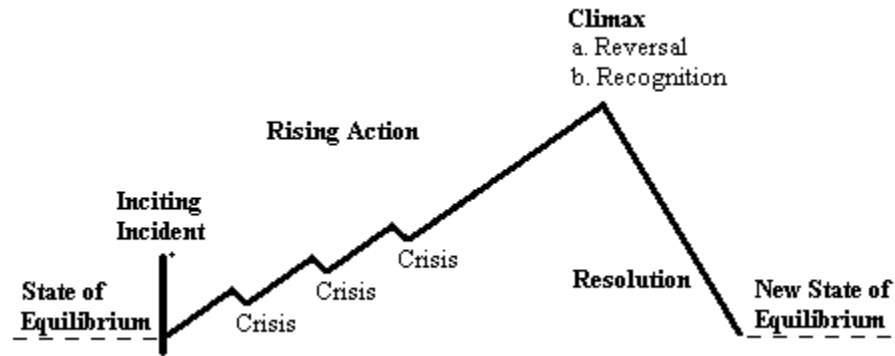
cultural past. Potentially, a visitor might choose to commemorate some people or events over others, depending on how said people and events are portrayed in an exhibit space. In any case, a visitor's memory, collective or personal, will somehow be affected by what he or she learns in a museum setting.

All of this, potentially influential, information is communicated to the receiver in different rhetorical ways. Certainly at the Canadian War Museum, the historical narrative is communicated in a performative style. If “[h]istorical writing [...] is – like literature – a matter of communication, not fact-finding” (Pihlainen 26), then the narrative displayed in the First World War exhibit is also a matter of communication. Writing a historical narrative or creating an amalgam is much like piecing together an exhibit in a museum gallery. Facts drawn from a variety of sources, such as journal entries, newspaper articles, regimental diaries and rosters, official and unofficial writings, are pulled together to make a cohesive whole. Narrative is a tool used by historians, fiction writers, teachers, playwrights, etc, to facilitate human understanding and interest. “Narrative exists to make continuous what is discontinuous; it covers the gaps in time, in action, in documentation, even when it points to them” (Kellner 55). Moreover, since real life, as White says, “can never be truthfully represented as having the kind of formal coherency met with in the conventional, well-made or fabulistic story” (ix), the exhibit curator and interpretive planners created their own performance when they pieced together the narrative performed in the First World War exhibit, a narrative that shares the elements required for a well-made play.

2. THE FIRST WORLD WAR EXHIBIT

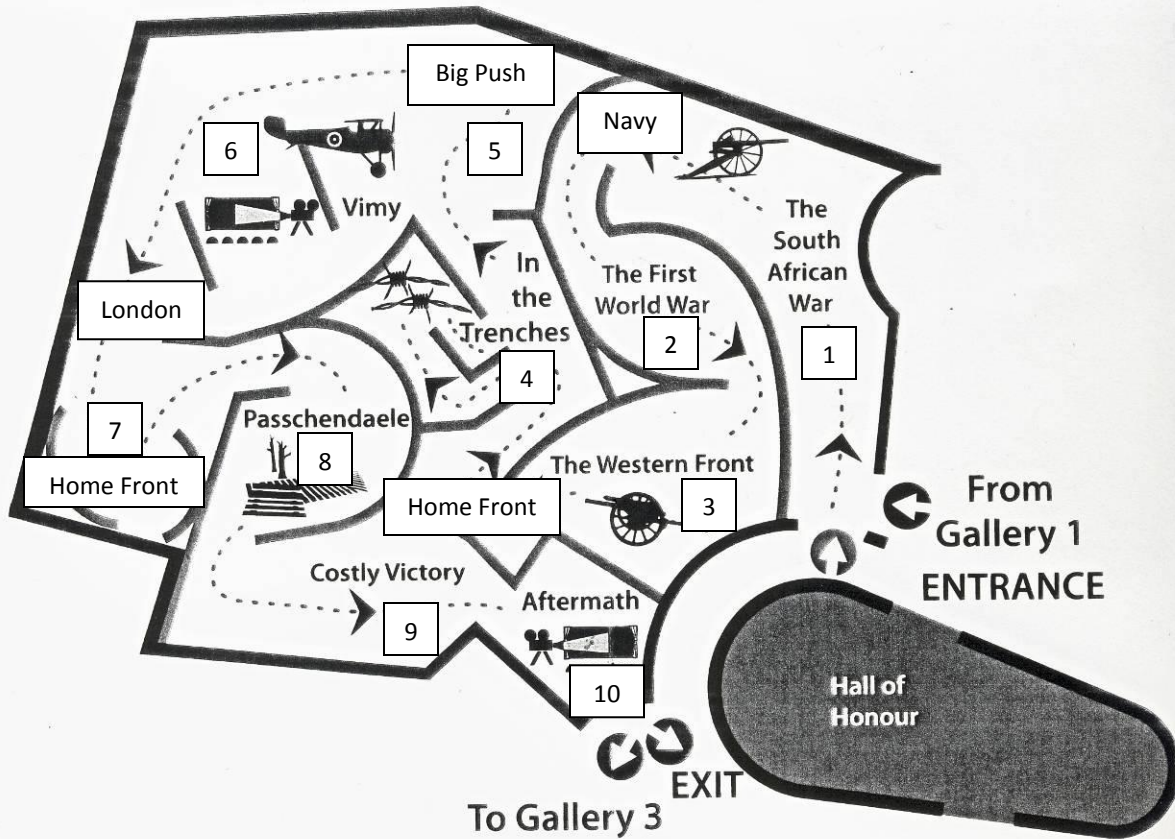
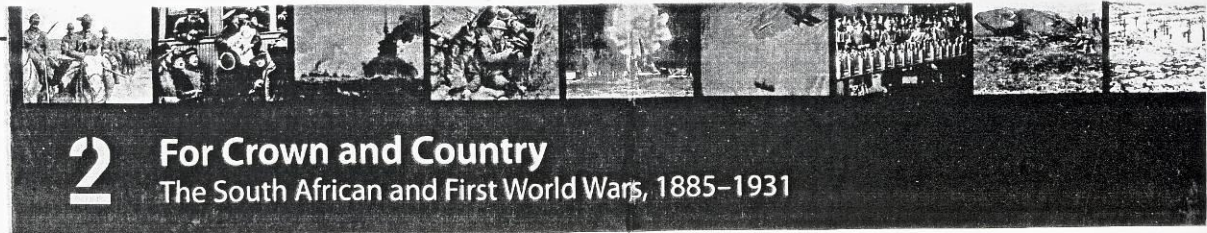
The curator and the interpretive planners are the museum staff responsible for the presentation of the First World War exhibit, which is located in the gallery *For Crown and Country* that covers the time period from 1885 to 1931. The curator is a historian and provides the historical narrative, by piecing together all of the resources at his or her disposal, that is written on the text panels in the exhibit. The interpretative planners help shape the presentation of that narrative to make it as engaging as possible, while meeting the Canadian War Museum's mandate (Educate. Preserve. Remember.) Together, both the exhibit curator and the interpretive planners help with the layout of the gallery and the strategic placement of the chosen artefacts they wish to display.

The dramaturgy of the First World War exhibit follows the major elements of a well-made play identified in the Freytag Pyramid: the state of equilibrium, the inciting incident, the rising action, the climax, the resolution and the new state of equilibrium (see fig. 2). Although the well-made play is attributed to Eugène Scribe who coined the expression in the 19th century, it is based on the recommendations made by Aristotle in his *Poetics* and refers to “a play characterized by the perfectly logical arrangement of its action” (Pavis, *Dictionary* 438). As discussed, the writing of historical narrative is comparable to the writing of fiction. In turn, the writing of fiction is comparable to the writing of a play. Like a play there is significant *dramatic action* that takes place within the historical narrative of the First World War exhibit, which entails a specific event, a limited timeline and a significant change from the original state of affairs (Rush 38). For the purposes of this project, I have divided Gallery 2 into roughly ten major sections with important transition zones (see fig. 3).



**Freytag Pyramid
(Rush 39)
Figure 2**

The *specific event* showcased in the First World War portion of the gallery is what happened to Canadians during the Great War of 1914-18. Although the gallery covers briefly what comes before and after the Great War, the First World War follows the *limited timeline* of the four-year period. The final element required for dramatic action is that a *significant change* must occur in the narrative. This will be better understood after the Freytag Pyramid and the elements of a well-made play are applied to the First World War exhibit; however, one of the many significant changes is that Canada, although it remained a British Dominion until 1931 with the legislation of the Statute of Westminster, received representation among the League of Nations in 1919 with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, which was the peace treaty to formally end the Great War.



CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM
MUSÉE CANADIEN DE LA GUERRE
1, PLACE VIMY PLACE
OTTAWA, ON K1A 0M8

Map of Gallery 2: *For Crown and Country*
(Canadian War Museum, white text boxes added for specification by the author)
Figure 3

2.1 State of Equilibrium

The first section of the gallery, on the South African War, transitions into the beginning of the First World War via a hallway that discusses Canada's financial and naval situation at the turn of the 20th century.¹ Here a visitor is made aware of the state of equilibrium. There was tension in Europe, where countries were racing to build powerful armies and, in particular, where Britain and Germany raced to build stronger national navies.

2.2 Inciting Incident

At the beginning of the First World War exhibit, an overhanging archway indicates that the visitor will now enter the First World War portion of the gallery, which covers the years 1914 to 1918, starting with the Road to War section. It is here where the visitor learns about the inciting incident, which is the second step in the Freytag Pyramid. Many factors contribute to the outbreak of the Great War, but the agreed upon catalyst is the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Serbian nationalist in June 1914. This put into motion a series of events and called upon old alliances, which eventually led to the outbreak of war in early August 1914. What propelled Britain to war in August 1914 was the implementation of Germany's Schlieffen plan, which took the German army through neutral Belgium. Due to Britain's declaration of war against Germany, Canada, like all other British Dominions, was automatically at war.

The Road to War section (the second section of the gallery although the first one to talk about the First World War) introduces the main characters that were engaged in this war and that will be talked about throughout the exhibit. On a large scale, there was the Triple Entente, which included the British Empire, France and Russia, and the Triple Alliance, which initially included

Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, but came to represent only Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1915. The characters that are closer to home are the faces of the everyday men and women displayed on the walls in large images illustrating Canada's eagerness to join the fight and the general enthusiasm surrounding what was perceived to be a great adventure in the fall of 1914. Unlike a typical well-made play where there is normally one protagonist, the First World War narrative at the Canadian War Museum showcases the stories of a variety of persons, this includes soldiers at the battle front, officers in charge, women left in Canada, politicians engaged in international affairs and children at the home front. However, the connecting characteristic between these stories lies in how the museum displays them. Each story, each person, is represented as a regular person, an ordinary person. Although the names of the soldiers may change from one information panel to the next, they represent one another, and they represent those who are not mentioned. Each displayed soldier is a representation of all soldiers. The average visitor might even identify with the people presented, as in the medieval morality play, when the character Everyman represents all mankind and is someone who the members of the audience can relate to.

2.3 Rising Action

A uniformed mannequin stands guard at the entrance to the third section, which traces the story of the involvement of Canadian troops on the Western Front in 1915, touching specifically on the Second Battle of Ypres. This was the first main obstacle Canadian soldiers had to overcome while they were stationed overseas. The atmosphere is very different in this section, as the realities of war become apparent. Visitors can read about the consequences of the introduction of poison gas in combat; they can see large canvas paintings depicting the battle and presenting

injured soldiers; and they can learn that the number-one-killer of men during the war was artillery shells.

Another transition passage, which connects the Battle of Ypres to the section on the trenches, displays John McCrae's well-known poem "In Flanders' Fields." However, the focus of this transition is the home-front and the use of propaganda on Canadian citizens. There is a video recording of a concerned Canadian woman, who speaks to the rumours coming from the front lines, implores the watching visitor to band together with her, and explains that there are "enemies" on Canadian soil who should be locked up. "It's like you've entered a time warp [...]" (Williams 248). These three elements are found in this small transition section through the use of propaganda posters and information regarding the creation of internment camps in Canada for Ukrainian-Canadians.

The fourth section presents the life the soldiers were forced to live, as a result of the warfare, in the trenches, a continuous obstacle they had to face. The images display tired faces and there are artefacts (rum containers, shell art, etc) that allude to the everyday life in the trenches. Here the visitor can walk through a mock trench that has sandbags, plank flooring and dim overhead lighting. There are First World War replicated periscopes, used by soldiers to look safely over the top of a trench, which show a loop of black and white film footage of no-man's-land. Upon exiting the trench, there is a touching story about Lawrence Rogers and how his daughter sent her teddy bear overseas with him for luck: He did not survive. There is an interactive activity that explains the annoyance of lice and the dangers of trench foot. Visitors can learn about hand-to-hand combat weapons before they enter the fifth section of the gallery about the Big Push.

It was hoped that the Big Push would end the war; soldiers were even given steel helmets to wear for the offensive. However, the opening battle of the Big Push, the Battle of the Somme, proved to be a terrible slaughter, and there would be no breakthrough of the enemy lines. In this section the visitor learns about the disaster that was July 1, 1916 and how the Battle of Courcellette, later in September of that same year, was just one of the many offensives that formed the larger Battle of the Somme, which ended in November of that year.

Adjacent to this section is information about the Battle of Vimy Ridge in 1917 (the sixth section), an important landmark in Canadian military history as it was the first time that all four Canadian Divisions were united in combat. Because of its height and strategic importance, the ridge, located just north of Arras, was a significant obstacle to overcome, and months of preparation and practice went into the winning of it. A black-and-white video relates quotes from soldiers who were involved at Vimy while showing a montage of film and images². The effects of shrapnel are displayed in their gruesome reality of torn flesh and severed limbs. Panels explain the success of the “creeping barrage,” a military tactic developed especially for Vimy, which led in part to the Canadians’ battlefield success. Nearby there is also information regarding the contribution of the newly developed air war tactics. The stories of Canadian pilot aces Billy Bishop and William Barker are immortalized by the display of a Newport 17 and a First World War airplane fuselage.

The transition space that follows covers the soldier’s life while on leave in London, England: a place the soldiers called Blighty. The seventh section provides an overview of what was happening at the home front. Canvases depicting the Halifax Explosion, which until the advent of the atomic bomb was the largest man-made explosion, face a nearby montage of large photographs, words and quotes that spans two curving walls. The images on one wall show tired

and discouraged faces, while on the opposite wall, the citizens appear determined and supportive. Here the exhibit describes the introduction of conscription in Canada in 1917 as well as other measures that were taken to support the war effort, such as the introduction of Daylight Saving Time. These were not measures that were easily accepted nation-wide and while a war was fought overseas, obstacles on the home-front needed to be addressed.

The next transition shows two different images of an area in Belgium. In the first image, the countryside is picturesque with an aerial view of a cathedral, distinct roads and organized farming plots. In the second image, the countryside is desolate and destroyed; the foundations of the cathedral and roads are barely visible and the farming plots have become a bombed lunar landscape. This type of terrain became horrendously difficult to live and fight in, due in large part to the bog-like consistency of the muddied ground, a geographical challenge that is reproduced in the eighth section of the gallery.

The eighth section covers the Battle of Passchendaele and the conditions soldiers were forced to live in towards the end of the war. Visitors can see the main hurdle that the soldiers had to overcome was the geography itself. There is a mock landscape; a panoramic image on a curved wall shows a destroyed tank, skeletal trees and exploding shells; the ground planks cover muddied ground and shell holes filled with water; and a mannequin of a dead soldier “floats” in the muck. Visitors can walk through this section and gain a fleeting impression of what the soldiers were forced to endure. At the end, there is a video, across from a Nursing Sister’s uniform, that depicts the horrible symptoms suffered by victims of shell shock.

The transition here is brief, in fact its brevity adds to the climactic atmosphere of the ninth section: A Costly Victory. Rousing music underlines this section about the final push, the last 100 days of the war, and the climax of this exhibit.

2.4 Climax

The climax of the Great War can certainly be debated depending on your historical viewpoint. However, in the First World War exhibit it is in the section on the final days of the war. Here there are descriptions of the final main battles fought by Canadians set up on a-frame display cases. There are short descriptions of various soldiers deemed heroic for different reasons: General Arthur Currie for his battle planning skills, Private Tommy Ricketts for his bravery in battle and Corporal Francis Pegahmagabow for his sharp-shooting. There are also paintings that question the futility of this war; paintings that are the representation of artists' questioning the whole Great War endeavour, and by extension a representation of the opinions of some contemporary Canadians as well as modern-day visitors. Perhaps in taking the time to fully appreciate the displayed art and other artefacts in this area, one can find Aristotle's *recognition* and *reversal*. At first, those persons (the characters of this tale) who naively thought war was a grand and pleasant adventure know better by 1918. They are no longer ignorant regarding the reality of war and, in opposition to their actions of 1914, they are now working towards rehabilitation and peace with the original enemy.

2.5 New State of Equilibrium

At the end of this area, names of countries that have been formed or that have fallen and the number of civilian and military deaths are written on a wall awash with red. These are some of the major consequences that are a result of the outbreak of the Great War. Here there is another archway, similar to the one that opens the gallery, and it acts as the last transition. Beyond it, lays the tenth and final section of the exhibit on the aftermath and consequences of the First World War in Canada and how it helped lead to Canada's full autonomy from Great Britain. It

provides an overview of how soldiers, and their families and the government, dealt with the return of the war veterans. In this section, there is a recorded documentary video, *The Costly Road to Autonomy*, explaining such things as well as various commemorative items that were used by families to remember those who never came home. The faces that were so eager and naive at the beginning of the exhibit are different now. They are sombre. They are ecstatic. They are in mourning. They are relieved...

It can be said that the end of the gallery provides the visitor with a new state of equilibrium that is of a country ultimately relieved that the Great War is over and at the early stages of acquiring complete independence from Britain. However, as one leaves the gallery *For Crown and Country*, the entrance to the Second World War gallery is clearly visible as well as one of Adolf Hitler's parade vehicles, connecting the events of the First World War with those to follow.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although the narrative in the First World War exhibit has a similar structure to that of a well-made play, the exhibit is not a play. The exhibit is a performing agent that showcases a historical narrative. In this communication process, “[r]hetoric, representation, and reality [...] cannot be separated from one another” (Kellner 2). The writers of history, the men and women Tim Cook would call Clio's Warriors, have a responsibility to represent history as accurately as they can. However, as Kellner states, “[...] history has always been a kind of imaginary work” (49). This quality arises in a historian's work because of the basic need to interpret the available historical data in order to present it in a narrative format. Narrative helps people understand meaning, and “if all understanding is a narrative understanding, then, Ricoeur asserts, this understanding, is

entirely controlled and guided by the basic armature of narrative, what Aristotle called *muthos* or plot” (Kellner 8-9).

The plot of the First World War exhibit is performed through the exhibit’s space, the objects on display and the people who interpret within the confines of that space. Firstly, the display and layout creates a fictional space; one that can contribute to a visitor’s sense of national identity. Secondly, the artefacts and objects on display in that space contribute to the events and people that visitors choose to commemorate. Thirdly, the people who interact in an exhibit space can hold a certain amount of influence of the memory of others. According to Susan Crane, representations of museum collections help fix memory in the minds of visitors (2-4). The Canadian War Museum’s First World War exhibit space displays a historical narrative that is relatively unchanging. Visitors can use the exhibit as a point of reference when remembering Canadian history.

By performing historical narrative, the Canadian War Museum can influence its visitors in fundamental ways. Antoine Prost explains that museums are vital and legitimate storehouses of information about our past, and that they influence how we understand our cultural knowledge and how we remember our history (303). According to Prost, there is a reciprocal correlation between history and these elements: national identity, commemorative acts, and personal memory (293-306).

In his 1996 book *Douze leçons sur l’histoire*, Prost proposes that history is linked with our sense of national identity, with acts of commemoration and with memory. A traditional museum visitor trusts the museum to showcase truth, the “real thing” (Williams 239). Prost asserts that the museum is a dominant institution in our current cultural and historical education (303); therefore, these three elements factor into the performance of the museum.

When history is taught to people, it opens their eyes and allows them to form opinions about their social past and present (Prost 295). Interestingly, Denning explains that he would like his historical narrative to be like theatre, because “[in] theater [*sic*] it is the narrative form that is dominant. The story rules” (*Enigma* 216). The curatorial staff responsible for historical accuracy at the Canadian War Museum also become narrators and tellers of Canada’s military history, because they piece together a part of our nation’s historical narrative through research. Their role is not just to be responsible for historical accuracy, but to be historically accurate in the narrative they create. The narrative constructed by the museum curators and exhibit planners, is displayed by the exhibit space and, as a result, influences a visitor’s sense of national identity and personal memory, and places objects where visitors might commemorate them.

Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer maintain that collective memorization is “the product of collective agency” and occurs “in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and redescribed [*sic*] [...]” (vii). By establishing a set mock-up of a First World War trench, for example, the Canadian War Museum has set a stamp on what a part of the past should look like. In so doing, the Canadian War Museum has re-described an element of history for the museum visitor to see, and placed that new representation at the forefront of the visitor’s memory. Each new visitor who comes through the museum sees the same mock trench; therefore, as a collective they all remember more or less the same version of a First World War trench and can add that experience to their understanding of their national identity. By extension, as an institution that harbours the trust of its visitors, the museum also plays a role in what events or people become remembered or commemorated about the First World War. Because of a museum’s position of educational authority, it lends a certain amount of

authenticity to the artefacts and historical information it displays and as such can affect visitors' memories of the past.

As this chapter has demonstrated, the writing of history is like the writing of fiction in that they are both performative acts, according to historians such as White, Denning and Kellner. By the same token, since the First World War exhibit performs a historical narrative, it can be analysed through the use of literary theory, specifically the concept of possible worlds as theorized by Lubomír Doležel. In theatre, concrete worlds of the stage and possible worlds of fiction meet and that is where, according to Patrice Pavis, the magnetism of theatre happens (*Analyzing* 148). This concrete and abstract dichotomy serves the theatrical world well and is also present in an exhibit space where a historical narrative is presented. Both worlds are perhaps two sides of the same coin when it comes to performance. Chapter Two attempts to make heads or tails of this spatial experience in relation to Doležel's theories on possible worlds and explores how the making of such worlds might influence one's sense of national identity.

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

¹ The first part of the gallery covers the South African War, Canada's first overseas military involvement. In some respects, it foreshadows the events of the First World War section as it demonstrates Canada's readiness to go to war for Britain.

² The montage of film is a mixture of contemporary black and white footage alluding to a First World War battle, modern footage of the tunnels at Vimy Ridge, pictures from the war, pictures of the monument at Vimy today and quotes from various First World War soldiers.

Chapter Two

Possible Worlds in an Exhibit Space: Space as Performer of Historical Narrative at the Canadian War Museum

“Museums display material with presentational and interpretive methods derived from fiction”
(Stratyner 40).

The First World War exhibit, along with all the Canadian War Museum’s permanent exhibits, was designed in collaboration with Canadian War Museum staff and Haley Sharpe Design. Haley Sharpe Design is an innovative UK-based company that describes itself as a group of storytellers who use creative spatial design as their means of facilitating communication “between people and the objects, imagery, environments and ideas around them” (haleysharpe.com). This association between space, design, and meaning is captured nicely in Barbara Stratyner’s assertion that “the experience of viewing the exhibition is inextricably bound to the experience of entering and negotiating the museum as a physical space” (40). Primarily, this chapter will examine how the space of the First World War exhibit at the Canadian War Museum performs historical narrative and creates a possible world. In applying Lubomír Doležel’s literary theories on the make-up of a fictional world to the First World War exhibit, this chapter analyses the performed historical narrative through the exhibit’s structural elements, interactive displays, and showcased artefacts. Secondly, possible worlds created in museum spaces strengthen one’s creation of national identity. This happens because of their effect on collective memory. As discussed in Chapter One, in a museum exhibit every visitor has access to the same historical information. Therefore, even if the visitors may come from different backgrounds, and as such have different perspectives, they will collectively remember

approximately the same information. According to Antoine Prost, collective memory is an incontestable part of national identity.

A museum can serve the state to create a special narrative, or an ideological myth, of the nation's identity. Prost explains that the Western world's history of the 19th century, "which hoped to be free of morals and politics, filled an eminently political function, [...] which was the melting pot of national identities" (293).¹ This blend of identities and acceptance of multiculturalism, in Canada for example, engenders a necessary choice between the identity of a nation as a whole, versus the identities of the peoples who make up a nation. According to Prost, it is the responsibility of the government to properly acknowledge the diverse communities within its nation and it is the responsibility of the society—and accordingly the individuals who make up and form society—to provide the nation with its identity (293-94). One way in which society accomplishes this is through establishing national museums. As previously stated, a museum is a "permanent institution in the service of society and its development [...], which [...] communicates and exhibits the [...] heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment" (Lewis).

