



Cartographies of Colonial Commemoration: Critical Toponymy and Historical Geographies in Toronto

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Abstract:

Everyday, I move across a cartography that tells me a story, one that I often don't consciously listen to, but do learn from. This story, one of colonial dominance, lives on through the markings of place, particularly the toponyms, or place names. In this article, I seek to explore the role of these toponyms in telling a story of place, one that (re)writes my home, Toronto, as a colonized space, one whose geographic and historic intelligibility is made possible through the inscription of place-names that commemorate the European centre. I demonstrate how the banality of colonial geography works in its powerfully subtle ways by taking the reader on an imaginary subway ride, one that travels across a series of toponyms that highlight how the city recites, inscribes and promulgates a story of colonial presence in a largely obscured but simultaneously hyper-visible way. I argue that such colonial story telling through toponymy is a crucial site at which to engage critically.

Keywords: critical toponymy; historical geographies; colonial cartography

Next stop, Bloor-Yonge, Bloor-Yonge Station.

Change here for Line 2.

Doors will open on the right.

Heading southbound on a Line 1 train, I hear the all too familiar proclamation that we are arriving at the busiest station on Toronto's rapid transit network. Pulling into our destination, I ready myself to navigate what is ultimately a collection of weary and anxious bodies, crowding around the door as they prepare themselves to depart with great haste. As the train slows down, people rush out to catch connections to a west or eastbound Line 2 train or to seek refuge from the oppressively hot subway platform in search of cooler locales.

As we arrive at the station, the bubbling of anxieties that compel people to vie for strategically valuable places by the doors marks the imminent diffusion of bodies through the station and the stories that they tell. The tired businesspeople and students, marked as they are by exhaustion after a long day, will move through the station and take with them their experiences from that day. The movement of these stories captured in the faces and bodies of travelers is inherently connected to those of others—the story of the city lives on through the connected narratives of individual lives. Amidst the “storied lives” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) that live through/within the bodies of those traversing the city's transit system is the story of place remembered in the commemorated ghosts of the community's history. Here, I speak not of the plaques that grace “heritage homes” or the statues littered through the city's geography that explicitly remember these ghosts. Rather, these ghosts live through the language of the city's cartography—the toponyms (place-names) that, through their signified remembrance, claim space as a particular, historically constituted place and in so doing, teach a normalized reading of space. The lives of these ghosts can be witnessed in the mundane signaling of the aforementioned subway's reminder of the coming stop:

Arriving at Bloor-Yonge, Bloor-Yonge Station.

Utterances such as this require us to ask: who/what is Bloor, who/what is Yonge and how do each of these articulate with other toponyms to represent a community as a particular historical space? How does the subway train's message about an upcoming stop, thoroughly trite in its choice of language, play a small but crucial part in the remembrance of these ghosts that hail into perpetual remembrance settler histories and geographies of this community? How does the toponym, serving as it does as a political and historical marker of commemoration (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, & Azaryahu, 2010), create this space into a place with ideological, cultural and historic privileges while simultaneously making such commemoration utterly innocuous in its presentation? How do these toponyms, more specifically, serve to support the ongoing banality of colonial representation and space making in the everyday landscape (Stanley, 2009)?

In this paper, I seek to explore how it is that toponyms define, commemorate and concurrently produce and police historical and geographic meaning in the everyday landscape. I do so with a focus directed at engaging the role of toponyms in commemorating, validating and (re)producing

colonial histories of Toronto and place more broadly. In this sense, I explore the enactment, production and narrativization of history through everyday geography and how this serves to reproduce colonial histories of commemoration in a paradoxically obvious and simultaneously obscured fashion. To explore this further, I leverage critical toponymy, an exploration of “the entanglements of place-names with power relations and social antagonisms” (Vuolteenaho & Berg, 2009, p. 12) to theorize the role of place-names and their role in mapped spaces in presenting taken-for-granted colonial historical geographies that at once blatantly signal settler privilege in the urban landscape while also fading into the background of everyday life. To provide a more “concrete” example of this at work, I return with the reader to the Toronto subway to illustrate how a rather short trip through the downtown core tells a story of colonial place through the stations that passengers move between.

Mapping Historical Geography Through Toponymy

Disinterested Cartographies

Every day, we move across a cartography premised on rational organization, one where space is presented as the logical conclusion of best practices and principles. This rationality is largely directed at producing a representation of space that requires little cognitive work; spaces should be easy to move across, uniformly designed with familiar fixtures, and “objectively” easy to negotiate. Crucially, this rationality is premised on apparent, but not real, spatial disinterestedness. The organization of space, though presented as “just is,” embodies particular ideas, modes of moving and relating to each other and politics: maps are imagined and space is rendered in ways infused by power (Crampton & Krygier, 2006). As a consequence, mapped spaces are complicit in telling a story that itself is a consequence of judgements about what is important to know. However, as a product of subjective conceptions of space, maps inescapably lie in their privileging of items/features, a privileging that consequently necessitates an (un)conscious exclusion of other features (Monmonier, 1996). Elsewhere identified as “silences” (Harley, 1988), maps are inherently products of political circumstances and cultural commitments, which necessitates a reading of them as texts that tell a story of place.

The principle method through which maps assert their capacity to exclude/include ways of knowing a space is through the language used to label and identify particular places. Maps, like any other text, cannot determine interpretation but can offer a preferred meaning (Hall, 1997), one I suggest is intimately connected to the nexus of coloniality and space, in validating and (re)producing knowledges of both the colonial subject and the place of colonized and colonizers in that relationship (de Leeuw, 2007, 2009; Razack, 2011). A simple example of this is the language of maps and community arrangements themselves, which are often, in Canada, officially English or French and are so with little questioning as to their place in providing the linguistic base for cartographic knowledge. Here, maps not only make space but shape our understandings of those very constructed spaces by determining not just what we need to know but what language we need to

make a space intelligible. One particularly powerful dimension are toponyms and their ability to make banal a privileged history through ostensibly empty signifiers.

Toponyms as Markers of (Hidden) History

Toponyms, as markers that cement (sometimes quite literally) commemorations into the cartography of a space, offer themselves as the quintessential linguistic tools to weave historical knowledge into everyday spatial life, particularly given that they are often understood more for their functional value and less because of their historical effects. "Pronouncing the proper names of the dead," Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu (2010) remind us, "facilitates remembrance" (p. 459) but, crucially, this remembrance is often secondary to the functional nature of a place-name all the while not denying the commemorative work done in uttering a particular toponym. Said differently, using a place-name as part of a conversation about space, one in which the name is used operatively, also serves to render particular commemorations normal to a space; while the consequence is dualistic in nature (commemorative and functional), it is often only the functional use that is intended. This naturally leads to a question about the lack of explicit knowledge about commemoration. If, in other words, the commemorative work isn't explicitly undertaken and/or even known (i.e., it's not known who or what serves as the name sake), is the commemorative dimension all that powerful? What matters, and here I echo Maoz Azaryahu (2009), is the writing of "an official version of history into spheres of social and spatial practices of everyday life that seem to be totally detached from political contexts or communal obligations" (pp. 66-67). What matters here is less that a conscious knowledge of the histories is being remembered and more that a history is (re)normalized. The creation of a reservoir of historical figures and events that overlays a space cartographically (and often opaquely) serves to produce what some critical toponymers call a "city-text," a "representation of the past" (Azaryahu, 1990, p. 33) that, critically, "functions as a system of representation and an object of political identification" (Palonen, 2008, p. 220). Powerfully, the text of the city, Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu (2016) remind us (speaking about street names but, I would suggest, an argument that applies widely across toponyms) "constitute[s] a seemingly trivial aspect of streetscapes" (p. 142) that still teaches people about sanctioned and privileged historical events and actors of a place. Even, as noted, when this history isn't necessarily obvious from the signification being done by the toponym, we can often guess (p. 144) and infer what types of history are being signalled.