According to John Falk, "[e]ach of us possesses many identities which we use to support our interactions with the world, including a museum visit" (*Identity* 9). It is important to acknowledge that identity is not necessarily formed "by any one particular process" (Mandler 275). Erving Goffman explores how the very acts of social interaction can become performances and influence our sense of identity (17-19). Richard Schechner states that "[p]erformances mark identities [...]" (*Studies* 28). A museum visitor often defines his or her identity by what he or she is, or by what he or she likes to do, but perhaps more often by what he or she is not. In defining

national identity, we may look back to “premodern periods [...] when people were already defining themselves as members of groups that look a lot like nations—ethnicities, “cultures”, rulerships. In the modern period, however, this process of national identification became more ubiquitous and also more consequential, thanks to some modern phenomena” (Mandler 272). Modern phenomena, such as print, media and *museums*, contribute to a people’s sense of nationhood and allow individuals to feel as though they have a role in creating the narrative of the nation. This concept of a national narrative engenders the sense “of a group joined over deep time by a “common fate”” (Mandler 280). Each time this common fate is reinforced (for example, through the museum’s displayed settings), one’s sense of national identity, of belonging to a nation, can be reinforced as well.

The Canadian War Museum’s gallery space, *For Crown and Country*, reinforces a national narrative about Canada’s participation in the First World War. Primarily, it accomplishes this through the creation of possible worlds. This chapter applies literary theory on possible worlds to the First World War exhibit space. Doležel invites his readers to “expand and refine [his literary] theory but also to undertake further analytical ventures” (*Heterocosmica* xi). It is with the last part of this challenge in mind that I have chosen to apply Doležel’s six literary functions to analyze a possible world as it is created by the Canadian War Museum’s First World War exhibit. As discussed in Chapter One, the writing of historical narrative is in itself like the writing of fiction. As Schechner explains, because “to perform” can be defined in many different ways, such as by doing an action or interpreting meaning, both types of writing can be considered performative (*Studies* 28). As a result, literary theory can be applied to study the space of a museum exhibit, in which a historical narrative is performed.

Section one of this chapter discusses the theoretical make-up of Doležel's possible worlds of fiction. Doležel postulates several differences between a fictional world and a historical world as it is created by a literary text. Because, the narrative performed in the exhibit is historical in nature, not fictional, these differences will be examined in section two, in relation to their application to the spatial layout of the First World War exhibit. Section three offers the application of Doležel's six functions of a possible world of fiction to the exhibit as a performance space.

1. FICTIONAL WORLDS: WHAT ARE THEY?

Literary theorist Lubomír Doležel is well known for his work in establishing the particulars of a fictional world. He explains that “[t]he only worlds that human language is capable of producing are possible worlds” (Doležel, *Fiction and History* 30). In his book *Heterocosmica*, Doležel explains the evolution of the theories regarding possible one-world model frames and how they are *not* entirely useful to his theories on fictional worlds. Additionally, he illustrates the application of the theories of possible multiple-world frames and how they *are* of use to his literary theories. In the following, I propose to apply Doležel's theories on fictional worlds to the analysis of the First World War exhibit space's structure and spatial composition. Three basic terms, integral to understanding Doležel's work, are:

- *actual world*. A realized possible world that is perceived by human senses and provides the stage for human acting. [...]
- *fictional world*. A possible world constructed by a fictional text or other performative semiotic medium. [...]

- *possible world*. A world that is thinkable. [...] (*Heterocosmica* 279-281)

Doležel discusses a “one-world frame” as the basis for fictional worlds. A one-world frame presents only one actual world; all other worlds stem from it in one way or another. In a logical fashion, Doležel describes various semantics according to “the degree to which they accept the legitimacy of fictional representations” (*Heterocosmica* 2). Doležel begins by explaining Bertrand Russell’s theories on fictional terms. Russell states that fictional terms lack reference, because they do not exist. Thus, Doležel explains that Russell’s theory on fictional terms should be labelled “empty terms” (*Heterocosmica* 2-3). Doležel recognizes Russell’s approach as extreme because his logic deals with entities that do not exist, such as a dramatic character, i.e. Hamlet. In this example, Russell explains that because Hamlet is a piece of fiction, “only the thoughts, feelings, etc., in Shakespeare and his readers are real, and [...] there is not, additional to them, an objective Hamlet” (Russell 169). In this fashion, Russell presents all statements about a fictional world as having the same truth-value since there is no grounding in the actual world. However, saying that Hamlet died of small pox, for example, is false. Therefore Doležel points out that Russell’s theory is not propitious towards accurately describing a possible world of literary fiction. Nor is it applicable to a fictional world within a museum setting. Whether or not the exhibit’s terms are fictional, they do still have to reference the actual world.

Like Russell, Gottlob Frege argues that “there are no worlds behind fictional worlds” (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 4). Although all three theoreticians argue that fictional worlds lack reference, Doležel and Frege’s approach to semantics infers that fictional terms *can* have meaning. Doležel furthers his explanation of fictional worlds by discussing Frege’s theory

concerning “reference” and “sense.” “*Reference* is the denotation of an entity in the world; *sense*, the mode of presentation of the reference” (3-4). To explain Frege’s pure-sense theory on language, which requires that “sense” and “reference” be separated and defined independently, Doležel turns to Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure’s explanation of the *signifier* and the *signified* dichotomy, the linguistic expression and its assigned sense, can be summed up as follows: The written word itself is a sign. It is the *signifier* and thus represents an abstract concept, i.e. *signified*. For example, the word “rifle” is not the actual weapon that a soldier carries to war. “Rifle” is the sign used to designate the long firing weapon and by convention communicates the concept of “rifle” (the signified) to the mind of the receiver. In a museum, the written word is not the only type of *signifier*. Artefacts are also signs: the object in a museum, for example the *signified* rifle, now is a sign of something. It has become a sign of all similar First World War rifles.

Doležel, however, is not satisfied with this linguistic theory to explain fictional semantics (*Heterocosmica* 5). He proposes to use mimetic semantics and three differing interpretive functions in literature to describe fictional worlds. The two functions are found in the First World War exhibit. Firstly, the Arthur Currie displayed in the fictional world of the exhibit space (through the use of displayed text panels and photography) represents the actual Arthur Currie from 1918. Doležel explains this phenomenon as a basic mimetic interpretation when a *fictional particular* represents an *actual particular* (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 6). This type of characterization is typical of the documentary-style play in which “characters are seen as authentic protagonists from history [...]” (Irmer 17).² There are also images of soldiers going off to war, representing *all* the Canadian soldiers leaving their homes in 1914. Another example of this occurrence is the image of a distraught anonymous woman displayed in the 1917 Home

Front section: she is meant to represent the large number of women who wished for the safe return of their men.

Nor does a fictional world always offer an exact replication of an actual entity; therefore, like in an exhibit, a fictional particular can be created from an amalgam of facts relating to a certain type of particular. The use of Everyman in the medieval morality play is a clear example of this style of representation. Doležel refers to this type of referencing as the second mimetic function in which there can be many actual candidates that inspire the creation of the fictional particular thus: a *fictional particular* represents an *actual universal* (7). He labels this third mimetic function as pseudomimetic: “*actual source* represents (“provides the representation of”) *fictional particular*” (9). This is when a fictional particular is explained as being preserved from a pre-existent versus referring to an actual particular or universal. The example he gives refers to Ian Watt’s analysis of Robinson Crusoe, in which Watt claims that authors write fictional worlds of literature based on the information and knowledge in their heads, thus the character presented takes root in the actual world that is within the author’s mind. Doležel points out however, that “the actual world cannot be the domicile of fictional particulars” (*ibid.*). With this, he establishes that mimetic semantics is also inadequate in defining fictional world semantics (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 9-10). Although Doležel proposes, as a solution to the one-world model impasse, giving up on semantics altogether and using a formal and pragmatic approach instead, he agrees with Thomas G. Pavel who states that “fiction is both a pragmatic and a semantic notion, since the organization of cosmological space obeys pragmatic reasons while the structure itself is clearly semantic” (qtd in Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 12). Therefore, he proposes to break the traditional one-world model frame, and ultimately bases his literary fictional world theory on semantics and the multiple-world frame. Doležel suggests a formal and pragmatic approach to

structuring possible worlds, explaining that the importance must shift from the “sign-world” axis to the “sign-user” (*Heterocosmica* 10).

In Doležel’s explanation, “[p]ragmatic theories [...] seemingly avoid the pitfalls of one-world semantics by relocating the concept of fictionality from the “sign-world” to the “sign-user” axis. Fictionality is explained as speech-act convention [...]” (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 10). A shift from the “sign-world” axis to the “sign-user” is like a shift from performance theories to reception theories. In altering the previous perspective and placing fictionality under the control of the “sign-user,” Doležel acknowledges the possibility of any number of possible worlds so long as there are people able to create them. So long as there are people to construct different social realities, Schechner states, there is performance (*Studies* 168). The First World War exhibit at the Canadian War Museum is constructed by the hands and minds of historians, curators, interpretive planners and exhibit designers. All of these minds came together collectively and the result of their creation offers a performance of historical narrative to the museum visitor.

Doležel relies heavily on Saul A. Kripke and his proposition of a “model structure” and says that there are an infinite number of possible worlds that surround our actual world (*Heterocosmica* 13). The possible-worlds frame, Doležel says, became an “interdisciplinary paradigm that provides new insights into theoretical issues of natural, social, and human sciences” (14). This expansion came about because of “two modifications of the original concept” (*ibid*).

Because of these modifications, an exhibit space can be analyzed under a possible-worlds model frame in a more accessible manner. The first modification is the shift in thinking with

regards to how possible worlds are “found.” Previously, they were considered to be metaphysical and they were “discovered by an exceptional intellect or imagination,” but Doležel explains that “[p]ossible worlds do not await discovery in some remote or transcendent depository, they are constructed by the creative activity of human minds and hands” (*Heterocosmica* 14). This change allows for the realm of possible worlds to be widened and to include possible worlds of philosophy, religion, natural science, historiography, fiction, etc (*ibid*). An exhibit space falls under this more accepting view, as it can be linked with both possible worlds of fiction and historiography. The second modification relates to the scope and size of a given possible world, which was previously given strict limitations. Doležel now presents possible worlds as macrostructures “constituted by a finite number of possible particulars” that are, however, established by the imaginations of their creators (15).

By synthesizing theories on possible-worlds semantics, Doležel proposes six theses of a possible world and applies them to fictional worlds of literature. He explains that fictional worlds of literature “are a special kind of possible world; they are aesthetic artifacts [*sic*] constructed, preserved, and circulating in the medium of fictional texts” (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 16). A fictional world of literature exists because an author has created it. Arguably, the First World War exhibit space at the Canadian War Museum is also a special kind of possible world. It exists because a team of qualified and diverse staff came together to display a chosen historical narrative of Canada’s participation in the First World War, using text, artefacts, soundscapes, video, interactive activities, etc.

The construction of *fictional spaces* in a museum is comparable to the construction of fictional worlds in literature. Although he defines literary fiction as “probably the most active

experimental laboratory of the world-constructing enterprise,” Doležel also stipulates that “the universe of possible worlds is constantly expanding and diversifying thanks to the incessant world-constructing activity of human minds and hands” (*Heterocosmica* ix). From this encouraging starting point, I step into the analysis of fictional spaces and their creation in the First World War exhibit.

2. POSSIBLE WORLDS OF FICTION VERSUS POSSIBLE WORLDS OF HISTORY

The First World War exhibit space performs historical narrative through its design layout, artefact display and stylized recreations. Historical narrative has featured in Doležel’s most recent publication *Possible Worlds of Fiction and History*, where he clearly explains that there are four differences between a possible world of fiction (*poesis*) and a possible world of history (*noesis*). He explains that they are:

1. Differences in *the worlds’ function*: This is perhaps the most fundamental difference between the two types of possible worlds. Were it not for this essential difference in the worlds’ *raison d’être*, then the following three differences would be moot points.
2. Differences in *the worlds’ treatment of incompleteness*: This difference lies in how the creators of both possible worlds negotiate gaps in their narrative, either intentionally or unintentionally.
3. Differences in *the worlds’ agential constellations*: This difference lies in how worlds of fiction and of history cast the characters in their respective narratives based on what resources are available to the creators of the two different types of possible worlds.
4. Differences in *the worlds’ basic structural differences*: This difference lies in how the creators organize their worlds according to the limitations (or lack thereof) imposed upon the creators by the fundamental function of each type of possible world. (Doležel, *Fiction and History* 33-39)

These four differences between a possible world of fiction and a possible world of history provide interesting insight into the analysis of the possible world of the First World War exhibit.

It is crucial that as a national museum presenting Canada's military history, the Canadian War Museum must completely refrain from providing inaccurate or fictional information in order to avoid misleading the visitor.³ Therefore, the narrative displayed in the exhibit arguably creates a possible world of history more than a possible world of fiction. However, the exhibit space created retains elements of fictionality. It is at once a concrete and tangible space, as well as an imaginary space because of the abstract fictional world it creates. As mentioned in Chapter One, Patrice Pavis explains that a theatre space, when being used during a performance, creates the same dual result (*Analyzing* 149). In either case, the exhibit space contributes to visitors' memories and their sense of identity by showcasing a part of Canada's national historical narrative.

2.1 Functional Difference

An exhibit functions as a space through which a museum communicates "intellectual substance to interested visitors" (Storr 26). In the First World War exhibit a historical narrative is performed. Doležel explains that "fictional worlds are imaginary alternates of the actual world; historical worlds are cognitive models of the actual past" (*Fiction and History* 33). Basically, a fictional world is not necessarily based on real people and/or events. However, in a historical world, the people and events presented stem from the actual past. This difference appears in that a possible world of fiction is a fabrication, an invented fantasy, whereas a possible world of history is based on genuine facts about real-life happenings.

2.2 Treatment of Incompleteness

The second most fundamental difference is based on how writers of fiction and of history treat the unavoidable fact that their worlds are incomplete. This dilemma lies in the fact that gaps in fictional worlds “are created in the act of world making, they are onic in nature [whereas] historical worlds are incomplete in a different manner, and their gaps are of a different kind; they are epistemic, determined by the limitations of human knowledge” (Doležel, *Fiction and History* 38). Although historians can chose to omit certain information in order to make their narratives easier to understand or more appealing to their readers, there are certain omissions that are forced upon a historian due to the possible lack of evidence on the subject. As a result, a historian can make educated guesses on how something in the past *might* have been, based on his or her existing knowledge (39).⁴ Whereas generally, fiction writers strategically chose where the gaps in their narrative will go based on whatever they feel is most effective.

2.3 Agential constellations

There are no restrictions on the characters depicted in a possible world of fiction. There are however, restrictions on those presented in a possible world of history because “the cast of agents in the historical world is determined by the set of agents involved in the reconstructed past events” (Doležel, *Fiction and History* 36). In the First World War narrative of the Canadian War Museum, there would be no reason to present information pertaining to the character named James Bond, because he was not a part of Canada’s actual experience during the First World War.⁵ Therefore, the characters present in the First World War exhibit are restricted to those people who were actually alive during the Great War. Possible worlds of history reconstruct “the actual past by constructing models of the actual past” (33); thus, the characters in a historical

world were at one point real, whereas the characters in a fictional world emerge from the authors' imagination.

Doležel explains that both the fictional and the historical world however, “are inhabited, not by the real, actual people, but by their possible counterparts” (*Fiction and History* 36). Moreover, he explains that historical persons cannot interact or communicate with fictional characters in a historical world. Within the First World War exhibit there are various intermedial elements that allow visitors to interact with composite characters based on historical persons. For example, in the Road to War section of the exhibit, a visitor can interact with a digitized First World War recruiter through a touch screen computer console. At this station it is possible to answer the recruiter's questions and find out if you would have been an appropriate candidate for the burgeoning Canadian military. In this respect, a fictional particular can be a part of the actual world, in that the recruiter (albeit limited to a virtual reality) is accessible to the visiting public thanks to modern computer technology.

2.4 Basic Structural Differences

Because a historical world is necessarily based on fact, one cannot alter the historical narrative in whatever manner he or she pleases. To do so, would transform the historical world into a fictional world. “The fiction makers are free to call into fictional existence any conceivable world. [...] In contrast, historical worlds are restricted to the physically possible ones” (Doležel, *Fiction and History* 35). However, let us examine the interesting example of the recreated trench in the First World War exhibit. For although it *is* based on what a real trench would have looked like in the First World War, it remains a creation in today's world and is physically accessible to the museum visitor. It alludes to what a First World War trench looked like and what it felt like.

This is a strong example of Aristotle's conception of *mimesis*, or representation. The mock trench is an imitation of reality, a likeness. It is not the real thing. Therefore, the mock trench is a fictional space. Moreover, each visitor has access to the same mock trench. As a result, the memories that are created by visitors about what a Canadian First World War soldier lived through in the trenches will be similar. This phenomenon contributes to the creation of collective memory and thus to national identity. Museums play "a role in the constitution of national identity" because, as a repository of history, museums contribute to memory-making (Crane 2-4). In turn, "these memories then become components of identities [...]" (Crane 3).

3. FIRST WORLD WAR EXHIBIT: A SPACE OF POSSIBLE WORLDS

In 1998, Doležel quoted Paul Ricoeur on historical narrative: "I am reserving the term 'fiction' for those literary creations that do not have historical narrative's ambition to constitute a true narrative" (qtd in Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 25). In his latest book, published in 2010, Doležel admits that "history reconstructs the actual past by constructing models of the past, which have the status of possible worlds" (Doležel, *Fiction and History* 33). The exhibit space that is created, although with historical content, is still in itself a possible world. And although it presents a historical narrative, the First World War exhibit is not incontestably a possible world of history. It does not occupy pages in a book, rather it occupies *space*. As a consequence of occupying a part of this space, an embodied experience occurs for the visitor. The performed historical narrative requires an audience, the visitor, for it to be considered a performance at all. This is true for theatre as well, as would argue many theatre theoreticians and practitioners, not least of all Erika Fischer-Lichte who explains that "[t]heatre always occurs as a public event" (7).

An exhibit uses actual facts and remains accessible to its audience's general experience, but it does have similarities with Doležel's make-up of a possible world. In some ways, an exhibit brings the concept of a possible world to a whole new level (i.e. stylized recreations). One certainty is that an exhibit is a fictional *space* in that, much like a set on stage, it is a real space where visitors can walk and interact with a *constructed* space, a representation of history.

Doležel creates six functions of a fictional world, which provide an interesting perspective when applied in the analysis of the performance of history in the First World War exhibit. They are:

1. Fictional worlds of literature are constructs of textual poiesis.
2. Fictional worlds are accessed through semiotic channels.
3. The set of fictional worlds is unlimited and maximally varied.
4. Fictional worlds of literature are incomplete.
5. Fictional worlds are ensembles of nonactualized possible states of affairs.
6. Fictional worlds of literature can be heterogeneous in their macrostructure. (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 16-24)

His first function establishes that fictional worlds are created through the craft of writing. The second explains how fictional worlds are communicated to readers. The third and fourth functions deal with the size and scope of a fictional world. The truth-value associated with fictional worlds is dealt with in the fifth function. Lastly, the sixth function accounts for the fact that fictional worlds can be made up of any number of differing components. In the following pages, all six functions will be explored in relation to the fictional world of the First World War exhibit.

3.1 Fictional worlds of literature are constructs of textual poiesis

At a basic level, one could say that the exhibit curator is like the playwright, the interpretive planner is like the director, and the design company is like the set and lighting designers (Gillette 7-15). Like the playwright, the director and the designers, the museum team requires an audience to validate the existence of its performance, the exhibit. “The moment [a museum] makes the decision to present an exhibition, [it has] decided to address a public audience” (Storr 25). In order to make the exhibit accessible to that audience, the exhibit team must piece together the chosen narrative. When a curator puts together the story to be told in an exhibit space, he or she does just that; the curator *pieces* together a combination of other previously written texts and facts, in order to create a narrative that is accessible to a visitor today. These pieces of information come from personal diaries, regimental journals, newspaper articles, works of art, etc. The curator creates a specific narrative and gives the text to the interpretive planners and designers. It is up to them to *create* the appropriate spatial layout to showcase this chosen historical information. Doležel emphasizes the importance of originality as a function of fictionality and explains that fictional worlds of literature are constructs of textual poiesis. By writing a text, the author creates a fictional world that was not available prior to this act (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 23). The exhibit space itself, because it is created, was not available prior to its creation and combines performative elements such as soundscapes, lighting effects, visual effects and stylized re-creations. These in turn become a part of a visitor’s memory, and likewise can influence one’s sense of national identity. It is important to understand one’s past in order to feel some type of ownership for the present. Prost explains that in taking pride in our past, our society strengthens its identity (Prost 302). The stylized re-creations show just how difficult the terrain was for the Canadian soldiers during the Great War, and visitors, while mourning the loss

engendered by war, can be proud of the challenges these soldiers, representative of ancestors or past fellow Canadians, had to overcome.

3.2 Fictional worlds are accessed through semiotic channels

A play can be accessed through the reading of written text, or the viewing of live theatre. In written form, the semiotic channel is based on language and de Saussure's theory of the *signifier* and the *signified*. In a live performance, in addition to the spoken text, there is also a sign-system where the audience members interpret the actions occurring on stage and the objects acting as signs of signs (Pavis, *Dictionary* 240). A museum exhibit combines several semiotic systems too. Like fictional worlds, visitors access the First World War exhibit through the act of processing signs. Visitors look at display cases, read text panels and interpret artefacts. Doležel postulates that "[r]eaders access fictional worlds in reception, by reading and processing literary text" (*Heterocosmica* 21). Michel de Certeau eloquently describes reading as a creative act "full of detours and drifts across the page, imaginary or meditative flights taking off from a few words, overlapping paragraph on paragraph, page on page, short-lived dances of the eye and mind" (qtd in Denning, "Performing" 4). Visitors access the fictional world of the First World War narrative by reading explanatory text panels and *walking through* the exhibit. In the well-known story of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, written by Lewis Carroll, the main character falls down a rabbit hole and emerges into a fictional world. Fictional worlds are not *physically* accessible; an individual cannot emerge from "a rabbit hole" into a wonderland like Alice. This statement may be true when considering a world of literary fiction because it is a world that is only accessible through linguistic channels and through our imagination. It is not, however, completely valid when discussing stylized recreations such as the mock trench in the First World

War exhibit, which can be accessed through the channels of sight, touch, sound and so on. The recreation imitates a historical reality, life in the trenches, but it is not real. Instead of falling through a rabbit hole, a visitor crosses the threshold into the trench. This mock-up is theatrical, there is a certain element of make-believe associated with one's experience; and as a result, a person can physically access the fictional world created within the parameters of the trench, which is constructed within the museum's exhibit. Therefore, although it is physically impossible to visit the fictional world of Carroll's *Wonderland*, it is possible to visit the fictional world created by the mock trench. This is comparable to a stage-designer's set on stage, used by the production's performers.⁶

Additionally, this means that even if the visitor has never before seen a trench, he or she could now describe (loosely) what a trench looked like and what it felt like to be in one because of the exhibit's performance. Conversely, an individual with extensive knowledge of First World War trenches would be able to point out the failings of the mock trench in the exhibit, such as the inaccurate positioning of the sand bags. It is as Annie Van Fossen Storr explains in her article "Audiences, Exhibitions, And Interpretive Labels," visitors "may or may not have prior knowledge of the topic at hand"; therefore, "exhibitions ought to be planned from the start to stand on their own as coherent units" (26). This is accomplished through establishing key themes and using them as performance objectives. One such element in the First World War exhibit is to provide the description of a soldier's life in the trenches. The location of the mock trench at the centre of the gallery is particularly interesting. The trench is a defining element of the First World War and was at the centre of a soldier's experience overseas. Like a medieval labyrinth, the layout of this exhibit allows a visitor to kinetically experience the trench as the central element of the First World War narrative. Through reading and physical experiences,

visitors have an increased ability to retain knowledge, which in turn contributes to memory. Moreover, in recognizing that trench life was at the centre of Canadian soldiers' experiences in the First World War, visitors might feel pride because their ancestors survived horrible conditions or they might feel overwhelmed by the experience of war. In either case, something ties into the Canadian narrative and helps reinforce the visitors' sense of national identity. This reinforcement happens because for a moment, perhaps, through physically accessing the semiotic channels of the exhibit's historical narrative, the visitors might feel more strongly as though they are included in that narrative, engendering a stronger sense of ownership towards the past.

3.3 The set of fictional worlds is unlimited and maximally varied

The creative world of playwriting now encompasses a wide range of topics and dramatic styles. Fictitious plot lines are still common; however, documentary plays based on real events have been on the rise since the advent of "the portable tape recorder" (Paget, "Verbatim Theatre" 317). Like documentary theatre, an exhibit space is created to showcase a portion of reality. Everything is factually accurate but since there remains a chosen focus only a certain amount of information can be displayed. For example, when analyzing the First World War exhibit, the curatorial staff members were required to limit the information displayed to the time period that was chosen (1914-1918).⁷ After that choice was made, certain battles or themes within that time period were decided upon and then displayed from a certain perspective (either a soldier's perspective, an officer's, a family member's or even a tactical perspective, etc.) Conversely, other topics are deliberately left out within that same period in history. This can happen because of the limited artefacts, space or finances available, or the level of significance attributed to that event (e.g. something of little importance in the grand narrative of the war may be left out in

order to showcase an event that had a greater impact on the outcome of the war). All of reality (the whole story) is simply too vast to put in one exhibit; therefore, only a portion of it can be displayed. Logically, however well-rounded it may seem, it can be assumed that an exhibit will always be *incomplete*.