Toponymy and Settler History

The banality of toponymic inscription and the historical work being done through toponyms largely appears in settler communities as a site of both settler commemoration and as a functional tool in the remaking of space (Razack, 2011; Veracini, 2014). When we consider that settler-colonialism "covers its tracks and operates towards its self-supersession" (Veracini, 2011, p. 3), the banality of place-names becomes an effective means to teach and cement the settler project into public and geographic imaginaries. In a settler context such as Canada, the production of an "authorized index of a putative narrative of history" (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 150) is inevitable going to

be inextricably entwined with the denial of Indigenous practices and knowledges from everyday “official” landscape (for example, of official street names).

By denying the prominence of (but by no means erasing, however) Indigenous place-names, a settler cartography that employs its own patterns of historical remembrance as a vehicle for configuring spatial arrangements effectively scrubs itself from consciousness when its presence becomes the normal way of organizing space. In this regard, the map “lies” about what it is covering and it becomes difficult to see what else exists beneath the taken-for-granted spatial understandings that now configure and produce meanings about where “we” are. The key principle that makes cartography seem innocent and disinterested in a settler context, then, is its banality.

What makes the banality of this toponymic naming so powerful can be noted in the expression of colonial reimaginings of place; the ascribing of new names to places already named inscribes and prescribes favoured Eurocentric readings of place in relation to the colonial metropole. This practice of toponymic dispossession, the expunging of Indigenous place-names in favour of colonial ones to reflect settler presence in every corner of geographic consciousness (Tucker & Rose-Redwood, 2015), serves to delineate conceptions of place that support the idea that “this” named place is a natural consequence of both time and spatial organization. This supports settler colonialism’s essential character: suffusion without attention and domination from behind the veil of invisibility. Far from being removed and disinterested, settler colonial toponyms mark and remake the community from the vantage point of innocence¹. Equally as troubling is the concomitant process of making this the only intelligible geography (i.e., there comes to be no other way of reading space). This dynamic of intelligibility is key, for no other method of naming space is legitimate in a colonial context where the suffusion of colonial toponymy is not only complete but the “only” language possible. To borrow a phrase from Eda (2002), “toponymy enacts a writing that conquers” (p. 128), one that settles the linguistic space, extinguishes o/Other languages of place and entrenches itself, all the while claiming neutrality and indifference to the process of making history that it necessarily accomplishes.

What is necessary as a response to this is a critical toponymic approach to understanding place, especially when we consider how place, as a powerful shaper of identity (Casemore, 2008; Chambers, 2008), is linguistically regulated by a toponymy that is not only politically determined but complicit in the (re)production of relations of power through the practice of laying taken for granted notions of place over those who live upon/within space (Rose-Redwood et al., 2010; Tucker & Rose-Redwood, 2015; Vuolteenaho & Berg, 2009). What this requires is a contesting of how “place naming reflects how power controls territory and, in so doing, maintains that control” (Giraut & Houssay-Holzschuch, 2016, p. 2). Disrupting this process demands ongoing and sustained efforts to

¹ A distinction between intention and consequence is important here. The intention behind colonial toponym production and installation is largely either a benevolent process or one rooted in a misunderstanding about the history of named space (i. e. believing that it can and needs to be named). However, the privilege of being unaware of already established names is the quintessential privilege of settler-colonialism: remaining unaware of the displacement and erasure enacted through settlement. Thus, while (re)naming may appear to be a benevolent or neutral act, the consequence of such work is quintessentially colonial in extinguishing the remembrance of Indigenous culture and history as it appears in the language of space.

acknowledge that much of how the landscape operates as a home for commemoration is largely unknown and potentially unseen. We must give ourselves the task of questioning the banal in its creating, legitimating and sustaining problematic and divisive knowledges of the world (Gulliver, 2011; Montgomery, 2005, 2008; Rogers, 2014; Smith, 2014). What we must do in this work is acknowledge the “dynamic of remembrance and forgetfulness” (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011, p. 610) that happens not just in schools (as named sites) but in public spaces more broadly, where certain histories are remembered through a forgetting of what was, and remains, originally “here.”