However, by performing only certain elements of Canada's First World War history, the museum staff influences what elements of history visitors will be exposed to; thus, influencing the subject of what visitors can remember. Like in a play, first the playwright chooses what information the audience will be privy to, and then the performance team (the director, actors, etc) decide from which perspective the story will be played out. The museum team "has the power [...] to shift the perspective from which viewers will tend to consider an exhibit, by choosing one fact over another, giving visual priority through [...] design, or even physically arranging data on the wall in the display case" (Storr 30). These choices regarding the physical arrangement of the space, thus affecting the performance of the space, then have an effect on what visitors are exposed to and hence their interpretation of the war. After they leave, visitors continue to have a type of participation with the museum. This lies in their "remembered and lived [museum] experiences" (Crane 2), which are created because of the activities that are seen, done, walked-through and felt in a spatial environment. These experiences become imbedded in one's personal memory; visitors learn about and remember key moments in Canadian history because of the narrative performed by First World War exhibit space. They can see how previous ordinary Canadians participated in this narrative, and visitors might be able to identify with these Canadians. This in turn can affect one's sense of identity and then contribute to national identity, given that together many individuals are needed to make up a nation.

According to Crane, theoretically "museums represent an organizational principle for the content

of cultural identity [...]” (2). As a point of reference, the First World War exhibit harbours information of Canada’s cultural past. This information, along with many other elements, contributes to one’s sense of national identity by offering a piece of the “puzzle” that makes up Canadian history, so to speak, which is necessary in understanding a national narrative.

3.4 Fictional worlds of literature are incomplete

Although an exhibit will always remain incomplete and historical narratives are based on human knowledge, which is generally limited to documented fact(s)⁸ and the biases that have tainted that information, the individuals on display in the gallery, were at one point complete. This trend is common in documentary or verbatim theatre, in which the characters and events of the narrative are based on real people (Paget, “Broken Tradition” 233-34). Background information on a showcased “character” within the exhibit, such as Lawrence Rogers, is available. He was a farmer from Quebec who joined the ranks of men on the Western Front and he became a Lieutenant with the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles. His son and daughter mailed him a care package in 1916, which included a letter and a small teddy bear. One can access information, in addition to what is displayed in the museum, by researching Rogers in the museum archives. This would, however, bring one back full circle to the reality that is the incompleteness of historical narrative itself.

Unlike worlds of logical semantics, fictional worlds of literature are incomplete because “only some conceivable statements about fictional entities are decidable, while some are not” (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 22). To re-use Doležel’s quote from Wolterstorff: “[w]e will never know how many children had Lady Macbeth in the worlds of Macbeth. That is not because to know this would require knowledge beyond the capacity of human beings. It is because there is

nothing of the sort to know” (qtd. in Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 22). This element is echoed in Tony Bennett’s book *The Birth of the Museum*, in which he states that “no museum can include everything” (111). Nor can one work of historical narrative encapsulate a complete whole. This is clearly a parallel with the previous function on how fictional worlds are unlimited and maximally varied. As discussed in Chapter One, a historical narrative in itself is incomplete because of the methods adopted by historians to convey the information to their readers. If information regarding a certain period of time is not available to the historian, he or she might decide to simply omit that time period or interpret the void by inserting information based on his or her existing knowledge (Doležel, *Fiction and History* 39). “Every narrative, however seemingly “full,” is constructed on the basis of a set of events that might have been included but were left out; this is true of imaginary narratives as it is of the realistic ones” (White 10). As Hayden White explains in the previous passage, the limitation of “incompleteness” is true of possible worlds of fiction or of history. Likewise, theatrical performances are also incomplete in a similar way. Performances are generally limited to a couple of hours (the attributed *stage time*), in which the time of the fiction (the *dramatic time*) might span days or months, as a result not every action or event from the fictional narrative can be presented on stage (Pavis, *Dictionary* 409-10).

In like manner to how museum curators and interpretive planners influence national identity through their content and performative choices, displaying a limited or a large amount of information on a particular subject in an exhibit can also have an impression on what visitors remember. Nevertheless, visitors can chose to expand their personal knowledge by doing continued research on a displayed person or event.⁹

3.5 Fictional worlds are ensembles of nonactualized possible states of affairs

Though theatrical performances vary in their structure, many plays still follow strict narrative codes, such as plays that follow the classical well-made play formula (for example, *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen). Other plays seemingly break conventional linear plot structures by “starting in the middle” or “working backward” (Rush 63-67). Yet even other plays will appear to be completely illogical (for example, *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett). However, when it comes to museums, Barbara Stratyner underlines that they require narrative in order to facilitate visitor comprehension, and that a museum’s narrative “must be selected and scripted individually for every interpretive show” by “the curatorial staff, design staff and the interpretive/education staff, representing the collections, the museum-as-building and the audience respectively” (49, 87). The First World War exhibit team at the Canadian War Museum had to agree on the way in which the exhibit space was to be presented. To do so, they had to establish links between the narrative they wanted to perform and the objects, images, and any other displayed item they used as signs to convey that narrative to the audience. One of Doležel’s six functions is that *fictional worlds are ensembles of nonactualized possible states of affairs*. He explains that “the most important feature of the possible worlds model frame is its legitimation of non-actualized possibles” (Doležel, “Possible Worlds” 230). This is accomplished through constructing fictional semantics appropriate to a given possible world. In turn, because semantics are created for a fictional world, references can be made to what exists within the conventions of that specific fictional world. For example, someone can refer to Ian Fleming’s famous character James Bond and, even though he does not really exist, a reader of the spy novels can understand references made to him.¹⁰ Within the space of the First World War exhibit, a visitor can make reference to William Barker, for example. The visitor can

explain that William Barker was one of Canada's top flying aces during the Great War and that he remains the most highly decorated Canadian service man or woman. The most significant difference between James Bond and William Barker is that the latter actually existed and was not *created* to belong to a fictional world, even though the displayed William Barker at the Canadian War Museum now belongs to the possible world of the First World War exhibit. Additionally, because the information being read on a text panel is referencing actual people and historical events, there can be no use of fictional semantics and no allusion to a fictional reference, because the exhibits truth-value is high. "[Crucial to the credibility of exhibitors is their] ability to be simultaneously honest and convincing [...]" (Storr 28). If the museum were to present inaccurate information, conflicts might arise and the trust visitors place in the Canadian War Museum as a factual institution could potentially be broken.¹¹

Doležel further explains that "fictional persons cannot meet, interact, or communicate with real people" (*Heterocosmica* 16). In the exhibit's possible world, the characters described are in fact real people who existed at one time in the actual world. As Freddie Rokem describes in his book *Performing History*, regarding characters in plays that depict historical events, "even if they belong to the past, [they] possess a reality or a veracity which does not exclusively confine them to the fictionality of the stage" (11). The soldiers depicted in the photographs on the walls of the exhibit belong to the past, but they are also immortalized by the very pictures on display. Although, a visitor cannot speak or interact, per se, with the soldier from the image, he or she can bear immediate witness to a moment in that soldier's life captured in a black and white photo.

Moreover, if people cannot meet fictional characters, then logically people cannot interact with fictional locations as they can with real locations. For example, the London created in Fleming's novels is not the same as the actual London. However, the London referred to in the First World War exhibit is the actual London of 1914-1918. It was accessible at one point in time in our history, but it is now outside of our current reality. Doležel thanks few people in his preface to *Heterocosmica*, but one of them is scholar Marie-Laure Ryan.¹² Her triadic model, often used to represent the actuality of possible worlds, is explained in the *Handbook of Narrative Analysis* as:

[A theory of] a universe consisting of three different levels or worlds. The center [sic] is the actual world, the existing state of affairs. Possible worlds circle this center as satellites, and at the outer limit we find the impossible worlds. [...]

Possible worlds have access to the existing worlds: they at one point could become real. (Herman and Vervaeck 152-151)

The London of 1914-1918, performed by the First World War exhibit, can no longer become real. It was, however, real in the past; therefore, perhaps Ryan's definition can be amended to say: "they at one point could become real or *were real at one point*." This change would refer to the real worlds that existed at one point but no longer do. In which case, the London displayed in the exhibit "floats" as a satellite revolving around the actual London, which would be at the centre as is Ryan's "actual world." At one time that London was real and since that time, it has become what Doležel would term a *particular* in a possible world. It has become an element in the possible world of the First World War exhibit space and as such can contribute to one's identity. In seeing the London where First World War Canadian soldiers spent their time on

leave, visitors can better understand Canadian history. Because each visitor who passes through the exhibit has access to the same information, a common thread unifies their memories of the First World War experience.¹³ In this way, a sense of national identity is reinforced.

Both the character of William Barker and the setting of a 1914-18 London, England, are performed by the displayed artefacts (such as the fuselage of Barker's original plane) and images (such as Canadian soldiers on leave in London) in the exhibit space. After walking through the space, visitors can learn and remember that William Barker flew a wooden bi-plane and that Great Britain was nicknamed Blighty. These facts become a part of a visitor's memory and then could potentially influence a visitor's sense of national identity, particularly in recognizing that William Barker remains one of Canada's top flying aces.

3.6 Fictional worlds of literature can be heterogeneous in their macrostructure

The narrative told within the First World War exhibit is one that stems from the grand narrative of Canadian military history. A visitor can walk through the exhibit quickly and get a superficial amount of information. Or a visitor can literally spend hours in one exhibit learning and reading about a variety of stories and people from the First World War. In this way, an exhibit differs significantly from a stage performance, given that, typically, a performance's *stage time* is a set length for the audience as a whole on a given performance night. However, different productions (not just different performances during the run of a specific production) of the same play can vary in length depending on directorial choices, etc. Even before the play finds itself into the hands of a certain director, the playwright can choose to include (or not) any number of elements depending on the story the he or she wishes to tell. These options are available to the playwright and are limited only by his or her imagination, which might, in turn, add or detract

from the overall performance time. In fact, because a play is a work of fiction, the playwright can combine any number of events or actions, in any logical or illogical fashion, according to his or her own wishes. Such choices are also characteristic of a fictional world.

Fictional worlds of literature can be heterogeneous in their macrostructure and are generally “constituted by symbiosis, hierarchies, and tensions of many domains” in order to allow for an array of possible particulars (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 23). In simple words, a variety of elements can come together and make up a fictional world. A similar process happens with the First World War exhibit space and the narrative it performs. It is constituted in a like manner because of the complex web of actual possibles that it weaves or can weave, not least of all is the fact that although the museum’s mandate is to focus on Canadian military history, the information presented cannot help but be linked to other types of histories (such as labour history, political history, women’s movement history, etc). Although the range of information that can be included is vast, it is limited to the past reality, because the narrative performed by the exhibit is a historical narrative. Regardless, the various elements that come together and influence a visitor during his or her visit will also have some type of effect on the visitor’s memory of the experience and the visitor’s new historical understanding. Memory and historical awareness contribute to national identity, according to Prost. It is up to the individuals to come together as a society and make up the identity of a nation (Prost 294). Having a historical awareness, Prost says, allows visitors to open their eyes and ask questions about their social past and present, which in turn allows them to come to a better understanding of their national identity (295). This can be accomplished by making memories that can be shared in performative environments such as museums. Regarding museums today, Prost writes that they

are a leading repository of cultural knowledge and places where one can learn about history (303).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The information that is on display at the Canadian War Museum is historical and has an unspoken authenticity because at one point the historical figures, for example, existed in the actual world and should, therefore, not need to be validated. As Doležel writes, “to exist fictionally means to exist as a textually authenticated possible” (“Possible Worlds” 237); however, an exhibit presents information, that is already considered authentic, textually *and* visually. The information communicated to the visitors is not diffused through fictional semantics. It is, however, disseminated deliberately through a curatorial narrative using a level of language that is intended to be accessible to the visitor.

In his article “How Playscripts Refer,” Michael Issacharoff explains that dramatic discourse may contain utterances that are real references and that require the existence of a specific object. The example given is that a real person or place may be referred to by a character in the play (Issacharoff 85). In a museum setting, all references refer to real spaces, events and/or people, making the possible world of a museum exhibit more easily accessible to a visitor from the real world. Moreover, Issacharoff explains that it is possible to modify the referential status of an object or person because of a change in context (from its use in the real world to its use in a play) (90).¹⁴ There is a letter written by a young boy to his father (Lawrence Rogers who was mentioned previously) on display in the First World War exhibit: because it is on display, its discursive context is changed (from the child’s reality to the exhibit’s reality). The child never meant for anyone other than his father to read that letter. What possible worlds

are created in the minds of the visitors when they read the letter? How do these variants differ from the actual world that the small boy lived in? And how does this add to a visitor's personal recollection of history, or a collective memory of history? How does this change, or not change, one's sense of national identity?

Regardless of the answers to these questions, the museum's performance of historical narrative provides information that in turn contributes to the building of a collective memory and national identity. Whether a visitor can loosely describe the trench-life experience or has gained information regarding a boy's interaction with his father, a type of narrative has been imposed upon them (rightly or wrongly) to be able to do so. "Having reconstructed the fictional world as a mental image, the reader can ponder it and make it a part of his experience, just as he experientially appropriates the actual world. The appropriation [...] integrates fictional worlds into the reader's reality" (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 21).

Granted, there will be military or other terms that a visitor may not be familiar with, but how does this affect one's experience in an exhibit? If something does not belong to our cognitive baggage, do we automatically place it in a "fictional" place within our mind until we can eventually assimilate it into our daily vocabulary? De Certeau would argue that assimilation is a two-way street, it not only means to "become similar" but also "to make something similar" (*Practice* 166). In coming to the Canadian War Museum, visitors assimilate more historical knowledge. This process helps them define, or re-define, their sense of national identity.

Doležel says that "fictional worlds gain a semiotic existence independent of the constructing texture; they thereby become objects of the active, evolving, and recycling *cultural memory*" (*Heterocosmica* 202, emphasis mine). Cultural memory, collective memory, national

memory, Maurice Halbwachs would say that each depend on individual memory and in fact form a circular relationship (22).

Relationships are not always formed consciously. For example, a relationship is formed between an audience member and a theatre performer. When an individual attends the theatre to watch a performance, that person assumes that what will be said, and how it will be said, is in fact fictional and, therefore, that individual enters willingly into a state of suspension of disbelief. When a visitor walks through a stylized recreation, such as Passchendaele (a famous First World War battle in Belgium), a similar relationship is created. He or she accepts that what is displayed is not real, but that it is an interpretation of a past reality, a possible state of affairs. On the other hand, a visitor assumes that the information written and presented, by the museum, is factual and true. How does this alter one's perception of what can be a possible state of affairs? In addition, every visitor enters with a different kind of knowledge (or past experience) and therefore creates his or her own possible world. When the information presented is different than that which the visitor comes with and he or she becomes convinced by it or changes his or her viewpoint because of it, then the visitor is "recentering," a term used by Ryan.¹⁵

In the next chapter, Ryan's ideas are explored even further. Her eight conditions on narrativity are applied to the objects displayed in the First World War exhibit by way of proving that on their own—that is without the clarification or narrative provided by museum text panels—the artefacts, images and interactive displays in the exhibit create narrative. By placing an object on display, the Canadian War Museum attributes significance to that object. Whether this is intentional or not, in choosing one object over another, certain events, artefacts, or people become more easily commemorated as a result. As Alan K. Kirk and Tom Thatcher explain,

“[c]ommemorative practice of all sorts attempts to counteract the danger of rupture, the possibility of a fatal disconnect between a community and its past, the loss of memory that spells unraveling [*sic*] of identity in the present and future” (7). If a society does not remember its past, it is difficult for it to hold onto its sense of identity. This chapter has explored the performance of museum space and its influence on national identity, the next chapter explores the performance of objects in that space and how their selection can contribute to acts of commemoration.

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

¹ I have translated all English passages from Antoine Prost’s *Douze leçons sur l’histoire* and apologize should there be any shift in meaning as a result.

² However, not all characters displayed in the First World War exhibit are based on actual people from the past. For example, there is a virtual character of a First World War recruiter that is more an composite-figure of past facts, versus a direct representation of any one individual.

³ Although, there are examples of caricatures in the exhibit—such as the computerized recruiting sergeant mentioned earlier—who are rooted in real historical fact.

⁴ The example used by Doležel refers to Hugh Trevor-Roper’s historical character Edmund Backhouse, of whom little information is known regarding his post as a professor at the University of Peking. Doležel explains that “[i]f the documents of the University of Peking are opened for research, then of course this gap in Trevor-Roper’s possible life of Edmund Backhouse might be filled” (*Fiction and History* 38-39).

⁵ As a point of interest, James Bond is mentioned in the Second World War gallery because the author Ian Fleming trained at a Canadian spy camp known as Camp X in Whitby, Ontario.

⁶ In the case of the museum’s “production,” the performers are not limited to a cast of actors. As is discussed throughout this thesis, the museum’s performers can be its design layout, its collection of artefacts and objects, and the people who interact within its walls.

⁷ In this case, as explained in Chapter One, the actual gallery covers the time period between 1885 and 1930 in order to cover the South African War as well as the aftermath of the First World War.

⁸ I say generally because rumours can also be turned to for historical inspiration.

⁹ This opens up a larger discussion as to how identity can be affected by personal research and interest, one which will not be continued here but can be explored through the work of Jeffrey Blustein, *The Moral Demands of Memory*.

¹⁰ For example, any fan of Fleming's famous 007 knows that James Bond prefers his martinis shaken, not stirred. This illustrates, that although the world of James Bond does not exist, because it is based on a determined set of fictional semantics, that particular piece of trivia is true within the fictional world of the British spy.

¹¹ This of course brings up the question: who exactly decides what is *right*? Chapter Four discusses ownership of the past and conflicting views on historical narratives.

¹² In Chapter Three, Ryan's eight conditions on narrativity are applied to the objects displayed in the First World War exhibit by way of proving that on their own, the artefacts displayed create a narrative.

¹³ Granted, although visitors may each walk away with a different perspective, the museum space offers the same basic information to all.

¹⁴ A similar transformation occurs during the process of musealisation as will be discussed in Chapter Three.

¹⁵ "Normally, the actual world is the world of which I am the center [sic]; I cannot move outside it, and, therefore, cannot consider it just a possibility (Herman and Vervaeck 156).

Chapter Three

The Great War Picture Show: Images and Objects Performing Historical Narrative at the Canadian War Museum

“[A] successful exhibition is not a book on the wall, a narrative with objects as illustrations, but a carefully orchestrated deployment of objects, images, and texts that gives viewers opportunities to look, to reflect, and to work out meanings” (Wallach qtd in Conn 7).

As a history museum, the Canadian War Museum presents a narrative of Canadian war history to the public. In Chapter Two, I discussed how the museum creates a possible world through the exhibit’s physical layout and design. Chapter Three will explore how the use of objects and images on display in the First World War exhibit perform historical narrative. The Canadian War Museum design team, including Haley Sharpe Design, went through “literally tens of thousands of images before narrowing down their selection. Upwards of 2,000 images were used in the Museum [...]” (Haley 3). The company constructed this selected narrative through the use of “specific themes, artifacts [*sic*] and interpretive features [...]” (1). Each displayed image and object was purposely chosen, so their strategic placement within the exhibit space would contribute to the narrative of the First World War presented there.

Objects, according to Patrice Pavis, are important components of the stage and are versatile performing agents in their own right, because “[t]he same object is often utilitarian, symbolic or playful” depending on the context in which it is used and the spectators viewing the performance (*Dictionary* 240). As Silvija Jestrovic explains in her article “Theatricality as Estrangement of Art and Life: In Russian Avant-garde,” it is the *mise en scène* of objects on stage that has the “potential to transform intertextual patterns into inter-performative codes” (46). The placement of the objects is key to the transformative process that makes them into an object

of theatricality, or in the case of this chapter into objects of museality. Objects in museums, according to Steven Conn, “tell stories in unique ways” and “offer people the simple pleasure of looking at and the thrill of being in the presence of real things [...]” (47, 57). Moreover, as explained in the introduction, objects on display in a museum become signs. This new state, the state of museality, occurs when the object’s original function is altered, when the context in which the object would normally be seen is changed and when there is a spectator, transforming the object into something to be gazed upon (Nelle 154). This phenomenon alters the function of a displayed object; it casts the object into the role of a performer. At the Canadian War Museum, the objects, images and interactive displays in the First World War exhibit are performers of historical narrative. Similar to a stage designer’s need to construct a narrative in order to support or tell a story with his or her set, an interpretative planner, exhibit designer and exhibit curator have combined images, paintings, artefacts, and laid them out in a museum to tell a story. Design Director Bill Haley explains that when approaching the museum design:

Particular consideration was given to the clusters of graphic interpretive information to ensure that combinations of textual and visual narratives could be easily followed. The team devoted a great deal of time to how the storyline and its rhythm of peace and war, drama and pathos would unfold before visitors. (2)

The museum’s interpretive team strategically laid out the artefacts and created a visual story for the visitors to observe.

The story performed in the First World War exhibit is the history of Canada’s military participation in the Great War, and it is told in a narrative format not only textually, but also aurally *and* visually. On museum narratives, Barbara Stratyner explains that museum

“exhibitions used existing forms of narratives [...] because [narratives] had been proven to work in literary and non-literary forms” (58). Ultimately, exhibits are locations in which to display a collection of objects (Conn 203). It is with this in mind that I propose to investigate how the objects and images in the First World War exhibit visually perform historical narrative. As the focus of this chapter is the representation of narrative in a non-textual format, it is important to turn to a general definition of narrative, such as that proposed by Marie-Laure Ryan in her study on intermedial narratology (“Narration”). Ryan argues that “[a] definition of narrative should [...] work for different media [...] and it should not privilege literary forms” (“Toward” 26); and thus, her definition, can be applied to the study of visual narrative structures found in the museum.

The Canadian War Museum objects include photographs, artefacts, works of art (painted canvases, engraved empty shell casings, poetry, etc), vehicles, guns, military uniforms, maps and medals, etc. Visitors look at objects in the display cases, they listen to recorded documented stories, they interact with museum employees, they gaze at displayed images and photographs, they touch artefacts, they read poetry and quotes from the time period and they hear battle soundtracks or military music. These different audio-visual stimulus and design methods allow for interactive performances that provide visitors with additional perspectives of the past and allow visitors access to the historical information in different manners than that of *reading* a historical narrative on museum text panels. Visitors then process what they see (or read), hear or touch and make their own meaning.

In section one, this chapter will explore the theories of Roland Barthes and Marianne Hirsch regarding the complexity of interpreting meaning from an image or object. In section

two, this chapter analyses the eight functions of narrative as proposed by Ryan in application to the use of objects, images and interactive displays in the First World War exhibit. Both sections study the effects these performing objects have on historical commemoration.

Conn explains that “the objects collected and displayed in each museum stand as synecdoches for the larger body of knowledge [...] (8). Objects in museum collections are representations of historical information and knowledge. In turn, the choice to display certain objects over others plays a significant role in determining what elements of history can become commemorated. According to Aaron Beim, “commemoration is a communal act that musters symbols and emotions about past events or persons [...] to honor [*sic*] those events or persons” (23). Moreover, museums contribute considerably to commemoration because “their displays confer legitimacy on specific interpretations of history, and attribute significance to particular events” (Whitmarsh 1). Within museum walls, artefacts are displayed and preserved. According to Mieke Bal, a displayed object “embodies the discourse of memorial representation that both affirms and informs: informing the viewer of its significance, the object as display also affirms its significance” (Crane 2). This act of collecting and showcasing helps society to commemorate. Antoine Prost explains that, throughout the 20th century, our society has begun an “immense commemorative movement” because it fears losing its past (301). Although, he refers primarily to France’s history in his book, Prost acknowledges that similar trends exist in North America (293). The number of national and local commemorative events has increased and historically important sites and artefacts have been preserved. In displaying such artefacts for the public to see, institutions such as museums attribute a high level of legitimacy to them and place them in a position whereby they may be commemorated and/or help in the commemoration of the events they symbolize (Prost 303). Therefore, in addition to analysing

the visual narrative presented in the First World War exhibit, this chapter also discusses how the objects on display can produce a commemorative effect. Because they are removed from their “everyday” use and put on display for visitors to see and think on, they become objects of commemoration. The museum lends the objects a certain degree of legitimacy, because museums have a “presumed dedication to the ‘real thing’ – the authentic object [...] is prized and studied” (Hein 7).

1. MAKING MEANING WITHOUT WORDS

As discussed in Chapter Two, all of the information within the exhibit space is considered factual in the storyworld that is within the exhibit, which in turn is within the museum. When visitors come into the museum, they each have a certain horizon of expectation. They expect everything to be factual, which is at odds with the expectations of a theatre spectator who expects the performance to have a certain element of make-believe.

This aspect of spectating in museums may create controversies. For example, certain visitors may take the reaction of the Canadians at the home front to be that of *all* Canadians during the war and we may fall into what Paul Ricoeur warns regarding the possibility of one community’s collective memory overshadowing another’s to the point of erasing it (500). That being said, the narrative as displayed by the objects, images and artefacts is based entirely on historical fact and this is definitely true for the individuals showcased in the exhibit’s storyworld.

In the First World War exhibit, not *every* photograph is paired with an explanatory label or text panel.¹ Typically the narrative panels are surrounded by large images on the walls or appropriate artefacts and paintings. However, as the opening quote to this chapter states: “[a] successful exhibition is not a book on the wall, a narrative with objects as illustrations, but a

carefully orchestrated deployment of objects, images, and texts that gives viewers opportunities to look, to reflect, and to work out meanings” (Wallach qtd in Conn 7). In order to work out meanings from photographs and images, visitors must “read” them. As Hirsch says in her book *Family Frames*, “photographs are exciting and helpful because of their ambiguity, because of the reading they demand [...]” (75). The reading of images is accomplished through interpreting the photograph’s “lines, surfaces and shades” (Barthes, *Image* 16).

In addition to the photography and images, the visitors must also “read” the artefacts and interpret their meanings. Hirsch explains that we give meaning to what we see (3-4). When a visitor gazes at the artefacts, he or she interprets their meaning in such a way that is unique to his or her own experience. “Making meaning” is very subjective and in photography depends on various elements, according to Barthes.² In removing text and labels, displayed objects become similar to photographs, in that they must be interpreted by the visitors based on their presence alone and prior visitor knowledge. The artefacts must then speak for themselves.

Four elements of making meaning in photography as discussed by Barthes will be examined here, in relation to the displayed images and objects in the First World War exhibit. They are: the *punctum*, the *referent*, and the *point of view* and *frame* (Barthes, *Lucida* 26, Hirsch 7).

1.1 Punctum

Barthes gives the Latin name *punctum* to the “element that rises from the [photograph], shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces [the viewer]” (*Lucida* 26). To each visitor this happening is unique and is typically linked with a visitor’s reaction to a particular detail in the photo (42). It

is impossible to experience the *punctum* in an identical manner as another person because it is influenced by our own personal experiences and knowledge of the past (Hirsch 93). A visitor at the Canadian War Museum can come from any variety of backgrounds and thus experiences the *punctum* differently than another visitor. For example, in the first few months of the Canadian War Museum's opening in 2005, there was a woman who was upset about the fact that the museum presented information about Louis Riel.³ She complained to me bitterly and told me later that she was from Saskatchewan. Perhaps the location of her home province influenced her recognition of Riel's picture and her reaction to it.⁴

An object that resonates well with visitors in the First World War exhibit is the Roger's family teddy bear (see fig. 4). On its own, this artefact performs quite a poignant *punctum*. It sits in a glass case next to a hand-written letter and the photo of Lawrence Rogers.⁵ It is most likely appealing to visitors first because a teddy bear in a war museum might seem out of place, and second because naturally one associates teddy bears with children. The teddy bear's compelling story and touching narrative has even become the subject of a children's book. Therefore, the commemoration of this object, and by extension the Rogers' family, moves beyond the walls of the museum and into the homes of families who might choose to read the book to their children.⁶



A Bear in War
(Left: “Teddy Bear,” Right: “A Bear in War”)
Figure 4

1.2 Referent

Unlike the ever-changing *punctum*, the *referent* (Barthes calls this the *photographic referent*) always remains the same. It is “not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph... The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent” (Barthes, *Lucida* 76). This element is not dependent upon the existence of a museum visitor. It is the very essence of a photograph or the item on display itself. As noted in Chapter Two, the linguistic sign is made up of the *signifier* and the *signified*. However, there is a third element that Ferdinand de Saussure introduces, and one which he explains is outside of the scope of linguistics. That element is the *referent*. The *signifier* is the letters on a page or the word that is uttered. The *signified* is the image that is created in the mind of the receiver. The *referent* is the actual object in the world. Barthes explains that without the referent the picture would be a picture of nothing, of empty space (*Lucida* 76). Some people choose a mountainous landscape as the referent, while others focus on the faces of their family members. In the First World War exhibit there are pictures of artillery guns, trench lines, gas attacks, work horses, fighting men,

nursing sisters, etc. The subject of the photograph or the artefact itself is the *referent*. It can then become commemorated because it is set apart and gazed upon by the museum visitors. Although the referent exists regardless of a visitor's presence, it cannot be commemorated without a visitor. Like the performative relationship, where an actor *and* a spectator are needed, it is the relationship that a visitor makes with the photograph that brings meaning to the experience of commemoration. It is what makes up the visitor's personal knowledge that creates the *punctum*, because the visitor reacts to the photo depending on his or her cognitive baggage or emotional memory. Moreover, in this process of recognition, "[t]he referent is both present (implied in the photograph) and absent (it has been there but is not there now)" (Hirsch 5). What the visitor sees when he or she gazes upon an image of a nameless soldier dozing in the trenches is an image with endless possibilities, it is an open-ended moment (see fig. 5). The soldier is captured in that instant, his mouth slightly open in repose; and yet, in the seconds after the picture was shot, perhaps he was awakened by the photographer or perhaps he remained asleep, lulled by an uncommon quietness at the front lines.

Although the viewing of the photograph happens in the now, it is a representation of what *was*. There is a feeling of intimacy in "catching" the soldier in such a relaxed pose, but there is also a sense of distancing, as the viewer is aware that this picture was taken almost 100 years ago. That knowledge acts in a similar way as the function of theatricality, in that it becomes "a distancing device" and estranges the visitor from the object that he or she is looking at (Jestrovic 42). As a result of the choices the design and curatorial team made regarding which images and objects should be used, the exhibit has a direct effect on what elements and people of Canada's First World War history can become commemorated. Although we do not know the name of the sleeping soldier, his face is on display and was chosen from hundreds of other pictures (Haley 3).



Catching a Nap

(Unless otherwise indicated, all photographs were taken by the author in the Canadian War Museum's *For Crown and Country Gallery*)

Figure 5

Additionally, people enjoy going to museums to see the “real thing” (Jackson and Leahy 303, Conn 57, Schechner, *Studies* 287, Williams 239-240). As mentioned in the introduction and in Chapter Two, visitors expect museums to be locations of truth. A displayed artefact, such as the Rogers’ teddy bear, is the *real thing*. Although, as it has been removed from its original context and put on display for visitors, the teddy bear is now an object of museality. The distancing effect has transformed it into a sign, just as an object on stage becomes a sign. In addition, it too becomes an object of commemoration; it is looked at every day by visitors and reminds them of a past event or person. They may not have a particular image in mind of who the teddy bear might have belonged to, but as it is displayed next to an image of Rogers, a visitor can make that visual connection. By extension, through the commemoration of the teddy bear, Rogers himself becomes remembered as well.

1.3 Point of view and frame

Pavis explains that the view a spectator has “of the event narrated or shown” is labelled the *point of view* (*Dictionary* 277). He clarifies that the *frame* of a theatre performance should not only be taken literally (as in the type of stage used) but that it should also refer “to the set of spectators’ experiences and *expectations*” (*Dictionary* 155). Both elements work hand in hand and affect one’s experience as an audience member. In *Theatre Audiences*, Susan Bennett states that “[t]he horizon(s) of expectations brought by an audience to the theatre are bound to interact with every aspect of the theatrical event [...] (99). This phenomenon exists in a museum-visitor relationship as well. “The museum audience for any given exhibition,” explains Annie Van Fossen Storr, “is indefinite in character, self-selecting, varied, and only partly predictable” (26). Although the education/interpretive staff at a museum represents the public’s interest(s) (Stratyner 87), each visitor comes to the museum with his or her own unique background and anticipations; thus, influencing in any number of ways the other people’s experience. Moreover, each time a visitor looks at a picture in the First World War exhibit (such as the soldier) or an artefact (such as the teddy bear), he or she does so through the lens of time.

Each person possesses a *point of view* and a *frame* that gives him or her a unique perspective on the narrative performed. For example, perhaps the viewer knew little of the Great War before visiting the museum and expected to increase his or her knowledge. On the other hand, perhaps the viewer was not Canadian, and came to the museum to compare his or her knowledge with what the museum displays. Hirsch explains that:

Between the viewer and the recorded object, the viewer encounters, and/or projects, a screen made up of dominant mythologies and preconceptions that

shape the representation. Eye and screen are the very elements of ideology: our expectations circumscribe and determine what we show and what we see. (7)

A set of circumstances surrounds and influences every individual, be they viewer or historiographer (as discussed in Chapter One). One cannot avoid being a product of his or her upbringing or of his or her society. The best one can do is to be transparent and admit to whatever biases he or she may possess when learning something new about a historical narrative, an object, or when faced with any new experience (Kellner 12-13, Kalle 25, Denning, “Enigma” 210).

Most of the pictures displayed in the exhibit are taken in the moment, which is to say that they are not posed with a specific intention. There is, however, at least one photograph, on display in the Passchendaele section that was posed. Under the exhibit subtitle “The Face of Battle,” there are a variety of photos depicting men and women in different physical states as a result of fighting in the war. Some are recovering from poisoned gas attacks and others are enjoying a relaxing break. In one such photo (see fig. 6), aboriginal athlete Tom Longboat is seen purchasing a paper from a French boy in 1917. At first glance, this photo seems quite natural. I daresay most visitors will never know the truth and that is that this image was posed and “staged.” Longboat and the man beside him are not wearing any battalion or company badges (“Pte. Tom”). All soldiers during the First World War received such identification. Additionally, although Longboat is wearing a private’s uniform in the photograph, he is also wearing officer boots. Such a mixture, of private and officer garb would not be acceptable during the First World War and thus would not be worn by an average soldier. Ergo the questions: what is the truth behind this image? What narrative does it perform for the visitor

who is unaware of this set-up, versus the visitor who is familiar with First World War military insignia? That being said, even a perfectly authentic photograph can represent different narratives, as Hirsch points out, “because [the pictures] do not transparently offer a single truth” (75).



**Pte. Tom Longboat “the Indian long distance runner buying a paper from a little French newspaper boy. June, 1917.”
 (“Pte Tom Longboat”)**

Figure 6

The images and objects on display in the First World War exhibit offer many truths depending on a visitor’s interpretation of the artefacts. One function that they all share is that they offer a performance of historical narrative. A potential truth is that because the Canadian

War Museum is seen as an educational authority, an object's placed in one of its exhibits might be more easily commemorated than if it were not on display.

2. MUSEUM ARTEFACTS AS PERFORMERS OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

In order to explore the structure of narrative performed by the objects displayed in the permanent First World War exhibit at the Canadian War Museum, I employ Marie-Laure Ryan's eight conditions on narrativity. Narrative and story, often considered interchangeable terms, began to be viewed as distinct forms under Russian formalists, such as Vladimir Propp. His *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, published in Russia in 1928, represented a breakthrough for folklorists and heavily influenced Barthes, who, like Propp looked at narrative from a primarily linguistic angle, analyzing narrative through sentence structure and small linguistic units. Barthes defines five major codes: the hermeneutic code, the semic code, the symbolic code, the proairetic code and the cultural code (*S/Z*, "An Introduction"). Gérard Genette adds rhetoric and focalization as significant elements in building narrative and he too establishes five main concepts: order, frequency, duration, voice and mood (*Narrative Discourse*). Mieke Bal followed Genette and differentiated the concept of the visibility of a narrator from that of the presence of a narrator (Herman and Vervaeck 19).

Like Bal, Ryan extends the concept of narrative beyond the limitations of the page and adds that "narrative should not privilege literary form" (Ryan, "Toward" 26). Ryan's open approach is the most applicable to a recreated physical space, such as a museum exhibit. In her article "Toward a definition of narrative," Ryan divides the eight categories of narrative into three semantic fields (spatial, temporal and mental) and one dimension that is both formal and pragmatic (Ryan, "Toward" 24, 28-29).

Spatial dimension

- Narrative must be about a world populated by individuated existents.

Temporal dimension

- This world must be situated in time and undergo significant transformations.
- The transformations must be caused by non-habitual physical events.

Mental dimension

- Some of the participants in the events must be intelligent agents who have a mental life and react emotionally to the states of the world.
- Some of the events must be purposeful actions by these agents.

Formal and pragmatic dimension

- The sequence of events must form a unified causal chain and lead to closure.
- The occurrence of at least some of the events must be asserted as fact for the storyworld.
- The story must communicate something meaningful to the audience.

Within the *spatial dimension*, Ryan covers a narrative's need to be about a world (fictional or historical) and that that world must be about people. Under *temporal dimension*, Ryan considers the requirements for a set timeline and for dramatic action to take place within the narrative. As conditions for the *mental dimension*, Ryan requires that the characters of the narrative be cognisant and that their actions be intentional. Finally, under the *formal and pragmatic dimension*, Ryan stipulates the importance of the concepts of causality, truthfulness and meaning.

Ryan indicates that “an inquiry into the nature of narrative can take two forms. The first, aiming at a description, asks: what does narrative do for human beings; the second, aiming at a definition, tries to capture the distinctive features of narrative” (Ryan, “Narrative”). The first part of this statement is explored throughout this chapter with the discussion on how the First World War narrative presented in the Canadian War Museum affects visitors’ experiences and historical commemoration. The narrative performed in the First World War exhibit informs visitors of the events of the Great War that have contributed to Canada’s growth as a nation. The second part of Ryan’s statement is applicable in this section: I will analyze the degree of narrativity that is performed by the objects displayed in the First World War exhibit by applying Ryan’s eight distinctive features mentioned above.

Ryan’s eight conditions are convenient, in that she allows readers/visitors to make their own choices with regards to what signifies a narrative for them. There is an acknowledgement of the fact that our standards of what makes a narrative are subjective; however, the degree of narrativity depends on how many of the conditions are fulfilled. Playwrights will pick and chose what dimensions they want to have emphasized in the narrative they are creating. As discussed in Chapter Two, playwrights might use any structure and a variety of techniques to relate the story to the audience (Rush 63-66). Exhibit curators do the same thing; they pick and chose what artefacts they want to display. This selection not only affects how people commemorate, but also which dimensions of narrativity are met. Ryan states that narrative is about human experience (Ryan, “Toward” 24). The Canadian War Museum as an institution has a certain mandate to follow: “*Educate. Preserve. Remember*” (“Backgrounder” 1). As an educational reminder, the museum hopes to impress upon its visitors that war is about a devastating human experience (“Backgrounder” 2). Does this mandate indicate that the Canadian War Museum

places importance on the spatial dimension, with its emphasis on the existence of individuals? Or does the very nature of the content fall primarily under the temporal dimension, because of the chronological order of events and the transformations they cause? Perhaps the emotional and intellectual reactions to the First World War are considered to be more important because it proves that the horrific events were caused by intelligent people? The answer to these questions may in fact stem from one's own *point of view* and the *frame* through which the information is viewed. Regardless of the reception, a certain amount of attention is paid to the balance of these dimensions for whatever reason the curator, the interpretive planners and the designers had in mind. The existence of a form of narrative within the First World War gallery is indisputable. Its representations, through the use of displayed artefacts, images and interactive stations, engage the visitor on levels that move beyond the textual. Because of the curatorial choices, certain objects are displayed instead of others, and this act influences the way visitors commemorate historical people and events by putting emphasis on the specific elements displayed.

2.1 Spatial Dimension

Ryan's first condition of narrativity is that a "narrative must be about a world populated by individuated existents" ("Toward" 29). A narrative must have within its story different characters, different individuals; in other words, it must be about people. This element, Ryan explains, eliminates representations of abstract entities such as "reason" (*ibid.*). An actor on stage, or a character in a play, represents an individual. However, there are examples in theatre when abstract entities are used as characters in a play, such as vice and virtue, or allegorical personifications thereof in medieval morality plays (Pavis, *Dictionary* 221). As soon as an image or a photograph of a person is displayed in an exhibit, whether or not that person has a

name, the story being told now has a face, or multiple faces, which makes that narrative about individuals.



Road to War

Figure 7

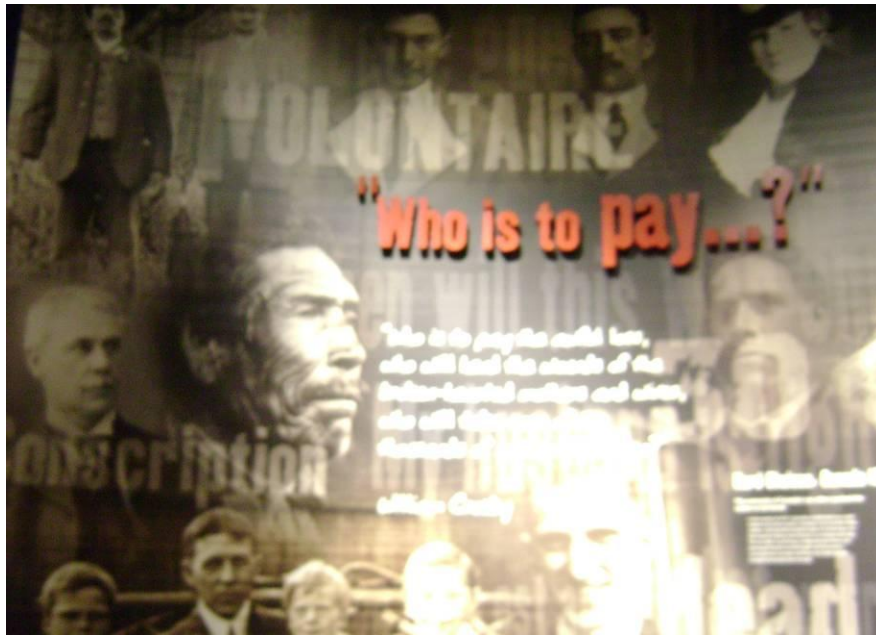
Without being in the physical presence of an individual, his or her image (a photograph, painted portrait, etc) is perhaps the most efficient means of displaying him or her. Objects, however, can also represent someone. Upon entering the First World War exhibit, one sees the large images of men preparing to head off to war and of the women and children they are leaving behind. The individuals of this narrative are performed through the museum's use of photographs. Black and white photographs (see fig. 7) set the scene for the imminent departure of the eager Canadian Expeditionary Force.⁷ In this same area of the exhibit, there is a mannequin wearing the uniform of a First Contingent Infantry Sergeant. The display of a soldier's uniform alludes to the physical bodies of the soldiers by representing what they had worn. A visitor can better understand the average height of a First World War soldier because of the accurate size of the uniform on display. Because the uniform is pulled from its original

purpose, that of being clothing for a Canadian soldier, and brought into an exhibit space to represent what Canadian soldiers had worn in 1915, a transformation occurs. The uniform becomes an artefact of museality. By extension, because its new function distances the object from its original purpose and the object performs for the visitor, the uniform can also be seen as an object of theatricality. One cannot, however, see this uniform and not see the shadow of the soldier who originally wore it. The bodily presence of the soldier is “present but invisible,” inferred from the uniform on display (Ko 437).⁸

As the visitor walks ahead in the gallery and the historical narrative progresses, the images of the men change because the characters in the narrative change. The images individualize the soldiers on the front lines. This can be seen in the paintings of soldiers suffering after the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915, in the photographs of men awaiting battle in the trenches in 1916 and in the images of pilots flying their planes through clouded skies in 1917. As the story of the First World War plays out, the individuals, performed by the objects and the images, evolve as well.

In addition to the men fighting, the museum showcases the war from the home front. Those women, children, family members and friends, who saw the soldiers off to war in the earlier images, are shown later in the exhibit as being torn and conflicted (see fig. 8). The performance of these people and their emotions is showcased by a wall, in the second home front section, which is composed of a montage of images and words. The quote “Who is to pay the awful loss [...]” by William Crosby is put over the faces of those left behind; this contrast suggests that regardless of whether their individual stories are showcased in detail, these different faces make a universal character of someone waiting for the soldier to come home. Edward Steichen⁹, Director of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art in 1955, said that:

“[p]hotography can be a moving force in the world as I saw it in the war. It can lift individuals as subjects from the humdrum and turn them into symbols of universal humanity” (qtd in Hirsch 48-49). These faces of Canadian civilians, represented primarily through the use of photography, also become characters in the First World War narrative.



Home Front
Figure 8

In the Last 100 Days section of the exhibit, there is an image of a tombstone on which a visitor can read: “Pr. Price killed in action on 11.11 at 10:58 AM. The last soldier killed in the war.” This image may not bring a face to the story being performed, but it most definitely brings a name. There is a sense of finality to the gravestone, and seeing it paired with the painting *For What?*¹⁰ (see fig. 9), one may begin to wonder: “who were those men?”



***For What?* – Frederick Varley
(Varley)
Figure 9**

The objects displayed, such as a soldier's uniform, the photographs taken of the soldiers, the canvases and the images of the people at the home front perform special characters in the drama of the First World War exhibit hall: they represent individuals and groups of people in the narrative of the First World War.

Therefore, the First World War exhibit meets Ryan's first and only spatial condition of narrative; it contains "individuated existents." In placing the photos and paintings on permanent display, the museum opens up the possibility that visitors can make reference to the First World War exhibit and the figures it showcases. Commemoration enables memories to find a tangible location, it "renders constitutive memories into durable forms [...]" (Kirk and Thatcher 7).

Moreover, by displaying multiple faces, faces that could represent any person from the First World War, the museum helps visitors remember, and thus potentially commemorate, all First World War soldiers. This is similar to how Canada repatriated the body of an *unknown* soldier and commemorated all military personnel past, present or future, by interring the unidentified remains at the National War Memorial.¹¹

2.2 Temporal dimension

The narrative presented by the objects and images in the First World War exhibit endures various changes and, as discussed in Chapter One, has the three elements of *dramatic action*: the narrative highlights a specific event; it is situated in time; and it undergoes a crucial alteration. Similarly, Ryan requests in her second function that narrative worlds should be “situated in time and undergo[ing] significant transformations” (“Toward” 29). In narrative, there must be a timeline and conflict and/or change that then engenders transformation for the characters involved. Ryan uses this condition to eliminate static descriptions in literature (“Toward” 29). Although it is useful to provide descriptions of the area or of the people involved, in order to describe the world one is creating, in literature, in plays or museums, a description alone is not sufficient to construct a narrative. The world of the narrative must move forward¹², whether it be presented in an episodic or linear fashion.¹³

In this case, the time it would take for a visitor to walk through the First World War exhibit is irrelevant. Rather it is the timeline in history that is showcased, the time performed by the use of specific objects, images or interactive displays. It is the very timeline of the historical narrative presented in the possible world of the exhibit, what Pavis would call *dramatic time* (*Dictionary* 410). The First World War exhibit is located in the larger gallery *For Crown and*

Country, which covers the South African and the First World Wars, as well as their immediate aftermath.

To help a visitor stay situated in the time of the historical narrative, there are certain titular panels or “sign posts” that move the narrative forward. These objects do have written text (words and dates); they do not, however, qualify as explanatory text panels.¹⁴ For example, the titular panel *For Crown and Country: The South African and First World Wars, 1885-1931*, is located at the entrance of the gallery. As a visitor walks through the space, there are various brief indications of time, such as the beginning of the First World War and the dates of significant Canadian battles. The use of these “sub-titles” would, in a conventional theatre space, be considered Epic techniques. In Epic Theatre, “[i]t is most important that one of the main features of the ordinary theatre [...] be excluded [...]: the engendering of illusion” (Brecht 122). The presence of titular panels in Epic Theatre would be used to intentionally alienate the audience members and remind them that they are watching a play.¹⁵ However, in a museum setting, these titular panels help with the flow of the visit by keeping people situated in the chronological time-sequence of the narrative.

There are objects that perform as indicators of time in a much more interesting manner. For example, in the opening section, the men seem quite excited to take off on the adventure of a lifetime. Geographically, that adventure takes place across an ocean and the knowledge of that voyage is, in itself, an awareness of time. Separating this introductory section from the section on Canada’s first battle in the war is a painting entitled *Canada’s Answer* (see fig. 10).¹⁶ This painting evokes the image of a long sea journey allowing the visitor to imagine the arduous oceanic passage as well as the temporal passage in getting Canadian soldiers from Canada’s East coast to the shores of Great Britain.



***Canada's Answer* – Norman Wilkinson
(Wilkinson)
Figure 10**

The use of visual images throughout the exhibit performs the passage of time differently in each section. In the section on the trenches, there are images of men dozing and of others writing letters, indicating that the passing of time in the trenches could be long and tedious. Some of the artefacts on display surrounding these images are examples of trench art. They are objects and decorative pieces typically carved from shell casings and other types of debris. In order to create these art objects, the soldiers responsible for these pieces needed long periods of undisturbed time. The lull between battles is thus performed through the careful representation of the works of art that are displayed in the museum vitrines.

Some objects perform the passage of time in an even less obvious manner. In the section of the exhibit that covers the last one-hundred days of the war there are three, stand-alone, A-frame panels that have empty bullet casings affixed to their sides. The number of bullet casings increases from one panel to the next, alluding to the exponential increase in the loss of Canadian

soldiers. From 1914 to 1918, nearly half of the Canadian soldiers who died lost their lives in the last one-hundred days of the war. The Canadians' progress through time, in this narrative, is marked by the loss of life: the growing number of bullet casings symbolizes both facts very subtly. To emphasize the sobriety of these detailed panels, there is accompanying rising dramatic music. It creates a climactic atmosphere for the visitor. Music itself is not static and is inscribed in time. Comparatively to a sound designer's role in supporting the overall atmosphere desired by a production's director, the use of sound is strategic in the exhibit's performance and further supports the fact that this narrative moves ever forward.