As an example of how this might look, I want to return to the introduction and the subway ride. I return to the subway as it is the epitome of the banal, a mundane space designed with the purely utilitarian objective of facilitating the movement of large numbers of people with regularity. Yet, amidst the hum-drum nature of trains crossing the city, a story is woven of settler-colonialism, one that commemorates and inscribes into the cartography a historical dominance that normalizes this place as a European place. Here, I argue, the city-scape becomes a pedagogical heuristic by virtue of its very linguistic character. The relations of power, historical commitments to projects of normalizing settler accomplishments and cartographies crafted through efforts to make space intelligible and congruent with a Eurocentric spatial imaginary all manifest themselves in a place such as a subway system.

Riding the Colonial Toponymy

Toronto, like many other major cities in Canada, is a vibrant multicultural centre that prides itself on an ethos of acceptance and cosmopolitanism. As Canada’s largest city, home to more than 6.1 million people in the census metropolitan area (Statistics Canada, 2016), Toronto is home to a complex web of toponyms that mark boundaries, natural features and infrastructure that make intelligible an intricate tapestry of physical features. This physical geography, layered over an equally complex cultural geography, exists in tension; Toronto’s multicultural outward self-presentation conflicts with what Casagrande (2013) notes as the destruction of “the connections between space and its first inhabitants” (p. 293) through the toponymic selections². While the multicultural essence of the city does indeed define the dynamics of the space, such eclecticism displaces the histories of those who were and continue to be subject to the thrust of coloniality. This, like any space, manifests itself in the language of the geography—the major centres and the landmarks that define the physical and cultural geography of the city mythologize European pasts and futures. This (re)produces the telling of a grand narrative history, one that “focuses on Europeans, tracing the progress of European-derived communities and institutions” (Stanley, 2000, p. 82). To illustrate the grand narration of place and the erasure of Aboriginal histories and presence in Toronto, I return to the steel confines of the subway to illustrate how those who live/work/play in this urban space are

² I think it worth noting that this in some respects is not all that surprising. As Verna St. Denis (2011) argues, multiculturalism doesn’t adequately acknowledge and account for the unique Aboriginal experience in Canada so it is little surprise that, as a reflection of hegemonic history, the toponymy of the city fails to incorporate Indigenous toponyms.

exposed to the powerful story of privilege through ostensibly innocuous travels into and out of the downtown core.

The Rapid Transit System

Comprised of four lines, with a fifth being built, Toronto's rapid transit network currently includes 74 stations (Toronto Transit Commission, 2016). Crossing the city, the rapid transit network moves high volumes of people across the city's established cartography. The rapid transit map, defined by the intersecting and muted yellow, green, purple and blue lines, becomes a means of (re)presenting a historical geographic knowledge of the city; in moving across the city, those intersecting lines serve as powerful markers of place. These sites are also powerful through their demographic reach: every day, more than 1.3 million people move through the rapid transit system (Toronto Transit Commission, 2014), a population of people equivalent in size to the elementary student population in the province of Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). The size of the system and its capacity to imagine and normalize historical commemorations are made all the more powerful by the toponyms that define the contours of each of the four lines: the stations. The stations themselves, rather uninspired in their physical configuration, are powerful reminders of the historical mythologies central to the narration of the city.

To best explicate the toponymic (re)presentation of colonial history, I take the reader on an imaginary ride south through six stations of one section of Line 1. This section, home to four of the top fifteen subway stations on the rapid transit system³, is comprised of a short journey down Yonge Street in Toronto, starting at the busiest station Bloor-Yonge, eventually ending at King Station⁴. Through this seven-minute journey down Yonge Street, riders are exposed to a "toponymic narration" of the banality of colonialism (Stanley, 2009); by riding the trains through the various locations, passengers are reminded of a history of this place that is made intelligible only through colonial commemorative practices that write the story of this place as one necessarily defined, thematically, by the central figures of the grand colonial narrative. In this regard, passengers are taught not necessarily the histories of the people remembered but instead, they are taught that this history is normal for this place.