Not far from the A-frame panels is an interactive display: an arch that visitors can walk under. This arch is one of a pair, and the first is walked through by visitors at the beginning of the gallery. These two "book-ends" symbolically mark the beginning and the end of the time of conflict. Although the elements of the First World War exhibit are static in nature —i.e. they do not move— the narrative performed by the objects (photos, paintings and sometimes sound) is dynamic, it undergoes transformation and follows a linear flow in its storytelling.

Ryan also argues, under her temporal dimension, that these "transformations must be caused by non-habitual physical events" ("Toward" 29); and the change of action within a given timeline should construct a coherent narrative. In other words, it is not sufficient that these transformations occur within humanity's natural evolution such as old age (Ryan, "Toward" 29). Narrative is constructed, and the events that make up narrative are constructed also. The objects performing the narrative in the First World War exhibit meet this aspect of Ryan's condition of narrative because of the very nature of the story being told. War is not a habitual occurrence, certainly not one on the scale of the Great War and certainly not within the context of its time. The men and women involved underwent certain transformations that are easily visible through

the use of images, artefacts, and interactive displays in the exhibit. By using contrasting images at the beginning and end of the exhibit, the museum performs the transformation of the individuals.

At the start of the exhibit, the visual narrative shows that men are preparing to leave the country in 1914 and head to war. Additionally, there is an interactive video that explains the outbreak of the war visually and aurally. There are a series of events, to put it simply, that bring about death, destruction, survival and the end of the war in 1918. Initially the atmosphere at home is filled with a certain anticipation of adventure clearly visible in the photographs on the walls (see fig. 6). The men appear to be generally excited, the social support seems quite strong, and overall there is a positive feeling and even a shared sense of pleasant ignorance, emphasized by the use of patriotic music.

In the next section the images change drastically (see fig. 11). Canada's participation at the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915 is depicted through paintings of fighting, images of gas attacks and an array of guns and artillery. These images, which are violent and graphic in nature, and the darker lighting contrast with the pleasant images and bright lights from the previous section. The changes in images and lighting indicate the transformation of these individuals, the characters of the exhibit's narrative, as the changes in lighting and sound design would affect the mood of a performance.

In addition, the objects begin to represent the significant transformations in the soldiers' environment. The despicable living conditions of war are shown through the aid of a mock trench, one that visitors can actually walk through and reach out and touch. It is a stylized recreation, but it allows the visitor to fill in the real elements with his or her imagination through

sound (a soundscape of battle and voices), sight (murky lighting and video) and touch (sandbags and other touchable objects).



Second Battle of Ypres

Figure 11

Other transformations that happen to those still in Canada are displayed through the images in the sections on the home front. Initially, the images in the exhibit portray a supportive social network. The faces that were envious or proud of their departing men earlier in the narrative have become worried for those same men because of the disastrous news from the battlefield. There are mock depictions of how life has been affected in Canada since the outbreak of the war. Men are seen in internment camps, women are seen knitting and preparing care packages. Without reading any panels, visitors can understand that suspicion has crept into

the lives of some Canadians and others spend all of their time supporting the war effort (see fig. 12).



Shock in Canada
Figure 12

These various transformations are performed by objects and images, from section to section, moving from one battle or location to the next. The transformations culminate at a montage of numbers near the end of the exhibit, displayed on a red-tinted wall painted with orange flames. These numbers symbolize the transformations that occurred as part of the international, overriding arc of the effect of the First World War. Numbers of the dead soldiers and civilians, the countries destroyed, and the countries created from the ruin represent significant changes from the original state of affairs. After these numbers, there is a section that shows how Canada was affected in the immediate aftermath of the war. This section showcases how people commemorated soldiers, both in private and in public. It also displays a section of the Statute of Westminster, which granted Canada, as well as other British Dominions, full

control over its foreign policy. This artefact and the short documentary video nearby, entitled *The Costly Road to Autonomy*, help visitors, particularly those who may be new to the country, understand Canada's coming of age.¹⁷ Alan A. Kirk and Tom Thatcher explain that “[r]emembering together common *commemoranda*, present in mediating artifacts [*sic*] and practices, serves also to incorporate new members through communication of a group's constitutive memories [...] (7, emphasis in original). Nearby there is a painting entitled *The Conquerors*¹⁸ (see fig. 13), a very empowering name and yet the faces of the painted soldiers reflect their transformation in the grand narrative of the war. They have become ghosts, shells of the men they used to be.¹⁹

2.3 Mental Dimension

Ryan states that “some of the participants in the events must be intelligent agents who have a mental life and react emotionally to the states of the world,” and she uses this to eliminate any possible explanation of natural events that do not involve intelligent beings, such as reports of weather forecasts (Ryan, “Toward” 29). In a report on upcoming weather, the text being delivered is about events of nature and not about people. Similar to characters in a play, who perform actions “even if [...] they do nothing visible” (Pavis, *Dictionary* 48), in narrative, some individuals must have an intellectual and emotional capacity to react to events. Additionally, they must be possible agents of action(s) with regards to other events within the narrative.



The Conquerors – Eric Kennington
 (Kennington)
 Figure 13

Through the strategic display of objects, the exhibit performs people's reactions to the First World War and its numerous social upheavals. Often people would react to the horrors of war creatively. There is a variety of artefacts on display that illustrate this tendency. For example, a copy of John McCrae's memorable poem, "In Flanders' Fields," is displayed following the section on the Second Battle of Ypres (Appendix A). McCrae wrote it in reaction to the horrors he had just witnessed as a medical officer and to the death of his friend, Lieutenant

Alexis Helmer. In most Commonwealth countries, this poem is recited during the commemorative ceremonies performed every Remembrance Day. It still evokes an overwhelming feeling of loss and suggests beauty amidst the chaos of war.

The trench art on display is also indicative of an emotional reaction. Nicholas Saunders explains that “[o]ne of the defining characteristics of trench art is its capacity to embody human experiences of and reactions to the unique circumstances of the conflict which gives birth to it” (187). Perhaps in creating art, the soldiers were attempting to make sense of all the chaos and destruction.²⁰ These carvings suggest that soldiers were seeking to attach a new meaning to a dangerous weapon. This may have been in order to better cope with their situation or to exert control over an explosive shell, the number-one-killer during the war.



Do Your Bit!
Figure 14

At the same time, the exhibit portrays how people in Canada were bombarded with the government's propaganda to push the war on all fronts. Propaganda was everywhere; this official response to the First World War battles is performed through the display of First World War propaganda posters (see fig. 14). Eventually conscription came into play through formal federal legislation in 1917 and is represented in the exhibit through the montage from Figure 7, with the word conscription clearly visible.

Ryan also establishes under this third dimension of narrativity, the mental dimension, that "some of the events must be purposeful actions by these agents" ("Toward" 29). In this condition, Ryan requires that the agents involved in the narrative have intentions behind their actions. In other words, it is not enough for the actions to take place by happenstance, there must be a purpose behind their happening and that purpose must come from *someone* within the narrative itself. Thus Ryan eliminates narratives that are based solely upon mental events, such as interior monologues ("Toward" 29).²¹

There is no obvious performance of this function of narrativity in the imagery or objects in the First World War exhibit; there are no paintings of men being ordered by their commanding officers (although it is implied through the very nature of the military hierarchy²²). Of course, with the explanatory text panels, the agents can be made clear with the names of generals, such as Arthur Currie a Canadian Division Commander in April 1917; and the agents' decisions can be identified as causing events to take place, victory at the Battle of Vimy Ridge for example.

Ryan explains that this specification is to ensure the elimination of representations in narrative (in any form) consisting exclusively of intellectual happenings ("Toward" 29). In proving that this element is present in the First World War exhibit, I have fallen back on implicit logic. It is clear that there are agents behind the actions displayed in the exhibit. For example,

someone made the decision to shell Passchendaele, an area in Belgium shown in a before-and-after photo sequence, as that type of lunar landscape does not evolve of its own accord.

Therefore, because there are photos in the exhibit, like the Passchendaele pair, the exhibit does offer a performance that alludes to human intervention. The presence of these photographs, and others, also reminds the visitor about the acts of destruction that war engenders and how human agency over the landscape can be both defensive (as in trench building) and offensive (as in the Passchendaele bombing). Museums, we are told, are sites of commemoration (Prost 303, Gillis 13-14). By selecting certain images, the museum gives weight to the events depicted in those images, and it is those events, like the bombing of Passchendaele, that can be more easily remembered and commemorated by visitors.

Some Canadians on the home front, suffering under terrible stress and inundated with the never-ending casualty lists, sometimes reacted to the war by becoming suspicious of others (see fig. 12), many women sought to contribute as much as possible, and children reacted to the absence of their fathers. Each of these types of reactions is performed by various objects displayed in the exhibit space. For example, the teddy bear showcased in the section on the trenches, when taken superficially, seems quite out of place. However, its location, combined with the letter written by a little boy and a photograph of a man in uniform, both on display next to the bear, starts to build a narrative of its own. It paints a picture of an ordinary man in battle. It helps contextualize who that man was and what elements contribute to his individual story. The display of the bear and the letter also shows how the absence of a father at war affects children on the home front. No matter what story the visitor interprets from the layout of the three artefacts, be it accurate or false, the visitor still builds a story based on the three items he or she has to look at.

2.4 Formal and pragmatic dimensions

Within a narrative, there must be an event that causes another event to happen, followed by another and so on. Narrative, not unlike historiography, is presented in this way. As Hayden White explains, it is historians who feel compelled to make a narrative out of historical facts and interpret what Greg Dening calls “the silences” (White ix, Dening “Enigma” 210). Writing a historical narrative, as explained in Chapter One, is much like piecing together an exhibit on military history. An exhibit curator calls upon a number of different sources (artefacts and written sources alike) to put together a historical narrative. Eventually all of these elements and events must come together and find resolution, or at least end. Some plays purposefully break the classical conventions of narrative associated with a well-made play (for example, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* by Luigi Pirandello). However, without the structure of narrative, the intentions of the characters are not necessarily always clear. According to Ryan, a narrative is not sufficient if it is presented in an unconnected manner, such as journal entries or war diaries. “The sequence of events [in a narrative] must form a unified causal chain and lead to a closure [this] eliminates lists of causally unconnected events (“Toward” 29).

Because of the chronological layout of this exhibit, the ending is quite evident. In fact, upon entering the First World War section of the gallery, the visitor is reminded that he or she will be learning about a time period between 1914 and 1918. However, one cannot walk out of this gallery without seeing Adolf Hitler’s limousine at the start of the Second World War gallery: *Forged in Fire, The Second World War, 1939-1945*. It reminds visitors that the end of the First World War would eventually lead to the Second World War.

However, without the aid of the narrative text the cause-and-effect relationship between the events and actions may not be very clear. Chronologically, the Canadian soldiers arrived in

Europe and participated in their first battle in 1915; the consequences of that battle are visually performed by images, there are paintings of victims of gas poisoning and wounded soldiers. From these impressions, one can gather that the consequences are physically devastating for the soldiers involved; however, there are no visual elements to describe what happened as a direct result of the battle in the grand narrative of the war.²³ As a consequence of the Second Battle of Ypres, the assumption can be made that Canada was in shock. This is based on the fact that the section immediately after this 1915 battle returns to the home front and shows the reactions of various Canadians to what was happening overseas (see fig. 12).

The exhibit itself is organized into sections thematically and spatially: sections that are typically labelled with dates and subtitles. Therefore, within the grand narrative of the exhibit, there are micro-narratives corresponding to these different sections. In turn, within those micro-narratives, because of the objects displayed, there is a causal chain of events. It is the combination of the objects and these micro-narratives that make the whole story.

For example, in the section on trench warfare, there is a micro-narrative regarding life in the trenches and the visitor is bombarded with a variety of images. He or she can also experience a recreated trench, complete with soldier mannequins, the sound of exploding shells, screaming men, and touchable artefacts, etc. The combination of these elements performs a fairly complete experience of what the living conditions were like in the trenches for the soldiers.²⁴ Further in the same section is an interactive display that allows a visitor to lift up panels and expose a soldier's foot under his boot, or his shoulder under his uniform. Here a visitor learns of how the trench environment led to physical consequences for the men. After lifting those panels, a visitor discovers that, as a consequence of his unhygienic living conditions, the soldier suffered from trench foot (an infection of the feet that could lead to amputation) and

the constant annoyance of lice. Looking at the large-print quotes on the wall, a visitor can learn of the emotional turmoil these soldiers experience: as a result of the fighting, the soldiers live in constant fear.

Similarly, in the Passchendaele section of the exhibit, there are images of this area on the Western Front, which was completely shelled. As a direct result of those bombings, the soldiers then had to fight in despicable conditions, which are simulated in a section immediately following the images of the bombed landscape. It is an area comparable to the mock trench: visitors can “step” into a photo of the destroyed battlefield, walk on planks to cross the muck, and touch representations of tools and guns that a First World War soldier would have used. The curatorial team also made an evocative choice to have a dead soldier represented in the muck. There is no text that explains that this soldier is representative of many Canadian soldiers who died in Passchendaele, either by being shot, wounded, or by drowning in the muddy landscape. However, the use of large photographs, the layout of the mock landscape and the presence of touchable artefacts build a narrative in this section of the exhibit. In fact, although the presence of text elucidates matters (such as historical facts and events) in most areas of the exhibit, the objects are laid out so one can see their relationship to each other, and the images are graphic representations of various scenarios played out in the First World War.

For the second element of narrative under her pragmatic and formal dimension, Ryan explains that “the occurrence of at least some of the events [in the narrative] must be asserted as fact for the storyworld” (“Toward” 29).²⁵ According to Ryan, established within the narrative must be facts that are undeniable. This is a condition that is equally important to the museum staff in their construction of the First World War narrative, as discussed in Chapter One and Two. The scenarios of battles, hospitals, airplane fights, are all believed to be true by the visitors

because they are within the walls of a history museum, Canada's national war museum. Moreover, this condition, Ryan explains, removes the possibility of assuming that recipes or advice columns are narratives ("Toward" 30).

Ryan's last condition for narrativity is that "the story must communicate something meaningful to the audience" ("Toward" 29). She acknowledges that this is perhaps the most controversial condition, because it needs to be followed by an examination of what makes a narrative significant. She recognizes that this point becomes very subjective and in the ideal case of narrativity this condition would perhaps make the narrative more satisfactorily complete, but that it is not absolutely necessary in creating narrative. What is meaningful to someone is not necessarily meaningful to another and, in applying this condition, narrative must then be viewed in relation to the context surrounding it (Ryan, "Toward" 30).

It is perhaps optimistic to think that because the story, performed by the First World War exhibit, is a story of our country's military history that it is meaningful to whoever comes and gazes on these artefacts. However, not every visitor is Canadian and many school children protest they are not there due to personal interest.²⁶ That being said, there is at least one artefact, one image, one "something" that performs the First World War narrative and will speak to them.²⁷ It is comparable to how an audience member can sit and appreciate a play by finding one or more elements that he or she can relate to or be drawn to. An audience member needs not enjoy the narrative performed in order to appreciate the costume design of the production, for example. Not all connections are positive.²⁸ However, most connections are rather positive. I remember a young man visiting the museum from a town near Quebec City. He was very excited to visit the Canadian War Museum, not only to show his friends around, but also to see the spy kit that used to belong to his distant relative, Marc Caza.²⁹ That experience was most

definitely commemorative, as this visitor's photo was taken in front of the display case to show his family members back home.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

A historical narrative performed in an institution such as the Canadian War Museum significantly influences the museum visitors. In some cases, the artefacts and images that are displayed can encourage visitors to forget past events. Barthes explains that “not only is the Photograph [*sic*] never, in essence, a memory... but it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter-memory” (*Lucida* 91). In her book *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, Jenny Edkins presents the argument that in some cases the establishment of commemorative institutions, museums and memorials can in fact “promote forgetting” (128). For example, though a 2011 visitor, experiencing the mock trench in the First World War exhibit, can never truly know what a First World War trench was like, theoretically, he or she can *forget* the real trench as he or she replaces it with the museum's representation, at least to some extent. Moreover, many historians and scholars characterize commemoration as the dialectic phenomenon where memory and forgetting meet (Rice 32, Stewart 574, Robinson 85). Because, although we commemorate in order to remember, by using memorials and museums as locations of commemoration, we remove the responsibility of remembering from the individuals in society and place that responsibility on *locations*.

The objects and images, the paintings and interactive displays have an effect on the way people commemorate. The curators, the design team and the interpretive planners chose what objects were to be displayed, and thus what objects are to be commemorated. “Commemorative ritual sustains memory by reenacting [*sic*] a community's “master narrative,” itself the product of

commemorative impulses” (Kirk and Thatcher, 8). The museum has a responsibility to the people and that is to educate, preserve and remember: the Canadian War Museum mandate. The museum displays the information it deems appropriate to educate the visitors about the history of Canada’s military past and present. It also preserves artefacts for future generations and houses a large collection of research material. And the Canadian War Museum remembers. If the museum is a site of remembrance, does an individual have to worry about remembering? This is where commemorative sites such as museums and memorials can induce forgetting. From personal experience, however, I know that the museum provides activities for visitors of all ages in hopes of helping people remember the past. The information displayed in the First World War is there to help people remember. The exhibit remains the same; it is the people who walk through the exhibit that change and their behaviour can change what they remember of their experience. What happens to the narrative when one considers the personal narrative of the individual visiting the exhibit? What would happen to the narrative of the First World War exhibit with the addition of a historical interpreter? The answers to these questions can be found in the layers of personal experience and collective memory. They will, however, be explored in Chapter Four as we discuss the presence of individuals as performers of historical narrative in the exhibit space.

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

¹ Although for any visitor who knows, the numbers alongside the photographs are the appropriate references to search for the photo on the Library and Archives Canada website.

² Making meaning is discussed later in this chapter under Ryan’s formal and pragmatic dimension.

³ Louis Riel (1844-1885) was a Métis politician and founded the province of Manitoba. He also led two rebellious movements against the Government of Canada, known as the Red-River Rebellion and the North-West Rebellion.

⁴ My interaction with this woman is further discussed in Chapter Four under Practical Case Studies: Personal Myth.

⁵ This is the letter and photo referred to in the conclusion of Chapter Two.

⁶ There is an ideological element to this bear's presence in the exhibit. It may inspire visitors to think of the family's support for the father at war. It may also carry a larger implication: Canadian families supporting the war effort.

⁷ The Canadian Expeditionary Force or CEF was created in 1914 in response to Great Britain's declaration of war. The CEF, comprised solely of volunteers until 1917 when the government began conscripting men, was made up of permanent Canadian soldiers and part-time militia men. It was disbanded after the end of the war. The modern term Canadian Forces was adopted when the Canadian Army Active Force, the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Air force were integrated in 1968 creating the first combined command military force in the modern world.

⁸ In her article "Footbinding in the Museum," Dorothy Ko explains how to avoid a sense of voyeurism the "viewer's access to the women's bodies [is controlled by the bodies being] present but invisible. There are no dioramas; the presence of the laboring [*sic*], suffering, and desiring bodies can only be inferred from the clothing, tools, furniture, and the interior domestic space" (437).

⁹ Steichen was an aerial photographer in the First World War and a naval photographer in the Pacific during the Second World War (Hirsch 49).

¹⁰ "Frederick Varley's *For What?* portrays a cart filled with bodies collected from the battlefield. It starkly portrays the horror of war and questions its purpose" ("Official Art").

¹¹ The remains of an unidentified Canadian soldier from the First World War were returned to Canada in 2000 and interred at the National War Memorial near Parliament Hill. He was chosen from a Cabaret Rouge cemetery, near Vimy Ridge, as a symbol representative of all soldiers from the army, navy and air force. However, it can be argued, that by remembering everyone, *no one* individual is remembered (Gillis 11).

¹² Although in works such as *Waiting for Godot* there is seemingly no action, it can be argued that Samuel Beckett explores the action of *waiting*.

¹³ This is true in the case of the *For Crown and Country* gallery, which follows a linear flow. The Second World War gallery, *Forged in Fire*, however, has an episodic flow and uses time indicators to make visitors aware of what part of history they are reading about as they move from section to section.

¹⁴ Explanatory text panels typically provide descriptions, which vary in length but provide at least some detailed content.

¹⁵ Brecht's theories will be further explored in Chapter Four, with the introduction of Freddie Rokem's theory on the actor as "hyper-historian."

¹⁶ "English marine artist Norman Wilkinson painted Canada's First Contingent leaving Canada in October 1914. Over 32,000 Canadian and Newfoundland soldiers sailed to Britain in 30 passenger liners. At the time, it was the single largest group of Canadians ever to sail from Canada" ("Official Art").

¹⁷ Canada may have entered the Great War as a minor power, but at the end of the war Canada was "a significant ally, demanding greater influence in the Empire" (*The Costly Road*).

¹⁸ “Kilted Canadians of the 16th Battalion, some depicted as pale ghosts, march through a destroyed battlefield of broken bottles, skeletal remains, and informal graves. Eric Kennington originally titled his work *The Victims*. After its showing in Canada led to objections about the title from the battalion's commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Cy Peck, Kennington renamed it *The Conquerors*” (“Official Art”).

¹⁹ One could argue that war *naturally* engenders such reactions in humanity and is therefore not a “non-habitual event.” However, Ryan insists that narrative is about conflict and about human experience (“Toward” 24). There can be no greater conflict than a world war. For four years, people around the world were forced to survive under considerable strain. The echoes of the Great War can still be felt today. As one example, we commemorate our war dead and living veterans on the anniversary of the very day the Great War came to an end. The Canadian War Museum is active in Remembrance Day ceremonies and unmistakably exhibits the human experience of the First World War by performing its narrative through the display of appropriate artefacts and photographs.

²⁰ In like manner, following the Second World War, a new movement in theatre developed: absurdism. The creation of this more existentialist type of theatre came as a reaction to the state of the world as a result of war. “*The Theatre of the Absurd* [...] was never a conscious movement, [so] it is difficult to specify those authors who should be considered among its ranks”; however, the movement “attracted considerable attention, especially through essays and plays of Jean-Paul Sartre [...] and] Samuel Beckett” (Brockett and Hildy 472-475).

²¹ Although an actor might deliver a monologue while on-stage, under the Stanislavsky ‘system’ in particular, directors will still ask their actors to find a motivation for their characters words and/or actions. “Motivation is an essential part of characterization” (Pavis, *Dictionary* 222).

²² Granted in a non military-history setting, this hierarchy would not necessarily be implied.

²³ Like many battles fought during the First World War, the Second Battle of Ypres won little for either side in the long-term; however, the Germans did succeed at gaining the high ground as an immediate result of this 1915 Spring offensive.

²⁴ There are of course missing elements, such as the smell of rotting flesh, the ankle-deep mud, the aggravation of lice.

²⁵ The example used in Chapter Two regarding Doležel’s postulate that *fictional worlds are ensembles of nonactualized possible states of affairs* is similar to Ryan’s condition that at least some of the events in the narrative must be factual for the storyworld. In a historical narrative this element is taken for granted (as Doležel points out in his book *Possible Worlds of Fiction and History*).

²⁶ As indicated in the introduction, I have been a Canadian War Museum employee since 2005. This comment is based on my personal experience as an animator leading school programs.

²⁷ The following extract is from a comment card left by a teenage girl at the Canadian War Museum and proves that at least some youth might change their minds about not wanting to visit the museum in the first place: “I discovered a lot of things here. I only came because my brother made me but I like it.”

²⁸ As discussed earlier in this chapter, in 2005, a visitor complained to me about information displayed in Gallery 1, *Battleground* on Louis Riel. Although the information on Louis Riel is presented factually with the museum taking no stance on his status as a hero or not, she was very insulted that the museum’s narrative included a man she viewed as a traitor. This case will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four.

²⁹ Marc Caza was a Canadian spy who served in France during the Second World War. Various memorabilia items of his are displayed in Gallery 3, *Forged in Fire*.

Chapter Four

Bodies in Performance: Museum Staff and Visitors as Performers of Historical Narrative at the Canadian War Museum

“[...] all human activity could potentially be considered as “performance,” or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself” (Carlson 4).

Marvin Carlson warns that the “recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behavior [*sic*] raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as “performance,” or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself” (4). These words of advice have encouraged me to bring a critical eye to the analysis of my role as a museum employee in performing historical narrative. However, Carlson also adds that the “difference between doing and performing, according to this way of thinking, would seem to lie not in the frame of the theatre versus real life but in an attitude – we may do actions unthinkingly, but when we think about them, this introduces a consciousness that gives them the quality of performance” (4). This chapter explores a number of performance theories and applies them to my tasks as a museum employee. I will discuss actions that have been performed with intention. The purpose behind these actions was to inform the public. Additionally, I will explore the actions of museum visitors and others that appear to be done without thought. Through this process, I will investigate where each type of action finds itself on what Richard Schechner labels “the broad spectrum of performing [... which has] no clear boundaries separating everyday life from family and social roles or social roles from job roles, church ritual from trance, acting onstage from acting offstage, and so on” (*Studies* 170-71).