Bloor-Yonge Station

The first stop on our journey, Bloor-Yonge Station, calls us to witness the articulation of two toponyms, which, given the prominence of the arterial streets that bear their name, are important markers of historical and geographic meaning. Yonge Street, the toponymic base for the subway

³ Bloor-Yonge is the busiest, Dundas is 10th, King is 11th, Queen is 14th. The two outside of the top 15 are College (16th) and Wellesley (40th) of 74 total stations (City of Toronto, 2013). The other nine stations are either on other lines and/or outside of this section of the line. While all stations are equally crucial in the narration of the city's toponymic history, the six stations chosen were selected as they are articulated and thus follow one another on a journey much like pages in a book.

⁴ For those who might be curious, a map of this route can be found at the following URL: <https://goo.gl/maps/fqPaN2HvsfH2>.

line⁵, street name and station name, is a powerful part of the social imaginary around Toronto. Much like the CN Tower or the Rogers Centre, Yonge Street is often positioned as a symbol of the city. Historically speaking, this makes some sense. As Wise and Gould (2000) note, Yonge Street was the “first” street in Toronto (a claim already laying the foundation for what constitutes originality) and built out of, perhaps ironically, imperial anxieties rooted in fears of American encroachment. John Graves Simcoe, Governor General at the time, envisioned a north-south road to facilitate the movement of troops north and south from Lake Ontario up to Lake Simcoe. In deciding upon a toponym for this newly constructed street, Simcoe decided to commemorate a friend, Sir George Yonge, then British Secretary of War. Yonge, in his capacity at the time “had signed the document designating the Queen’s Rangers as a regiment to protect the new province” (Wise & Gould, 2000, p. 234). The naming work done here, then, serves to name one of the city’s most symbolic routes as a commemoration of colonial management of the lands and concerns about establishing British military presence. Further, in commemorating British imperialism and protection of “our” lands, the name used for this street serves to buttress the idea of British resilience in the face of (potential) American hostility and acts as a reminder of British normalcy on these lands and the necessary need to militarily dominate this space.

Bloor Street, a major east-west arterial road, is named after Joseph Bloore, a prominent land developer and brewer in the area around the intersection of Bloor Street and Yonge Street today. “A loyal Conservative and a faithful Methodist” (Wise & Gould, 2000, p. 40), Bloore’s fame and power in the region is marked largely by his capacity to do well what is central to settler-colonization: “develop” land, build infrastructure and adhere to prominent political and religious discourses central in colonial logics. While this is not to suggest that Bloore actively sought to displace and dominate Aboriginal populations and lands at the time, the commemoration of such an individual serves to reinforce the idea that progress and growth in the city is intimately linked to the economic and political growth of the urban centre. Bloor-Yonge Station, thus, serves as a toponymic reminder of what makes colonialism possible in this space: military prominence, land “development” and the privileging of British political conceptions of social order and configuration.

Wellesley Station

Wellesley Station is named after Arthur Wellesley, the 1st Duke of Wellington and one-time (albeit short-lived) Prime Minister of Britain. Much like Yonge, Wellesley is famous for his military conquests and his role in the Battle of Waterloo, where he led forces against Napoleon (Wise & Gould, 2000, p. 221). Interestingly, Wellesley was also instrumental in British colonialism in India, with Wise and Gould (2000) noting that “he had an illustrious military career, including several decisive campaigns in India between 1796 and 1805” (p. 221). While this says nothing of Wellesley’s role in Canada, the commemoration of an instrumental figure in British colonial desires does serve as a reminder that colonialism and the damages that it necessarily entails are not just normalized parts of national mythologies but are also acts and relations of power that are worthy of commemoration.

⁵ Line 1 was previously called the Yonge-University-Spadina line (and still often is by many).

Indeed, commemoration of Indian colonial conquest, while removed physically from this context, is located discursively in this place as symbolic of necessary history.