In applying theories, such as Jiřy Veltruský's concept of the stage figure and Michael Kirby's continuum of acting/non-acting, I will investigate the degree of performativity in each occurrence of an employee/visitor interaction at the museum that I examine. Moreover, visitors themselves can become performers in the museum. By their reactions and emotional displays in the museum's public setting, visitors can influence other visitors or museum staff. In this way, visitors become performers, because according to Erving Goffman "[a] 'performance' may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (15). This influence can be cognitive or emotional and can be caused by an individual's behaviour or by the museum as an institution that showcases knowledge. According to Susan Crane, "[m]useums are more than cultural institutions and showplaces of accumulated objects: they are sites of interaction between personal and collective identities, between memory and history, between information and knowledge production" (12). Museums are locations where people can interact; they are sites where divergent personal memories can meet. As a result, these influential interactions, these performances (between institution and visitor, employee and visitor, or visitor and visitor), can affect personal and collective memories.

There is no way of controlling the information that a visitor receives prior to his or her arrival to the museum. As John H. Falk explains, "knowledge is built up over time, constructed from literally dozens if not hundreds of learning experiences" ("Director's Cut" S89). The careful layout of artefacts and interactive elements can be planned by a curatorial, an interpretive and a design team. The employee/visitor exchanges are very interactive and improvisational in nature; thus, they cannot be fully scripted in advance. Certainly, with experience, one can

generally plan ahead for re-occurring patterns of behaviour that ensue between museum staff and visitors.

What remains vital to the museum's functioning is the role played by the visitor: the role of the spectator. Whether or not that visitor is a specialized historian who might go to a museum in order to catch a glimpse of an artefact relevant to his or her research, or if that visitor is a member of the general public walking through the galleries and watching a staff member discuss the firing mechanism of an 18th century musket, he or she exists. There needs to be someone to bear witness to the performances by the employees, as in theatre performances, in order for them to be considered performances at all. This performative experience will at least help shape the visitor's experience and memory.

French historian Pierre Nora eloquently explains that memory is something that is alive and constantly changing, influenced by countless factors, one of which, he suggests is history itself (qtd. in Prost 299). Antoine Prost adds that in order to write history, one must not only be aware of memory, one must also "put one's remembrances in order, place them in sequence [...], explain and understand them, and transform an emotional experience into thought" (300). Prost gives an example concerning one's memories of war. A veteran's memories are associated with objects and locations, but the history of war is found in museums, "where the visitor who cannot [necessarily] feel as a veteran would feel acquires knowledge about the battle" (Prost 300). Both history and memory are intricately linked, and a visitor's memory will certainly be affected by watching performances of historical narrative within a museum.

This chapter explains the following terms used in museum studies that deal with performance: *museum interpretation*, *living history*, *animator*, and *guide*. In section one, this

chapter explores Freddie Rokem's theories on the actor as a *hyper-historian* and how the museum interpreter can also act as a *hyper-historian* by becoming a witness to history. In section two, this chapter evaluates the level of performativity that the role of a museum employee (specifically that of an animator) carries and how that level may change depending on the situation the employee may find him or herself in. Kirby's continuum of acting/non-acting will be used in order to evaluate the degree of performance in an employee's interaction with the museum visitor. In addition, as a result of this responsibility, the museum employee influences the visitor's memory. In section three, this chapter explains how visitors themselves can become performers in a museum setting, thus influencing another visitor's experience and contribute to individual and even collective memory. Section four provides two case studies in which visitors have been both spectators and/or performers of historical narrative on individual and national scales. The examples used in this chapter come from my personal experience and will be related to the theories mentioned above.

1. INTERPRETATION TERMS AND THEIR MEANINGS

As cited on the International Museum Theatre Alliance website, *interpretation* is

a communication process designed to reveal to a specific audience the significance of a historic / cultural / natural site or museum and the audience's relationship to it a first-hand experience [*sic*] involving interaction with another person, a place, an object or an artefact. Live interpretation and museum theatre are just two, highly effective forms of interpretative technique. (“Interpretation” imtal-europe.com)

Scott Magelssen, however, is more specific and explains that interpretation “is the industry term for museum programming in the forms of educational *interaction* between museum staff and museum visitors” (*Undoing History* xxii, emphasis mine). Both are correct definitions. For the purposes of this chapter, as it deals with the performance of people rather than objects, I will use Magelssen’s definition emphasising the element of *interaction* between museum employee and museum visitor. The interactive element implies that both staff and visitors take an active part in the exchanges.

Under the umbrella term of interpretation falls *living history*, which in museum-studies’ vocabulary serves as “a very broad term used to describe historically authentic activities in an appropriate context” (“Interpretation” imtal-europe.com). In this type of *living history* performance, there are two key types of performers. There are *first-person interpreters* and *third-person interpreters*. Magelssen describes a first-person interpreter as someone who is in period-appropriate costume and “who speaks in the first-person [...] when informing visitors about the lives and times they are portraying in the museum’s environment” (*Undoing History* xxii). Robin Lavoie further describes first-person interpretation as being “designed to offer interpreters as ‘living artifacts’ [*sic*],” whereas a third-person interpreter “often speaks in the third-person, concentrating more on the authenticity of dress, behaviors [*sic*], and battle movements than on performing a role from a particular person from the past [...]”(qtd in Bridal 149). Generally a third-person interpreter is also in costume (although not always) and informs the visitors about the people or artefacts the museum or the historic site displays.

There is also a third group of interpreters who are not dressed in period costume. The title for these museum employees varies and can be interpreter, docent, animator, guide, etc

(Magelssen *Undoing History*, Jackson *Theatre*, Bridal *Exploring*). In my experience at the Canadian War Museum I have filled two such positions since its opening in 2005. They are *guide* and *animator*. These two types of Canadian War Museum employees interact with the public on a daily basis as “performers of history.” For example, in each job, I have had to lead groups of people on historical tours or programs and provide historical content while answering visitor queries. My professional experience is of great value to this project as I have extensive skill and familiarity with the roles of the Canadian War Museum guide and animator and can speak from personal experience when giving detailed examples in this chapter. This chapter will focus on the two main performances that an animator offers to visitors, which are the Group Orientation and the Gallery Animation. Some of my experiences as a Canadian War Museum guide will be offered as examples of interactive performances with visitors whose personal experience with historical narrative conflicted with the narrative performed by the museum.

The term *guide* refers to the employees who worked in the permanent galleries at the Canadian War Museum from April 2005 until October 2010.¹ Guides offer information to passing visitors either by answering questions on the historical content of the exhibits or the layout of the museum, and ensure visitor and artefact safety. Guides also offer scheduled guided tours of the museum architecture and the four permanent galleries, and they staff the information desk where visitors might go and make inquiries or leave comments. I was a Canadian War Museum guide from April 2005 until April 2007², at which point I transferred to the Programs and Interpretation Division and became an animator.

Canadian War Museum *animators* perform a variety of tasks.³ From the months of October to April inclusively, animators lead eight types of school programs that meet the needs

of Ontario and Quebec’s educational curriculum. From May to June inclusively, animators offer Group Orientations which are short first-person presentations used to welcome all school groups to the museum. During July and August, during the weekends, intermittingly during the week of the school year, and during any holiday period (such as Remembrance Day, Christmas time or Valentine’s Day), animators provide special Gallery Animations that are advertised to the public. These animations range from craft activities with the visiting children to display carts with touchable artefacts. Both styles of activities invite visitors to receive additional information and help children gain insight into Canada’s military past and present in a way that is more accessible to them. Birthday Programs are also offered year-round on the weekends and animators facilitate such activities as well as the Canadian War Museum’s “Witness to History” events, which entail a presentation on behalf of a Canadian veteran to a visiting group. Additionally, animators perform such tasks as welcoming the groups of military recruits, helping with any special event openings, and going on outreach programs for various conferences. I was an animator for over four years.⁴

In this chapter the term *interpreter* is used more generally than the two more specific terms of *guide* or *animator*. Although each term has a unique role in the field of museums, they are all three more similar than different.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MUSEUM PERFORMER AS THE HYPER-HISTORIAN

In his book *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre*, Freddie Rokem suggests that actors on stage who perform historical figures become “hyper-historians” (*Performing* 13). Rokem attributes this term to actors who perform history in theatrical representations of the past, such as a costume play, in contemporary theatre. These

actors perform for an audience and act as witnesses to the events they are depicting for the spectators who become in turn secondary witnesses (Rokem, *Performing* 25, 192). In order to explain his idea further, Rokem turns to Bertolt Brecht's basic model for Epic Theatre and quotes from Brecht's essay "The Street Scene" (*Performing* 9):

"For practical experiments [Brecht] usually pick[s] as [his] example of completely 'natural' epic theatre an incident such as can be seen at any street corner: an eyewitness demonstrating to a collection of people how a traffic accident took place. The bystanders may not have observed what happened, or they may simply not agree with him, may 'see things a different way'; the point is that the demonstrator acts the behaviour of driver or victim or both in such a way that the bystanders are able to form an opinion about the accident. (Brecht 121)

Thus just like the demonstrator in this example is a witness to an accident and shares what he saw with secondary witnesses, the actor becomes a "hyper-historian" because he is a witness to an event that took place in the past and re-presents it for a live audience. An actor re-creates the event and, in Stanislavsky's method acting for example, may even re-live it.

Analogously, a Canadian War Museum animator becomes a hyper-historian when he or she is performing a first-person interpretation, during the Group Orientations, and when he or she is performing as him/herself during the Gallery Animations. According to Rokem,

the actors serve as a connecting link between the historical past and the "fictional" performed *here* and *now* of the theatrical event; they become a kind of historian, what [Rokem calls] a "hyper-historian," who makes it possible for [the spectators]

– even in cases where the reenacted [*sic*] events are not fully acceptable for the academic historian as a “scientific” representation of that past – to recognize that the actor is “redoing” or “reappearing” as something/somebody that has actually existed in the past. (*Performing* 13)

The animator who performs a first-person interpretation experiences this kind of transformation because the animator in this context becomes an actor. The animator’s performance can be associated with the last two nodes on Michael Kirby’s not-acting/acting continuum (discussed below in section 2.1). In representing the past, or an amalgam of historical data, the animator bridges the gap between that past and the present in order to allow “the spectators to see the past in a new or different way [...]” (9).

An animator performing as him or herself, as in the case of the Gallery Animations, also meets Rokem’s main requirement in the transformation from performer to hyper-historian. In presenting information to a visitor regarding a part of Canada’s military history, he or she becomes a witness of the events and shares them with a spectator. In the following extract, Rokem explains how theatre spectators can become “secondary witnesses” to the actor’s performance:

As a witness the actor does not necessarily have to strive toward complete neutrality or objectivity in order to make it possible for the spectators, the “bystanders” in the theatre, to become secondary witnesses, to understand and, in particular, “to form an opinion” about the forces which have shaped the accidents of history. (*Performing* 9)

This explanation is very similar to the relationship that exists between an animator at the Canadian War Museum and a museum visitor. In fact, like a Rokem actor, an animator does not need to be completely objective during his or her presentation. By witnessing the interpretation that the animator performs, visitors/spectators will still become “secondary witnesses.” In turn, this performance not only allows the visitor/spectator to understand historical events, but also to modify his or her memory of the accounts accordingly. An animator always seeks to provide an engaging performance for the visitor. Although this performance does not always take on the specifics of a historical character, as in the case of a Group Orientation for example, the animator’s re-telling of history educates and entertains the visitor. Both the Gallery Animation and the Group Orientation are the subjects of the analysis below. Certainly, this interaction is a two-way street and can equally influence the animator involved or nearby visitors (see section 3).

2.1 Practical Case Studies

As discussed in the previous section, an animator performs two different types of presentations. The first is called the Group Orientation and the second is called a Gallery Animation. Both are very different interpretive techniques; however, their two strongest similarities lie in that they are, first, both performances and, second, both performances of historical narrative. One, the Group Orientation, is a performance in the first-person tense about a historical figure, and the other, the Gallery Animation, is a performance where the animator acts as him or herself and delivers historical content. Both of these employee/visitor interactions are analyzed below as well as the effect these interactions have on the personal memory of the visitor and his or her recollections of the museum experience.

2.1.1 Group Orientation

The Canadian War Museum aims to tell the stories of everyday men and women.

Representations of particular people, such as Lawrence Rogers, are displayed in the galleries leading the visitor to a general understanding of the historical narrative in the exhibit. This hopefully allows the visitor “to relate to protagonists as individual people with specific and complex motivations and to explore the wider issues at close range” (Sculthorpe 80). One of the methods which the museum uses to represent the ordinary person is in providing living history presentations. These presentations are done live and are often either first-person theatrical interpretations or third-person presentations. Anthony Jackson and Helen Rees Leahy point out that the use of theatre techniques in museums “can inject personal narratives into global histories—demonstrating and offering insights into the global via the personal [...]” (“Seeing it for Real...” 321).

The most common theatrical presentations offered by the Canadian War Museum staff are called Group Orientations. These presentations are performances done in a first-person interpretation style, in costume, and the historical characters depicted are a combination of existing facts and personal stories (Lyons 3). Kathryn Lyons, a Canadian War Museum Interpretive Planner, writes on the subject:

The group orientation emerged as a 15-minute personal story of one individual in wartime. The story is told through the use of a reproduction work of art, a few genuine and reproduction artifacts [*sic*] and a costumed interpreter who gradually becomes one of the characters in the painting. That character then shares their story and objects in first-person. (3)

There are nine different first-person historical interpretations offered at the Canadian War Museum; they cover various periods of conflict from the Seven Years War in the mid-18th century to the current war in Afghanistan. Although each story is unique, they share a common catch phrase: “you are going to get the chance to hear and see stories about ordinary Canadians, like yourselves, who were asked to do extraordinary things” (*Nursing Sister* 1). The animators reinforce the fact that these stories are about *ordinary*, everyday individuals. In this way, the people presented become like characters in a play. Aristotle describes characters as relating to one of three types of qualities; “[they] are either (i) better than we are, or (ii) worse, or (iii) such as we are [...]” (3). A character I played is a First World War Nursing Sister named Madeleine and although time and experience separates the students from my character, I stressed that she is an ordinary woman, with basic human needs and dreams, in order to allow the students to identify with this historical persona. Nevertheless, by performing Madeleine I showcased a portion of the First World War historical narrative for the students. In turn, this performance may have affected the personal memory they have of their experience at the museum.

A first-person interpreter communicates using gestures and speech. Depending on the mandate of the museum or historic site, a first-person interpreter will adopt the accent and vocabulary appropriate to his or her historical character. This is to increase the “historical verisimilitude of their environments [... For example, at] Plimoth [Plantation, a living history museum in Massachusetts, U.S.A.], interpreters study “personation biographs” written out in colonial English script [...]” (Schechner, *Studies* 291). At the Canadian War Museum, I was given a script entitled “Nursing Sister in Doullens, France – Female” to play Madeleine. A first-person interpreter differs from other types of representations in that its object is a historical character, created based on an accumulation of facts. Sometimes the character is a known

historical figure (for example Phineas Pratt at the Plimoth Plantation); however, the performances I have done as Madeleine are a representation of a fictional character based on an accumulation of data (historical research) and is herself a representation of the women who joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the Great War. At 24-years old, Madeleine left Montreal to go and join the fight in France. In her time there, she made friends, she traveled to Paris and even London, she saved the life of a young man from Ontario and she survived the bombing of her hospital in 1918. She also worked 12-hour shifts at the Canadian hospital in Doullens (30 km from the front line), lost patients, endured secondary-lung infections from mustard gas poisoning, and witnessed the death of nurses and doctors.

This type of presentational style also bears the elements of an acting sign. In her book *The Path of a Character*, Yana Meerzon describes Jiřy Veltruský's concept of the stage figure as being "a part of the tripartite structure of an acting sign (actor – stage figure – dramatic figure)" (37). In a similar manner, first-person interpreters also create this type of structure. Meerzon explains that in this structure, "the actor signifies the "I" of an actor" (37). This first term can be easily interchanged with the term "animator" throughout these explanations. Although this substitution changes the meaning slightly, as an actor is not *technically* an animator, the comparison between actor and animator can thus be made more clearly. Let us now hypothetically define this same structure, with the small alteration, as an interpretive sign: animator – stage figure – dramatic figure.

"The stage figure signifies the function of an actor [read: *animator*] as both an originator of the action and its product" (Meerzon 37). There is the "I" that is the animator, in my case, Ashlee's "I", and there is the stage figure that is *Madeleine*. As Erika Fischer-Lichte explains in

her introduction to *The Semiotics of Theater* [sic], everything the actor does to represent the character is done for the spectators (9). Everything that I did when I pretended to be Madeleine as an animator performing a first-person interpretation was done to impress upon the spectators a certain emotion or idea regarding Madeleine, not myself. Madeleine was clearly a character that I adopted and that I tried to convey to my audience. I made sure to change my accent, so that when I spoke in English Madeleine sounded as though she came from Montreal. I adopted certain mannerisms that alluded to a First World War nurse's behaviour, such as adjusting a white nurse's veil. Additionally, my overall behaviour as Madeleine was different than my own. As Madeleine, I adopted an attitude of ram-rod military determination tinged with weariness. All of these characteristics I took on in order to perform my stage figure effectively for whatever audience. My goal was to perform my part so convincingly, that Madeleine's story would become an extension of the Canadian War Museum's First World War narrative for the visitors.

The third and final part of this acting/animating sign is the dramatic character, which Otakar Zich describes as "what the audience sees and hears" (qtd in Quinn 76) and what Michael Quinn explains as the "dynamic image in the minds of the perceiving audience" (Quinn 76). It is the fabrication that is created in the mind of the spectators, or visitors, based on the performing elements that stimulate their imagination. This is easily applicable to the character of Madeleine as she became alive in the imagination of the audience. In the very first example I used, to open this thesis, I explained that at the end of one of my presentations in May 2007 after I had explained that I was a museum animator, a boy who seemed to be around ten years old lifted his hand and stood up all at once asking "so that was like a play?" When I said yes, the room was silent for a moment and then everyone burst into applause. It was a very rewarding moment to know that in the short time I had had with the group, I was clearly able to convey Madeleine's

personality. As a result of my performance, in which I conveyed a historical narrative, that boy and his class left with what I hope was a positive experience. I still look back on that shared event pleasantly; therefore, I assume that those students have good personal memories of it as well. Moreover, Jackson and Leahy discovered in their research that children remember historical information better when they are enjoying themselves, and when they can reference a character and that character's story (315).

Adopting the role and characteristics of a historical figure (real or fictional) is undeniably a form of acting. In his book *A Formalist Theatre*, Michael Kirby establishes a continuum of not-acting/acting with five nodal points (see fig. 15), and a first-person interpretation presentation fits easily into this range. He describes his desire to establish this continuum based on the need "to designate those transitional areas in which acting begins" (Kirby 6). Because many first-person interpretations are considered *interactive* theatre, a variety of questions or comments can arise that risk leading an interpreter off track. "*Interactive* theatre implies that audience members are acknowledged as being present and may engage in dialogue with the performer, without leaving their seats" versus *participatory* theatre which "implies that members of the audience are invited to join the performer for an activity or exercise" (Bridal 21). Therefore, first-person interpreters look to manoeuvre and manipulate a conversation back to where they have control and can insert another part of memorized text (Bridal 21-24). For example, I have had to talk my way out of "not knowing" what video games were as a First World War nursing sister and lead the conversation back to where I could relate Madeleine's "personal experience" of war with the group. Due to this interactive situation, which is not necessarily unique to first-person interpretation but is certainly one of its defining characteristics, a first-person historical interpreter can be classified in two different locations on the continuum.

Although, there are five nodal points —nonmatrixed performing; symbolized matrix; received acting; simple acting and complex acting—, I will only discuss those that seem relevant to first-person interpretation.

NOT-ACTING				ACTING
Nonmatrixed Performing	Symbolized Matrix	Received Acting	Simple Acting	Complex Acting

Kirby's acting/not-acting continuum (10)

Figure 15

“Acting becomes complex as more and more elements are incorporated into the pretense [*sic*]” (Kirby 10). For acting to be considered complex, according to Kirby, an actor must compound more than one emotional and/or physical element. These elements can be physical characteristics, such as age, emotional expressions, such as fear, or even representations of place, such as rain or sun (*ibid*). Simple acting describes acting that focuses on one element alone. Kirby hopes that the terms “simple” and “complex” be “accepted as objective and descriptive rather than evaluative. After all, [they] are terms that may be ascribed easily and without implied value judgment [...]” (9).

It is safe to say that first-person interpretation is a type of historical performance that falls under either simple acting or complex acting depending on the involvement of the interpreter. If an interpreter gives a high level of commitment then it is likely that he or she fits into the complex acting nodal; however, what is more likely is that a first-person interpreter performs simple acting which involves “simulation and impersonation [...] and where] some emotional work is required” (Schechner, *Studies* 174). When I acted as Madeleine, there were moments when I reached Kirby's definition of complex acting. Because I was in an intimate setting where spectators could interrupt and ask questions that were either related or unrelated to the

performance, I needed to have a certain amount of awareness. It could have been detrimental to the performance if I became completely emotionally immersed, which is indicative of the need to remain at the level of simple acting when performing first-person historical interpretations. However, that very argument can support the claim that first-person interpretation is a form of complex acting. Although Kirby only describes the emotional and physical elements required in complex acting, he does indicate that there are “many other elements” (10). Because of the very challenges mentioned above with regards to an *interactive* audience, there is an additional improvisational element in first-person interpretation that is not always present in a conventional theatre setting (Bridal 9). Therefore, without passing judgment on the quality of the interpreter, a first-person interpreter incorporates a number of elements (emotional, physical, improvisational, intellectual, and educational, etc) and thus can deliver a complex performance of historical narrative.

An animator will adopt the performative style of a first-person interpreter when performing a Group Orientation and thus demonstrates strong parallels with a theatre actor. In this performance, a historical narrative is shared with a group of individuals. Each of these people will walk away from that experience with some type of recollection, which will in turn build on their knowledge of the First World War (for example, in the case of Madeleine’s story) and contribute to their personal memory. The Group Orientation is not the only occasion an animator has to perform historical narrative. There exists non-scripted settings when an animator interacts with visitors in the galleries; these are called Gallery Animations.

2.1.2 Gallery Animations

During a Gallery Animation, an animator also offers historical information to the public. Unlike the first-person interpretive style of the Group Orientations, the animator performs a Gallery Animation as him or herself. Therefore an animator acts as a performer, adhering to Patrice Pavis' statement that "[unlike] actors, performers do not play roles; they act in their own names" (*Analyzing* 62). The Gallery Animation I will refer to is the animation cart set up in Gallery 1, *Battleground*. In this space, the animator sets up a reproduction of a 1775 battlefield medicine kit on a display cart, explaining the uses of the various tools to the public, as well as an 18th century British musket, demonstrating how to load the firearm. The proper terminology is required; however, there is no script to guide one's presentation.⁵

The same acting/animating sign structure that was applied to the animator acting as a first-person interpreter can be applied to the animator acting as him or herself but in the capacity of an educator (see fig. 16).

	Actor/Animator	Stage Figure	Dramatic Figure
Animator in Group Orientation	Ashlee's <i>I</i>	Madeleine	Madeleine in the mind of the visitor
Animator in Gallery Animation	Ashlee's <i>I</i>	<i>Ashlee the animator</i>	<i>Ashlee the animator</i> in the mind of the visitor.

Acting/Animating Sign
Figure 16

There is the "I" of the animator, in my case, Ashlee's "I", and there is the stage figure that is *Ashlee the animator* (in the museum uniform performing the duties of an animator). Everything that I did when presenting information to visitors during the Gallery Animation was done to impress upon my spectators a certain level of knowledge regarding the use of medicine

during the late 18th century. As an animator, the vocabulary I chose was different than that of my everyday speech⁶ and the projection I used was louder than normal. Additionally, although I was constantly thinking about the spectator's safety, level of interest, mental well-being (as some elements discussed can be quite gruesome such as limb amputation) and the elapsed time, that did not show through in my stage figure's presence.⁷ This is comparable to an actor remembering his or her exits and entrances, complex blocking and line timing. The audience must not see the actor *thinking* about what he or she has to do next: the actor must appear to be fully in the moment.⁸

A certain distance was established between Ashlee as "I" and *Ashlee the animator* (stage figure), who made reference to the lives of colonial soldiers in the 18th century by intermittently pretending to act like one. However, I would remain myself and thus establish an effect much like Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*. Brecht used this 'distancing' effect to discourage the spectators "from feeling empathy for the characters" and to provide them with a relatively neutral re-presentation of some dilemma or event (Jackson, *Theatre* 141). That said, in the case of the Gallery Animation, there is no particular hope that such a distancing effect will happen. However, the animator has a similar intention and tries to heighten the spectator's awareness so that he or she might gain a better understanding of the dilemmas or events of Canada's military past. In order to accomplish this, an animator may play a character, for example the 18th century soldier, believably without actually becoming a soldier. As such, I might have stood at attention the way a colonial British soldier would; or in demonstrating one of the stages of how a musket was fired, I might have turned my head away from the firing mechanism: soldiers would do this in order to avoid injuring their faces when the black powder ignited. In some cases, I asked the visitors to describe what they noticed, in others I explained why I looked away. This was

performed with the purpose of demonstrating “how human beings have behaved at particular historical moments, and to invite the audience to ask why [...]” (Jackson, *Theatre* 141).

Although Brecht’s hope that the spectator would seek further knowledge was politically motivated, an animator hopes to simply encourage the visitor to make links with the past and better understand the way life was. In performing certain behaviour methods, I wanted to encourage visitors to see in their mind’s eye how a person would have acted in the past. I wanted that knowledge to be accessible to them, and people appreciate “an informal and direct relationship with the museum’s contents and its interpreters” (Jackson and Leahy 312).⁹ This relationship facilitates learning and remembering. Therefore, by gesticulating a certain way, by using appropriate terminology, I helped historical facts come alive in the visitor’s imagination.

The third element of the acting/animating sign is the dramatic character. Admittedly, it is difficult to see this applied to the animator in a Gallery Animation. Yet, many visitors who spoke with me after the demonstration formed their own subjective idea about what made up *Ashlee the animator* (stage figure) and thus created a dramatic figure in their imagination. For example, questions I have been asked, to which every answer has been “no”, are: “Do you have a degree in history?” “Are you a doctor?” “Are you in the military?” or “Are you a motivational speaker?” These questions lead me to believe that certain visitors left assuming that I have a degree in history, for example, without asking.

Susan Bennett explains in her book, *Theatre Audiences: a theory of production and reception*, that “[...] the audience inevitably proceeds through the construction of hypotheses about the fictional world which are subsequently substantiated, revised or negated” (150). She further explains that spectators have constraints, such as production time, that do not always

allow for these fictional constructions to be properly validated or corrected. Certain visiting tourists at the Canadian War Museum inevitably created their own hypotheses of who I was; however, unlike theatre spectators, visitors had the opportunity to ask questions, if they so wanted, and to have their speculations validated or discredited. Many of them have asked questions, and thus have included me further into their processes of reception. I certainly tried to maintain a degree of spontaneity when answering visitors. Yet their questions were so often alike and I found myself repeating the same answers over and over again. In fact, sometimes I felt as though I had practiced and edited my answers so many times that they had almost become scripted. Because these acts and answers were repeated, Schechner calls this type of behaviour *restored behaviour* (*Studies* 73, *Theory* 324). *Restored behaviour*, although not scripted necessarily, is nevertheless a type of performance and falls under Kirby's second nodal: symbolized matrix.

An animator's Gallery Animation also conforms to Kirby's symbolized-matrix nodal on his not-acting/acting continuum. Symbolized matrix refers to a "performer [who] does not act and yet his or her costume represents something or someone" (Kirby 5). Although I did not wear the uniform of a colonial soldier, as an animator I wore the Canadian War Museum animator vest and nametag. Schechner further explains this performer as "someone [who] is performing actions that can be understood by spectators as 'belonging to' a character even though the performer always behaves 'as herself'" (*Studies* 174). Spectators understood that I was just "pretending" to load the musket (no gun powder or musket ball was ever actually loaded). For example, certain behaviours I performed as *Ashlee the animator* were unique to my position as a Canadian War Museum employee. Sometimes, I would alter my voice to suit the story and adopt the recognizable military officer's tone and "give" the order to fire. Other times I would

use specific gestures, such as placing my feet just at the right angle for shooting as a soldier would have done in the 18th century. Therefore, although I was myself, I used certain performative elements that belonged to the demonstration of a musket firing.

These behaviour methods can be repeated, which according to Schechner brings them into the realm of *restored behaviour* (*Theory* 324). “Because it is marked, framed, and separate, restored behaviour can be worked on, stored and recalled, played with, made into something else, transmitted, and transformed” (Schechner, *Studies* 35). In order to appeal to nearby visitors and draw them in for a demonstration, I would perform “twice-behaved” actions. From visitor to visitor, I would repeat a certain hand gesture to indicate that they could come near, or ask them if they felt ill and whether or not they would like me to help them with my medical tools. One of my favourite “catch phrases” remains “How are you *feeling* today? A check-up is free with the museum admission.” In fact, I performed “countless-behaved” actions, with the exception perhaps of my initial animation, which I still practiced and rehearsed by myself or with colleagues first.

Ultimately, Kirby states that theatre is best described on a scale: “At one pole we have theatre, which is a performance intended to have an effect on an audience, and at the opposite pole we have everyday life, in which we usually do not perform or direct our behavior [*sic*] toward an audience” (xiii). This is an ideal description in favour of an animator’s Gallery Animation, because animators always perform for spectators, the visitors, with the intent to have an effect on them, whether that effect is to inform or provoke them into discovering more on their own. Freeman Tilden, widely considered the father of museum interpretation, underlines the important fact that interpretation exists not only to inform, but also to provoke in order to

stimulate the visitor “toward a desire to widen his horizon of interests and knowledge, and to gain an understanding of the greater truths that lie behind any statements of fact” (33).

Both a Group Orientation and a Gallery Animation rely on performative elements. These performances are given for the benefit of the visitors that come to the museum and in turn affect their experience. Whether this influence is positive or negative, it will take root in the visitor’s personal memory. It will even affect one’s collective memory, because as Maurice Halbwachs explains, “while the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember” (48).

The animation performances also influence the animator in some way. Because the animators are not performing their own personal stories, but those of historical characters, they are witnesses to these past events, as in the case of the performance of a First World War nursing sister. That being said, the interpreters are not performing verbatim theatre and in fact the amalgams they are presenting to the audience, although based on real facts, are not about real people.¹⁰ However, it is still possible for the visitors “to become secondary witnesses” (Rokem, *Performing* 9). This happens even when an animator shares historical knowledge with a visitor, as in the case of displaying and explaining the 18th century battlefield medicine kit. The visitors/spectators witness of history happens because the animator performers become “hyper-historians” when he or she interprets historical narrative for an audience (*Performing* 13). There have been examples of visitors who become performers of historical narrative by their reactions to the historical narrative performed by the museum. In my time at the museum, I have seen examples of visitors who became performers of historical narrative. The instances that I refer to below (section 3.1 and 3.2) stem from conflicting information in the historical narrative

performed by the Canadian War Museum and the historical narrative the visitors have previously stored in their personal or collective memories.¹¹

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: VISITORS AS SPECTATORS AND PERFORMERS

In his book *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, Tony Bennett argues that even in their early years museums were institutions of education where visitors might (and in some cases where visitors were expected to) perform for others. Similar to Augusto Boal's *Invisible Theatre* techniques, the upper class visitors, the elite, would "influence" the behaviour of the lower class visitors. Museum officials hoped that the people of the lower class would be positively influenced by the elite were they given the opportunity to interact with them in a controlled setting, such as a museum. More recent work has been produced on the subject of visitors' influencing other visitors, but there is still much room for discussion and learning (Casey "Staging Meaning," Falk *Identity*). For example, Valerie Casey's article "Staging Meaning: Performance in the Modern Museum" offers an overview of what happens when the visitor switches from the observer to the observed (87). In some cases, the visitors' behaviour and reactions in and *outside* of the museum carry influence over others.¹² In extreme cases, such as the Bomber Command issue discussed below, when visitors provide constructive criticism or express dissatisfaction about the museum, attempts are made to try and meet their suggestions or demands. In this way, visitors can not only influence other visitors, but also the museum as an institution itself.¹³

Both John H. Falk and Vera L. Zolberg believe that visitors do not so much learn something new from their experience(s) at the museum, as they re-affirm their pre-existing knowledge or reshape their current memory. In his article "The Director's Cut: Toward an

Improved Understanding of Learning from Museums,” Falk compares the collective creation of an exhibit space to that of making a documentary film. On visitor learning he says:

[...] there is a growing awareness that much of the learning afforded by museums is in the area of consolidation and reinforcement of previous understandings and perspectives; individuals are much more likely to describe the outcomes of their museum experiences as strengthening rather than changing their existing knowledge structures. (Falk, “Director’s Cut” S90)

At the Canadian War Museum, the general narrative of Gallery 2, *For Crown and Country*, for example, is simply a re-telling of what most visitors already know about Canada’s involvement in the First World War.¹⁴ For example, in May 2011, I had a very interesting interaction with a museum visitor in the section of the First World War exhibit that displayed information about Canada’s air war tactics. I approached the visitor and asked if I could help him in any way. He explained that that was not necessary as he was very familiar with the artefacts on display. I asked him to explain how that was and he proceeded to tell me that an old family friend, now passed on, had been a pilot in the Great War. This family friend had shared many stories with the museum visitor and showed him the same type of equipment that was now on display in the exhibit space.

Zolberg’s description of individual memory in her article “Museums as contested sites of remembrance: The Enola Gay affair” has two aspects. The first aspect of individual memory she describes as an archivist. She explains that “individual memory consists in reshaping or ‘refashioning’ in light of new information received, and of ongoing or new emotional states” (Zolberg 70). With this explanation she differs from what Falk believes, that visitors *reinforce*

(versus “refashion”) their “existing knowledge structures” based on their experiences (Falk, “Director’s Cut” S90). However, the second aspect that makes up memory, according to Zolberg, is more in line with Falk’s opinion that a museum experience strengthens a visitor’s knowledge of him or herself, and of the past. Zolberg explains that individual memory is also a “shaper of the personal myth” (Zolberg 70). She hastens to add “that myth does not necessarily equal falsehood, but emphasizes a ‘truth’ incorporating symbolic and metaphorical reconstructions” (Zolberg 70). In summary, Zolberg believes that one’s personal memory is made up of the combination of one’s accumulated knowledge and personal identity. An understanding of the past contributes to our identity (Rokem, *Performing* 3), and the displaying of the past in a trusted museum space can have a significant effect on memory. The following analysis investigates two different experiences within the Canadian War Museum when the historical narrative performed conflicted with an individual’s personal myth and with a group’s collective memory and *did not* positively strengthen their existing knowledge structures. In each of these scenarios, I explore how the individual and the group in question became performers. In the case of the individual, when she voiced her opinions visitors present became spectators of this conflict of narrative. Regarding the group situation, the members’ opinions were brought all the way to the Parliament of Canada, at which point an entire nation became spectators.

3.1 Practical Case Studies

The following case studies stem from my personal experience as an employee for the Canadian War Museum. In the first case study, I talk about a woman whose personal myth was in conflict with the information presented by a Canadian War Museum display. I interacted with this woman, as she complained to me directly about information displayed in Gallery 1. As a result

of this woman's behaviour, I and the visitors surrounding us, as well as the visitors in her group, became witnesses to her interpretation of history. In the second case study, I examine how a group's collective myth was in conflict with the narrative displayed by the Canadian War Museum. This situation, and the ensuing Bomber Command controversy, did not affect me directly, in that I was not involved in the larger debate. I did, however, interact with many visitors and other museum employees and volunteers who felt as though their sense of self had somehow been attacked because of this conflict. As a result of the controversy, which turned into a national debate, I, visitors and people from across Canada became witnesses to a conflicting view of Canada's Second World War historical narrative.

3.1.1 Personal Myth

In the first few months of the Canadian War Museum's opening year at its new location in 2005, a visitor berated me, as a representative of the museum, regarding the information presented about Louis Riel in Gallery 1, *Battleground*. In her knowledge of the past and in her personal myth, Riel was a traitor, not a hero. The fact that the Canadian War Museum painted him as neither was not important to her; she was extremely insulted that he was even acknowledged in the Canadian War Museum, where a national war narrative was being represented.¹⁵ She was so upset in fact that she vowed to never come back to the museum... I wish I had been more experienced in dealing with irate visitors at that point in my career, because I believe that now I could help diffuse such a situation better than I did then. As Myrian Sepúlveda dos Santos indicates in her article concerning the representations of black people in Brazilian museums, a museum is also a place where people search for social identification (59), and I question whether or not this visitor, who came from the Prairies, felt as though her narrative, what made up her

identity, was disrespected. Did the Canadian War Museum, which by its very nature encourages trust in its visitors, fail her? The trust she had in the Canadian War Museum, shadowed by her positive or negative expectations, was somehow broken and, on a minor scale perhaps, she experienced a trauma.

First she had a moment of recognition, which in Paul Ricoeur's words means that she experienced an "act of memory" (495). She recognized from her perception and knowledge of the past that Riel was a traitor. Then she realized that this historical figure was on display in a Canadian national museum, without blatantly being labelled as a traitor. This was a contradiction to her personal myth, to what she knew to be true, and coupled with the fact that the trust she had placed, consciously or unconsciously, in the museum as a government institution was broken, she may have felt overwhelmed.

Her discomfort was witnessed by a number of visitors and one can only imagine the thoughts that went through the minds of those that saw her unhappiness and listened to her arguments. Did they agree with her, did they disagree? Did they think her concern was valid or not? Regardless of the other visitors' reactions, she became a performer in the eyes of those around her as she dramatically voiced her concerns regarding the negative effect the displayed information might have on the people visiting the space. Whether the information displayed had an effect on the visitors or not, her reaction to it certainly did. As Falk explains, "the quality of interactions visitors have with individuals outside of their own social group, for example explainers, guides, demonstrators, performers, or even other *visitor groups* can make a profound difference in visitor learning" ("Director's Cut" S84, emphasis mine). This brings me to the interesting point about the ability of the visitors to influence the experience of others, and, in the

words of Ervin Goffman, to become performers. Goffman explains that it is through influencing others, intentionally or unintentionally, that someone can become a performer, and that the observers become spectators (15, 251).

The experience I went through with the angry woman was upsetting to me in its own way. I was surrounded by other visitors, and they expected that I would represent the Canadian War Museum's mandate fairly by providing an acceptable answer. I will admit to having re-played this episode in my imagination, coming up with a better solution than what I had provided her with at that time, which was to write a comment at the information desk. Hindsight is 20/20, or so the saying goes. Influential director and theatre practitioner Boal developed *The Theatre of the Oppressed*. He hoped to help people deal with trauma by allowing them to re-write the endings of various plays in which the protagonist is somehow politically or socially oppressed. His audience members were encouraged to stop the action at any point (once the play had been acted out in full first), join the actors on stage and take on the role of the protagonist. This interaction was facilitated by a mediator known as the Joker. At this point, the spectator's proposed idea(s) was acted upon until it either solved the problem of the oppression or someone else stopped the action with a better idea, and so on. Sometimes solutions were never found.¹⁶ With more experience under my belt now, I could even smoothly extend the museum's narrative so that it included hers and perhaps help reconcile her towards a satisfactory ending to her experience at the museum, as a Joker would in Boal's theatre. This could be done by explaining to her that at the end of Gallery 4, *A Violent Peace*, there is a visitor comment section where visitors are encouraged to write down their comments about issues in the museum that provoke them or move them. Visitors are provided with postcards that can be mailed by the museum, to various members of the museum staff, to parliament, to the Canadian military or to international

organizations. Some postcards, a dozen perhaps, are even displayed in the comment display box in that section for future visitors to read over and think about.¹⁷

On the wall above this area there is a poster with Riel and the question “Hero or Traitor?” written above his picture. Had I encouraged her to visit this part of the museum, she may have felt compelled to write a comment and contribute to the ongoing debate about Riel’s questionable character and thus tie in her own personal myth with the Canadian War Museum’s larger narrative. Ultimately she created her own meaning of what it meant to have Riel on display in the Canadian War Museum. Certainly, this experience would have influenced her sense of self in some manner. Halbwachs explains that “[w]e preserve memories of each epoch in our lives, and these are continually reproduced; through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of our identity is perpetuated” (47). Perhaps in reading about Riel from a balanced perspective, she was able to later change her opinion about him. Perhaps her initial attitude towards his presence in the exhibit was later reinforced. This example is relatively insignificant in the larger narrative of the museum, in that it did not engender the attention of the press or the government; however, there have been other occasions where individual and collective memories have contributed towards the actual modification of an exhibit within the Canadian War Museum and thus altered the museum’s performance of historical narrative.

3.1.2 Collective Myth

During the winter of 2006-07 a debate began between the Royal Canadian Legion (and other veteran groups) and the Canadian War Museum. This controversy arose regarding information on display, about the Bomber Command during the Second World War, located in Gallery 3, *Forged in Fire*. Robert Bothwell, Randell Hansen and Margaret MacMillan explain that the

Canadian War Museum “found itself at the centre of a public battle that pitted Canada's official veterans' organizations, many individual veterans, and their allies against the museum and its supporters [...]” (367). Many veterans, not necessarily all but enough to make their voices heard, believed that the information displayed painted them as war criminals and de-valued their contributions to the war effort not to mention disrespected the members of the Canadian Air Force that were killed during the bombing raids over Germany during the Second World War. As a result of this complaint, the museum requested four outside historians to evaluate the content of the panel on display. The result of the evaluation was divided, two historians agreed with the content, and two agreed that the veteran associations' complaints were valid.

Therefore, this debate was brought to a Senate subcommittee. This automatically pushed the conflict to a national scale, thus anchoring the situation into our nation's memory because of the parliamentary debate that followed. This controversy was widely covered in news reports and papers (Capital News Online, CTV News, Legion Magazine, etc). As a result of the subcommittee's decision, in June 2007, the museum was forced to modify the panel in question (Richardson). The content of the disputed panel as well as the revised version is not of great importance to this argument about performance (although the content of both panels can be found in Appendix B). What is significant in this situation is that a group with a certain collective memory disagreed with the narrative presented in the Canadian War Museum. Following this disagreement, both parties became players on Canada's national stage. Each performed to the best of their ability in order to prove that their version of history was *right* and worthy of taking its place in the displayed narrative at the Canadian War Museum. Interested Canadian citizens became spectators of this debate; they could follow online, browse newspaper articles and, later, read scholarly articles.¹⁸ The final outcome set a potentially dangerous

precedent, a Senate sub-committee has now officially told a national museum what information is and is not appropriate to display. Now with its amended panel, the Canadian War Museum performs a new historical narrative for any future visitor to the museum. This new information will become a part of the knowledge banks and personal memories of visitors to come.

Cases like the Bomber Command issue and the infamous Enola Gay affair, about the Smithsonian exhibit on the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, raise the unanswerable question of “who owns the past?” a question echoed by Magelssen in his article “This is Drama. You are Characters.”¹⁹ In these cases, is it the men and women who took part in the very actions that are now on display and thus are seen as being a part of history? Or is it the men and women who walk through the galleries today, in hopes of achieving a greater and factual understanding of their nation’s history that may make them a more informed Canadian citizen? There is danger here, which, according to Ricoeur, is the possibility of one community’s collective memory overshadowing another’s to the point of erasing it (500).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

What I understand from these discussions (about performing historical narrative) and ongoing points of contention (between personal and collective memories) is that distance is needed before something can be comfortably labelled as “historical.” Just like Schechner states in his book *Performance Theory* “[t]heatre comes into existence when a separation occurs between spectator and performance” (137), separation is needed between the actual event and the time of study for it to be seen through a relatively neutral lens. As a performer of 18th century history and First World War history, I have rarely encountered a visitor who was particularly possessive about the past prior to 1930. The visitor who was upset about Riel remains the unique example in my

personal experience of when a visitor reacted negatively to the narrative performed by the Canadian War Museum about 18th century Canadian history. It seems that emotions and personal or collective memories are still too raw for elements of the Second World War to easily become a part of our nation's memory right now. It is as Aleida Assmann explains in her article "History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony," when some event falls within the period of contemporary history, "the historian still has to compete and cope with the memories of living witnesses, while in the case of the more remote past, he or she can claim the unrivalled authority of a reconstructor and interpreter" (271). We are soon to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Victory in Europe. Add to that at least another 30 or 40 years, and perhaps the stakes involved in representing the 1940s will be less personal. That being said, it is in these instances that history is truly alive, according to Hayden White, who says that

in order to qualify as historical, an event must be susceptible to at least two narrations of its occurrence. Unless at least two versions of the same set of events can be imagined, there is no reason for the historian to take upon himself the authority of giving the true account of what really happened. (20)

These are clear examples where, like the chicken and the egg metaphor and like de Certeau's explanation about how the past can only be viewed through the lens of the present day, museums and memory (both personal and collective) are equally influenced by one another. "There is a dynamic relation between historical narratives and collective memory, since historical narratives may become part of the collective memory of a nation" (Sepúlveda 58). This relationship does not only flow in one direction. My experience as Madeleine has brought me many positive memories. In performing a historical narrative about a First World War

nursing sister, I have gained a unique perspective on the involvement of women in the Great War. One of my spectators was a museum volunteer who was a nurse from the Second World War. After my performance as Madeleine, the female war veteran came to share her similar stories with me about her time in the Second World War. I have also retained new information from visitors who shared their stories with me at the Gallery Animation in Gallery 1, *Battleground*. Current military personnel and doctors have explained the differences between modern medical tools and the 18th century surgeon's kit: They are not so different. In turn, this information improved my ability to perform a more complete historical narrative for future visitors, by linking an element of Canada's military past with the present. Moreover, as was recently discussed, the collective memory of numerous veterans and veteran associations proved to be able to influence the content of a national museum with the changes made to the Bomber Command exhibit. These changes in turn influence the museum's performance of historical narrative and can have a negative or positive effect on visitors to come.

Personal memory is constantly shifting all the time as well. I know that as Madeleine during my first-person interpretations, I have influenced the memories visitors have of their experience at the Canadian War Museum. This is also true of my performances as *Ashlee the animator*, when I presented historical information in Gallery Animations (such as the battlefield medicine kit, or my interaction with the distraught woman). Even in times when I have taken a less direct role in the performance of historical narrative, personal memories remain effected by the exhibit's performed narrative (such as Bomber Command). Aside from my experience with the distraught woman and other negative interactions, I have experienced many positive interactions with visitors throughout my career as a Canadian War Museum employee. I cannot recount the number of times veterans have shared fascinating stories of their careers in the

military with me, or of their experience fighting overseas. Each time I have listened, *I* adopted the role of a spectator. I witnessed *their* interpretation, *their* performance of historical narrative. Our traditional museum roles were reversed. With each such experience, both my and their personal memory of Canada's military history has somehow been affected. Not only does the Canadian War Museum perform historical narrative as an institution, but it also acts as a space where people can perform historical narrative for each other.

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

¹ Due to corporate re-organization, in November 2010, the position of *guide* became *program interpreter*.

² In that time I was also a Team Leader for the Client Services team of hosts and guides (May 2005-May 2006) and spent a four month period working in France at Canada's First World War Memorial at Vimy Ridge (May-August 2006).

³ In November 2011, the position of Canadian War Museum Animator will be transferred from the Programs and Interpretation Division at the Canadian War Museum to the Client Services Department under the Visitor Services Division with the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, becoming *program interpreter*.

⁴ I was an animator from April 2007 to June 2011, with the exception of the summer of 2008 when I worked at the National Historic Site Dundurn Castle, in Hamilton Ontario, as a third-person interpreter, and May 2009-March 2010 when I was on medical leave. As indicated in the Introduction, I am currently the Training Coordinator and Supervisor at the Canadian War Museum, I have been in this position since June 2011.

⁵ This animation is typically staffed by two animators; however, one animator can lead the presentation alone.

⁶ I use and explain the expression "to bite the bullet" for example, which is not an expression that I use in my daily vocabulary outside of the museum.

⁷ Moreover, when I demonstrate the use of a musket, I also adopt the role of a period soldier in mannerism only.

⁸ Obviously certain directorial choices may influence an actor's stage presence and how visible those choices are to the audience.

⁹ Although Jackson and Leahy were referring specifically to children in this quote, it has been my experience that adults also prefer an informal and direct relationship when learning in a museum setting.

¹⁰ "In verbatim theatre, [...] aural testimony constitutes the basis for theatrical representation" (Paget "Broken Tradition" 234). For the animators' performances, interviews are not a part of the research method. The information presented is gleaned from a variety of sources such as history books, diaries, and regimental accounts. This is a performance style that is closer to documentary theatre in its creation method. "The documentary theatre is

a theatre of factual reports. Minutes of proceedings, files, letters, [...], official commentaries, [...] press, [...] and all the other media bear witness to the present and for the basis of the production” (Weiss qtd in Irmer 17-18).

¹¹ I feel that it is important to note, that there have been other visitors who have contributed additional information to the historical narrative that the museum performs; however, this analysis will only focus on two.

¹² Casey offers the example of Colonial Williamsburg where after “much pressure from the scholarly community, professional societies, and the public,” slavery in the early colonies was included in the site’s interpretative representations (87).

¹³ There are extreme cases of performance when the visitor becomes engaged in what has recently been termed “second-person interpretation,” where the visitor at a living history site or in a museum becomes “a part of” the past by being involved in recreating it (Magelssen *Making History* 296).

¹⁴ It is implied here that the visitor I am referring to is a Canadian citizen who would have followed a Canadian education.