College Station

College Station, named after College Street, shares a history intimately intertwined with University Avenue. Intersecting at Queen's Park, the home of the Ontario Legislature, these two streets' toponymic history is owed to the establishment of King's College in 1827 (Wise & Gould, 2000, p. 216). With regards to each space, the import of the toponyms and the commemorative work that they normalize accomplishes two things:

1. The commemoration of King's College normalizes "King" (see more below) and given the power of elliptical language (i.e., language that has no explicit referent but that, given the broader context, is not required), King's College normalizes a common cultural understanding of "King" as linked with the British Crown.
2. The toponym commemorates the establishment of post-secondary educational institutions. Universities and colleges, as sites of knowledge production, are locations from which Western epistemic and methodological privilege proliferates (Battiste, Bell, Findlay, Findlay, & Henderson, 2005; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012)⁶ and the commemoration of the establishment of these sites in Toronto serves as a powerful toponymic reminder that Western epistemic centring in the city is a necessary part of the narrative of the city.

The symbolic work being accomplished here then is work that commemorates culturally specific conceptions of knowledge generation and the import of regal remembrance. The King, the European organization of education and the practice of colonizing knowledge all, in subtle ways, get re-inscribed toponymically as passengers move through College Station.

Dundas Station

Returning to the practice of commemorating individuals, Dundas Station owes its name to Dundas Street, itself named in honour of the Right Honourable Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville, a British political figure in the late 18th century (Wise & Gould, 2000, p. 83). As part of his role in British politics, Dundas served as the President of the Board of Control, the person responsible for overseeing the British East India company. Bayly (1988), in discussing Dundas' tenure, argues that the imperial ambitions of the Wellesley "family circle" (which included the aforementioned Arthur) "was complemented by a new aggressive spirit in an embattled Britain and the 'voracious desire' for lands and territories announced by Henry Dundas" (p. 79). While this "voracious desire" for imperial domination is specific to the British colonial project in India, the commemoration of Dundas through

⁶ While Battiste et al. (2005) are specific in their discussion of the University of Saskatchewan, their argument that the (re)presentation of the university and the idea that it is "founded on a vision and visualisation of education and culture that look to Europe as the centre of all knowledge and civilization" (p. 8) is a critique of knowledge production that extends to most post-secondary spaces in Canada.

the station's toponym serves as a commemoration of colonial expansion and the "aggressive spirit" around such practice, entrenching the idea that aggressive policies are congruent (or at least not incompatible) with Canadian mythologies.

The theme of aggression and its commemoration also lives on through the original purpose of the road. Initially, the road itself was designed to connect British-controlled Detroit with Kingston, Ontario, "as a military road in case of war with the Americans" (Wise & Gould, 2000, p. 83). Much like Yonge Street, Dundas Road was built out of settler anxieties and desires to enable the easy movement of force across the city's burgeoning Euro-cartography. Here, the road serves not only to commemorate the role of a colonial politician with voracious desires for expansion, but it also serves to support the colonial military project of a Canadian state.

Queen Station

Queen Station is, simply, named after Queen Street. Originally named Lot Street, Queen Street was named as such in 1844 in honour of Queen Victoria (Wise and Gould, 2000, p. 170). In their description of Queen Victoria, Wise and Gould (2000) remind us of her longevity as a reigning monarch and the prosperity experienced by people in Britain (p. 171). Wise and Gould (2000) also suggest that Victoria "brought a new respectability and order to the English royal family, and came to symbolize the peace and prosperity of her age" (p. 171). What is at work here in the toponymic commemoration is two interrelated pieces of knowledge construction:

1. Simply, the station itself elliptically commemorates British regal presence in the city (and Canada more broadly).
2. The idea that Victoria was responsible for bringing "respectability" and "order" are notions rooted in culturally specific practices in which those words are informed by practices specific to British historical and geographic circumstances.

The cultural specificity of respectability is ultimately wrapped up, as historical scholars note, in regulation. As Huggins (2000) argues, respectability was wrapped up in middle-class hegemonic conceptions of behaviour. As a behavioural approach to understanding respectability, Victorian conceptions of the idea took on racialized connotations. In Victorian Halifax, for example, Fingard (1992) argues that "the worthy black citizens of Halifax considered respectability to be the key, not only to their superiority over their rough brethren, but to equality with whites, dignity in status, and justice in the public sphere" (p. 172). As a monarch whose name is linked with particular conceptions of respectability, commemoration of said history serves to reproduce understandings of behaviour that are congruent with who "we" are that are ultimately wrapped up in (racialized as) specific conceptions of Britishness.