¹⁵ Whether or not the public agrees or disagrees with the Canadian War Museum’s performed narrative, the museum is considered by the Government of Canada as the authority on our country’s national war narrative. As previously discussed in the Introduction, Chapter One and Two, there are many limitations on the construction of an exhibit and, by extension, a museum; therefore, it is simply impossible to showcase every individual’s story pertaining to Canadian military history. However, in addition to housing a Military History Research Centre where visitors can continue personal research, the museum attempts a balanced approach and makes available to the public temporary exhibitions on a broad range of Canadian-military related issues.

¹⁶ This repetitive structure, in which the events are replayed as if on a broken record, is reminiscent of “traumatic events being re-lived time and time again by [the] survivors” (Edkins 2). Perhaps this is an unconscious technique used to deal with the trauma until one is able to come to terms with an ending that he or she is more comfortable with.

¹⁷ Comments are selected and updated frequently by appointed staff members.

¹⁸ In addition, in the immediate aftermath of the controversy, multiple scholarly articles were written on the subject, such as: David Dean’s “Museums as Conflict Zones: The Canadian War Museum and Bomber Command” and Robert Bothwell, Randall Hansen and Margaret MacMillan’s “Controversy, Commemoration, and Capitulation: The Canadian War Museum and Bomber Command.”

¹⁹ This article discusses the pros and cons of literally *leading* tourists in a performance of history entitled “Follow the North Star,” about fugitive slaves in 1836. It is run on Conner Prairie, a living history museum in Indianapolis U.S.A.

Conclusion

How Do We Make Sense of Our Past? What I Have Learned About the Performance of Historical Narrative at the Canadian War Museum

“History is not dry facts and dates, but a fabulous dramatic story that makes for great theatre”
(Wendy Jones qtd. in Bridal 149)

“Everyone has history.” This comment was left by a child who visited the Canadian War Museum, in March 2011.¹ As Greg Dening says we make sense of our past in all sorts of ways. The opening quote for this thesis comes from Dening’s book *Performances*, in which he says: “Making sense of what has happened is how we live. We do it in all sorts of ways. We sing it, we dance it, we carve it, we paint it, tell it, write it. We find different ways to make sense of what has happened according to the different occasions of our telling and the different audiences to which we tell it” (Dening xiv). The Canadian War Museum makes sense of our past by performing historical narrative for its visitors. A portion of Canada’s military history is performed by the exhibit spaces, by the displayed artefacts and by the people who interact during their time spent at the Canadian War Museum. How visitors make sense of their experience at the museum and the knowledge they gain from their interactions is worthy of an additional study. However, this thesis, as Marie-Laure Ryan would argue, must come to an end. Although, I do wonder if the young boy, who thought that my historical presentation was like a play, made sense of his experience with me through song or dance.

Throughout this project, I have learned that the performance of historical narrative at the Canadian War Museum is layered with complex actions, interpretations, meanings and consequences. Some museum theoreticians, such as Hilde Hein, go so far as to say that

“[d]esign and spectacle, the semiotics of display – appear increasingly as central elements of museum exhibition, sometimes pre-empting narrative order, as museums shift their emphasis from preservation and study to dramatic delivery” (5). In my opinion, although this was not discussed in detail in this thesis, the Canadian War Museum does not overlook the importance of “preservation and study.” It offers its visitors a dramatic performance of historical narrative. The museum accomplishes this through its exhibits’ careful spatial layout, selections of specific objects and the employee/visitor interactions. These performative elements approximate the Canadian War Museum to a theatre. These three elements parallel what Patrice Pavis terms Components of the Stage: space, objects and actors (*Analyzing* 55-191). Erving Goffman explains that when someone, or something, holds influence over a spectator that person or thing becomes a performer (15). Because the museum uses three elements —space, objects, bodies— to influence a visitor’s experience, each of these museum elements becomes a performer of historical narrative.

There are other very interesting comparisons that can be made between the Canadian War Museum’s performance of historical narrative and various theatre theories that were not discussed in detail in this project. For example, Epic Theatre theories and Theatre of the Oppressed theories are used as secondary supportive arguments in this thesis. However, it might prove interesting to continue exploring the similarities between the state of museality and Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt* or a visitor’s unconscious performance and Boal’s *Invisible Theatre*. This project only briefly mentions similarities that exist between museum historical presentations and verbatim theatre and/or documentary theatre. It is interesting to note that the construction of a narrative and its layout in an exhibit space, a location intended for public viewing, is also comparable to documentary theatre. There are always other paths one can take

in search of knowledge. However, what this project has done is analyse how the Canadian War Museum performs historical narrative through its use of space, objects and bodies.

As discussed in Chapter One, the writing down of historical information in a narrative format is a performative act. According to historians such as Hayden White, Hans Kellner, Michel de Certeau and Dening, by constructing a narrative a historian performs for his or her audience. This is because in order to construct a historical narrative, one needs to interpret the data and information about the past. It corresponds to Richard Schechner's broad spectrum of performance (*Studies* 170-71).

In a history museum, such as the Canadian War Museum, the content displayed for visitors is most often done in a narrative format. As discussed in Chapter Two, according to Barbara Stratyner, "[m]useums display material with presentational and interpretive methods derived from fiction" (40). Museums construct performative narratives to help visitors better understand the information the museum wishes to display. The exhibit space is created "by the curators (representing the artifacts [*sic*]), designers (representing the space), administrators (representing the institution) and educators (representing the potential audience)" (Stratyner 39). The space of the exhibit is equally as important as the content of the exhibit, the institution creating the exhibit and the people visiting the exhibit. Unlike site-specific theatre, where a performance is suited to a particular location (Pavis, *Dictionary* 337), and unlike a conventional theatre space with a proscenium stage, on which a variety of plays can be produced, the Canadian War Museum's First World War exhibit was designed in conjunction with the narrative that it displays. Therefore, the exhibit (the performance space) and the narrative (what is being performed) formed a symbiotic relationship in the creation process. Moreover, it is a

permanent performance space that presents an unchanging narrative. Unlike a site-specific or a conventional theatre performance, which both are likely to be only temporary, the “play” that is performed in the First World War exhibit will never change.²

The space must support the historical narrative the museum wishes to perform. In order to do so, a team of designers meticulously plans the layout of the exhibit space; thus creating an original space. Through my professional experience and by applying Lubomír Doležel’s literary theories on possible worlds of fiction and history to the First World War exhibit (Chapter Two), I have discovered that the Canadian War Museum creates a unique type of fictional space.

Doležel’s six functions of a possible world of fiction are applicable to the spatial narrative presented by the First World War exhibit. However, the exhibit’s narrative aligns itself more with what Doležel qualifies as a possible world of history. A possible world of history is a world of *noesis*. The fictional space that is created in the First World War exhibit stems from an actual past that was at one point accessible. The individuals, locations and events displayed in the exhibit existed at one point in time; therefore, they did not originally stem from a writer’s imagination. In this way, the exhibit’s performed narrative creates a possible world that is more one of history. However, in the First World War exhibit’s recreated spaces (like the mock trench and the Passchendaele landscape) a particular type of fictional space is created that is unique to the Canadian War Museum. It has similarities with a stage set-design. A set design is typically limited to the use of performers (and production crew), whereas the mock trench is accessible to the public (potentially making visitors performers themselves). Yet it remains an imitation, the mock trench is *mimetic*.

The historical narrative performed within the museum setting allows visitors to learn and read about historical figures and accounts of past events. These people and events of the past belong to the military narrative that contributes to the history of Canada. Because such things are showcased in a performative space, for example in the First World War exhibit, visitors can walk through and interact with a representation of the historical narrative that is demonstrated. This experience encourages the visitors to feel as though they are participants in the narrative, and, according to Peter Mandler, having a role in a national narrative reinforces one's sense of belonging to a nation (280). Additionally, since the exhibit provides information about Canada's military past, visitors can better understand their past. From this, as Freddie Rokem explains, one's identity can be strengthened (*Performing* 3). Moreover, because the narrative represents a nation's past, Canadian visitors learn of their *country's* past and this experience contributes to their sense of national identity.

In light of what they can learn in the First World War exhibit space, visitors may or may not change their knowledge of the past, reinforce their existing knowledge of Canada's history, or identify with the information presented. Their experience in the museum space will nevertheless influence them in some way. A visitor might feel as though his or her existing knowledge was already accurate and, therefore, claim that he or she "was not influenced." That experience, in and of itself, reinforces the visitor's memory regarding his or her knowledge of the past and the visitor's sense of national identity. As Lewis A. Coser explains "[i]t is of course individuals who remember, not groups or institutions, but these individuals, being located in a specific group context, draw on that context to remember or recreate the past" (Coser 22). The recreation and remembering of the past by individuals is what leads to collective memory, which in turn leads to collective identity. By its very nature the Canadian War Museum is a national

institution. The narrative it performs represents Canada's national past, regardless of the stories it cannot display (due to numerous restrictions such as limited space, set finances, available information, etc).

The First World War exhibit performs historical narrative through its space. This space creates a fictional world and influences what visitors will remember of the Great War and Canada's participation in it, and this knowledge directly affects their understanding of Canada's military history. Andrew Whitmarsh explains of museum displays, that they "confer legitimacy on specific interpretations of history, and attribute significance to particular events" (1). Moreover, Whitmarsh states that museums "play a significant role in commemoration" (*ibid*). The Canadian War Museum team, in selecting which events and objects are showcased in its First World War exhibit, carry a particular responsibility in what elements of the First World War are commemorated.

The artefacts and images that are displayed in the First World War exhibit become performers of historical narrative in the museum setting. Displayed museum artefacts are in a state of museality: this means they are signs (Nelle "Museality in the urban context," Maraisse and Desvallée *Vers une redéfinition du musée?*). In theatre semiotics, objects on stage become signs as well (Bogatyrev "Costume as a Sign," Fisher-Lichte *Semiotics of Theatre*, Rokem "A Chair is a Chair..."). This "object as sign" semiotic system, shared by museums and theatres alike, requires that a performance (exhibit or play) be viewed by a spectator (visitor or audience member). It is through the gaze of the spectator that the performance gains meaning and can happen at all.

In the exhibit, the choice of objects and their strategic placement constructs a narrative that tells the story of Canada's participation in the First World War. Historians such as White and Kellner, as mentioned previously, would argue that the construction of historical narrative is a performance in and of itself, because historians *interpret* the information they have available to them about the past. A historical museum, like the Canadian War Museum, presents a narrative for the visitors to interpret, using artefacts, images and other performative means (such as interactive displays). Roland Barthes and Marianne Hirsch's theories on photography (images without words) are useful for the analysis of the use and functions of objects in the museum. A photograph and an object must be looked at, and thus the onlooker creates the meaning. In a museum, objects are used as the primary sign system. The process of *constructing* the museum narrative is similar to the construction of a literary narrative. Marie-Laure Ryan's definition of narrative is appropriate for literary and non-literary settings. Certainly there is textual narrative used in the exhibit space. However, "a successful exhibition is not a book on the wall, a narrative with objects as illustrations, but a carefully orchestrated deployment of objects, images, and texts that gives viewers opportunities to look, to reflect, and to work out meanings" (Wallach qtd in Conn 7). In exploring Ryan's theories, I learned that the objects, images, poems, works of art and interactive displays that make up the visual signs used in the First World War exhibit perform historical narrative (Chapter Three).

Ryan explains that the *degree of narrativity* of a given story, is determined by how many of her eight conditions of narrativity can be met. She places her conditions into four categories: spatial dimension, temporal dimension, mental dimension and one formal and pragmatic dimension. The use and layout of particular objects in the First World War exhibit act as performative elements and the displayed narrative meets Ryan's eight conditions.

Objects and images in the exhibit act as representatives of characters and they are placed within a world that is performed through the use of photos and paintings; thus fulfilling Ryan's spatial condition. The layout and placement of these artefacts, which incurs a chronological understanding of the events depicted, meet her temporal condition. The individuals enacted by the displayed objects demonstrate intelligence, express emotion and act with intention; thus completing her mental dimension. Finally, the events performed by the display of specific objects (such as titular panels and images related to a post-First-World-War Canada) indicate that the narrative presented ends. This accomplishes part of her formal and pragmatic dimension, which states that "[t]he sequence of events [in narrative] must form a unified and causal chain and lead to a closure" (Ryan, "Toward" 29).

Ryan also states, under her formal and pragmatic dimension, that "[t]he occurrence of at least some of the events must be asserted as facts for the storyworld" and that "[t]he story must communicate something meaningful to the audience" (*ibid*). As discussed earlier in this conclusion and in Chapter Two, because of the historical nature of the narrative presented, all the information presented by the objects is factual for the historical characters within the narrative. Moreover, these facts are also true for the visitors that interpret the performance of the objects. Although it is hard to determine what is meaningful to visitors, the story, communicated through the First World War exhibit, deals with family values, personal aspirations, and human struggle. This meaning is conveyed through the display of the museum objects, the paintings and the images that perform the First World War narrative. However, as mentioned in Chapter One, it is up to the receiver to construct his or her own meaning of the exhibit.

By selecting certain objects, images and paintings over others, the museum curatorial, interpretive and design team chose which events and artefacts might be remembered and commemorated by museum visitors. “[L]ike all aspects of memory commemoration is often contested, or at least is subject to a variety of meanings” (Whitmarsh 11). In part, this is because each visitor comes to the museum with his or her own personal experience and it is impossible to state categorically what events and/or people the visitor might remember and/or commemorate after visiting the exhibit. Just as an audience member’s personal experience will influence his or her reaction to a play (S. Bennett 99), each visitor’s personal context defines how he or she absorbs and creates the meaning of the displayed artefacts. “The meaning of an artefact is determined not only by its placement in a narrative matrix, its textuality, but also conferred by its spectators” (Crownshaw 19). Therefore, it can only be said that an exhibit space, along with its displayed items, *influences* what is remembered and/or commemorated. The museum does not and cannot dictate what is remembered and/or commemorated. However, visitors must attribute some degree of significance to the artefacts because the artefacts are, nevertheless, on display in a *museum*. We learn from Tony Bennett, that from their earliest days museums were locations of influence. Museums are institutions that perform narrative and influence society’s general knowledge (Prost *Douze leçons sur l’histoire*, Falk “The Director’s Cut,” Jackson and Leahy “Seeing it for Real...?”) and influence the aspects of history that are remembered (Whitmarsh “We Will Remember Them,” Van Fossen Storr “Audiences, Exhibitions and Interpretive Labels,” Vogel “Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion”). In the act of collectively remembering events or people, visitors commemorate.

Each time visitors remember historical information or events, they perform the act of calling upon their personal memories in order to do so. The historical narrative performed by the

Canadian War Museum adds to those personal memories. In addition to the museum space and objects, museum employees and visitors themselves can also become performers of historical narrative at the museum. In investigating theories of performance, such as Freddie Rokem's "hyper-historian" and Michael Kirby's not-acting/acting continuum, I learned that in doing different tasks, museum employees become performers in different ways and that visitors have influence over others (Chapter Four).

Marvin Carlson explains that "[...] all human activity could potentially be considered as "performance," or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself" (4). Museum employees are given specific training and are expected to deliver accurate information to the public. This delivery process can vary, but ultimately the employees' intention is to deliver historical information engagingly to the public. It is the job of the employees to communicate the museum's information to the visitors; therefore, each employee has intent when he or she interacts with visitors. Museum animators do so by performing in different capacities. Two of which have been discussed in this project, the Group Orientation and the Gallery Animation.

According to Rokem, actors become "hyper-historians" when they perform a historical character. This is because the actors, like historians, make certain interpretations based on the facts available to them. In so doing, the actors become performers of history and the spectators become witnesses of this presentation. At the Canadian War Museum, museum employees are also like "hyper-historians." For example, museum animators perform historical narrative in period costume (during Group Orientations) and as themselves (in Gallery Animations). Each type of performance is an interpretation. It can be the animator's interpretation of the script he or

she is given or an animator's interpretation of the historical information that the museum, as an institution, wants to have shared with the visitors.

These scenarios are very different. In the Group Orientation the animator enacts a first-person interpretation of a historical character, whereas in the Gallery Animation the animator delivers historical information as him or herself. However, in both situations the animator adopts performative techniques. Both presentation styles can be placed on Kirby's not-acting/acting continuum within nodes that are performative in nature. The Group Orientation is considered more akin to acting. As the animator performs a role in period costume and in first-person dialogue, the Group Orientation is aligned with Kirby's simple and complex nodes depending on the animator's performance. The Gallery Animation uses what Schechner terms as *restored behaviour*, which indicates behaviour that can be repeated or rehearsed. Therefore, a Gallery Animation aligns with Kirby's symbolized matrix node, where the individual is recognized as performing, but always in the capacity as him or herself.

Moreover, in each case the animator creates a tri-part structure of "animator – stage figure – dramatic figure," like the one based on Jiřy Veltruský's for the actor. This transition happens because there is always the "I" of the animator; there is always the stage figure that the animator is trying to portray (the historical character or the museum employee); and there is always the dramatic figure that is created in the imagination of the visitors (what they construct as the historical character or what they understand the museum employee to be). The visitors who watch the animator's performances build, in their mind's eye, the figure of the animator (or the information communicated) that they will take home with them and store in their personal memory.

Because these presentations are performed for visitors, the memories of their experiences at the museum can be affected by the animators. However, performance of historical narrative within the Canadian War Museum can come from unexpected sources. Visitors themselves can become performers of historical narrative. According to de Certeau, a visitor's performance can be as subtle as one visitor's position in space, which can influence another visitor's path in the exhibit.

In my experience at the Canadian War Museum, I have seen visitors performing for others. Some performances have had little effect on the narrative presented in the museum, while others have brought about significant change in the narrative. John H. Falk explains that visitor learning can be significantly affected by the presence of and interaction with other visitor groups. The upset woman, who was emotionally shaken by the museum's choice to display information about Louis Riel, believed that Riel was a traitor and she vocalized her position to me and to many visitors around her. Although she might not consciously have been performing, she became what Schechner calls a "Goffman" performer (*Theory* 300-301). Her outburst was witnessed by other visitors and it is now impossible to say with certainty whether or not she held any influence over them and their experience. However, it is highly likely that she affected their memory of their experience at the museum.

There is a section at the end of Gallery 4 *A Violent Peace*, where visitors can leave comments. Here, comments have been left by various visitors attesting to Riel's status as a hero.³ We already know the opinion of the female visitor who complained to me; she thought Riel was a traitor. Other comments, left in Gallery 4, transform Riel into a symbol that is neither a hero nor a traitor, but a sign of the government's power struggle.⁴ These three different

opinions regarding Riel's status in Canadian history show that one national narrative is constructed from many individual stories and perspectives. White would argue that it takes at least two differing views on a past event in order for that event to become historical (20). These different stories or perspectives cannot always be showcased in the museum space (due to limitations previously mentioned such as finance, information, space, etc), but visitors can knit their personal stories and information into the larger narrative the museum performs by interacting with others or by leaving comments. In this way, they can become performers of historical narrative as well.

In some extreme cases, visitors can lead to changes in information displayed by the Canadian War Museum, as was the case in the Bomber Command issue in 2006-07. This controversy not only brought about change in the *military* historical narrative performed in the museum, but it also became a part of Canada's *national* historic narrative. A Senate sub-committee requested that the Canadian War Museum change the displayed narrative. This federal government intervention brought the events surrounding the debate and the ensuing modifications onto the national stage and a part of national memory.

National memory and identity, event commemoration and remembering, personal memory and identity, all influence one another (Halbwachs *On Memory*, Prost *Douze leçons sur l'histoire*, Blustein *The Moral Demands of Memory*). These terms, these elements that make up who we are as individuals, exist symbiotically. Visitors who come to the Canadian War Museum may feel that their sense of national identity is affected by the historical narrative performed. Such is the case with at least one visitor from Hillsdale, Ontario, who left the comment: "... I am thankful to those who served our country [...] I am proud to be Canadian."

The museum staff members collect many such comment cards that range from detailed descriptions to children's drawings of the Canadian flag.

Personal identities are also affected; in most such cases visitor's sense of family history is reinforced. A young visitor from Mississauga, Ontario, wrote on a comment card: "My Nanny [...] went to help in WWII. She was a nurse and saved people. When I grow up I want to save people too. I am lucky to have her in my life." Some visitors come to the museum specifically to learn more about their ancestors, while others identify with the stories of the ordinary men and women from Canada's military history.

Commemoration is an act of collective remembering and visitors have also left comments about their experience at the museum and how it had influenced them: "The [...] exhibit made me cry. War is real; and this museum inflicts that reality in us. [...] Every Canadian should come here." The museum also has an exhibit space called the Hall of Honour. In here, visitors learn about how people have commemorated military events and historical figures from the earliest years of Canadian history. Moreover, should they wish to, individuals or groups can visit Memorial Hall and honour the fallen soldiers of Canada's past.

In all of these experiences, and because of the historical narrative the Canadian War Museum performs, visitor's personal memories of events and military information is affected. One such example was left on a comment card by a teenager. She explains that "[...] j'ai appris des choses que je ne savais pas. J'ai pu comprendre toutes les horreurs que tant de gens ont vécu[es]. Et maintenant, je crois que mon vœu le plus cher, c'est que toutes ces atrocités reste[nt] dans le passé [...]" Because of what she learnt at the Canadian War Museum, she says that her greatest wish is that the atrocities of war never happen again. This statement implies that

the historical narrative performed in the exhibits affected her memory of world events and influenced her way of thinking about the past, present and future.

As this young woman's experience suggests, while the Canadian War Museum is a national institution that performs part of Canada's historical military narrative, its relationship with its visitors is layered with complications. Through its performance of historical narrative, the Canadian War Museum influences one's sense of national identity. The space of the museum exhibits, particularly that of the First World War exhibit as discussed in this thesis, becomes a uniform reference that visitors can turn to when remembering Canada's national past. The museum also affects what historical events and people are remembered and commemorated by visitors. By its selection of certain artefacts, the curatorial, design and interpretive team showcase certain objects and images over others; thus, lending them a significant importance. In all of these experiences, but perhaps more greatly in the employee/visitor interactions and the influence of other visiting groups, the personal memories of visitors change and are affected by the historical narrative that is presented.

Today theatre is often seen as an intermedial art form. Some audience members have come to expect spectacle while others might still prefer a more traditional performance. On stage, nearly anything can be seen from a simple black-box theatre to complex set or lighting designs, from a historical costume play to an intricate modern use of puppetry, from a painted drop-cloth to a computerized projection. Today, a modern museum, such as the Canadian War Museum, is perhaps even more intermedial than a theatre in its performance. Within its walls a museum can rely on its spatial layout to convey meaning; a museum exhibits its artefacts and displays (interactive or static) in a state of *museality* similar to that of *theatricality*; and, a

museum acts as a stage where people (employees *and* visitors) can interact with one another. It is in this last instance of a museum's performative activities that a museum places its audience into a more active role than does a theatre. In a museum, the audience can become more than just spectators; they can become performers. By performing their past, visitors might find themselves better able to make sense of it.

ENDNOTES FOR CONCLUSION

¹ At the end of Gallery 4, blank postcards with the Canadian War Museum logo are provided for the visitors should they wish to leave a comment. Visitors are prompted with images from history, various thought provoking questions, and the statement "I was at the Canadian War Museum and..." Comments can be left for other visitors to see and are collected by appointed staff members at the end of each day. Some comments are left in display cases semi-permanently (they are rotated with new comment cards every few months). I am grateful to the Canadian War Museum for letting me look through their piles and piles of visitor comment cards.

² Unless perhaps the exhibit curator receives a new artifact that he or she feels would add great value to the exhibit.

³ Comment card collected from Gallery 4, winter 2011: "Louis Riel was a Hero because of the thing [*sic*] he did to save his land. [...]" Anonymous.

⁴ Comment card collected from Gallery 4, winter 2011: "Riel was a government sacrifice to end any metis [*sic*] rights to land or self government. He was a message." Anonymous.

APPENDIX A

**First World War Poem: “In Flanders Fields”
By John McCrae**

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields.*

(“Canada in the First World War”)

APPENDIX B

New Wording, Gallery 3, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa

Original Wording:

An Enduring Controversy

The value and morality of the strategic bomber offensive against Germany remains bitterly contested. Bomber Command's aim was to crush civilian morale and force Germany to surrender by destroying its cities and industrial installations. Although Bomber Command and American attacks left 600,000 Germans dead and more than five million homeless, the raids resulted in only small reductions in German war production until late in the war. (Dean 4)

New Wording:

The Bombing Campaign

The strategic bombing campaign against Germany, an important part of the Allied effort that achieved victory, remains a source of controversy today. Strategic bombing enjoyed wide public and political support as a symbol of Allied resolve and a response to German aggression. In its first years, the air offensive achieved few of its objectives and suffered heavy losses. Advances in technology and tactics, combined with Allied successes on other fronts, led to improved results. By war's end, Allied bombers had razed portions of every major city in Germany and damaged many other targets, including oil facilities and transportation networks. The attacks blunted Germany's economic and military potential, and drew scarce resources into air defence, damage repair, and the protection of critical industries. (Dean 11)

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