King Station

Named after King Street, the King Station toponym celebrates the reign of King George III, who, despite being known as "mad King George," "held the love of and respect of his subjects throughout a difficult reign marked by strife" (Wise and Gould, 2000, p. 127). Like the historical geography commemorated by Queen Station, King Station symbolically marks the mythologizing of

British monarchy and the ostensible role it ha(d/s) in establishing the values, historical context and beliefs of its subjects. Here, the commemoration serves to remember a king who supported imperial expansion, so much so that Black (2006) argues that “the reach of British power provided one of the most lasting legacies of George’s reign” (p. 329). Interestingly, Black also suggests that, “one of the most enduring aspects [of the spread of the empire] was naming, which marked British imperial expansion with the royal presence” (p. 329). What King Station thus recognizes is imperial ambition and concerns over the role of marking space to secure remembrance. Much like Queen Station, however, this marking is not explicit—Victoria and George are nowhere to be seen in the toponyms or their representations. However, this is not necessary as commemorative practices succeed at making and renormalizing histories of this place precisely because they do not (have to) draw attention to their histories.

Conclusion

After leaving Scarborough, the city where I was born, for the suburb of Newmarket, my family moved to a subdivision that was bordered, to the west, by Bathurst Street, a street that also served as the western boundary for my elementary school from grade three through grade eight. Nearly twenty years after first encountering Bathurst Street as a young child, I moved to Toronto from Ottawa, finding myself once again living a few blocks from Bathurst Street downtown. Bathurst Street, it would seem, and the commemoration of the Earl of Bathurst and one-time Secretary of War for the Colonies (Wise & Gould, 2000, p. 29) is an inescapable part of my own life story. This inescapability is hardly uncommon; the inescapability of the discursive and material realities of colonial toponymy shape geographic representations across Canada for each of us daily. Walking/moving through a city-space indelibly marked by the ongoing patterning of colonial accomplishment and exploits renders the space naturally/colonially “ours.” Every time a place name enters a conversation—a repetitive process for those who venture out into their communities—the “intersection of hegemonic ideological structures with the spatial practices of everyday life” (Azaryahu, 1996, p. 321) is re-inscribed. Street naming, we must remember, is “implicated in the *naturalization* of urban space through the material and symbolic erasure of subjugated knowledges and place-based ontologies” (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, & Azaryahu, 2018, p. 315). In communities of Canada, space, Razack (2011) and Veracini (2014) remind us, is necessarily remade in settler-colonial projects. Riding through the subway, driving down local roads or walking through parks—each often banal celebrations of colonial dominion over the lands—we are reminded of the powerful articulation of history, geography and settler-coloniality through toponymic practices.

At the risk of appearing fatalist in my understanding of the powerful, toponymic imagining of space as a canvas of colonial remembrance, it is important to recognize that a city’s toponymy (it’s spatial curriculum) is never fixed, nor is it ever uncontested. Individuals and groups do powerfully resist and groups have asserted their resistance to settler toponymy. In Toronto, the Ogimaa Mikana (2015) project has asserted the presence of Anishinaabe toponyms in response to their erasure through colonial place-naming, and, in British Columbia, Indigenous peoples in W̱SÁNEĆ and Lekwungen Territories (called Saanich, B.C. in colonial toponymy) have resisted and challenged the

naming of Mount Douglas by re-asserting the original SENĆOŦEN name of PKOLS (Rose-Redwood, 2016). Projects such as these serve to remind us that toponymies are neither fixed nor completely opaque layers over a landscape. What is important to take from projects such as these is the necessary work that they call us to do as pedagogues. This work will require active efforts to acknowledge the limits of our own knowledges, our comforts with the banality of colonial naming practices and our implicatedness in the perpetual (re)normalization of colonial commemoration at every corner.

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