

**Along the Highway:
Landscapes of National Mourning in Canada**

by

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**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Geography
Department of Geography and Program in Planning
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Abstract

Between 2002 and 2011, 158 Canadian Forces soldiers died while serving in Afghanistan and were repatriated via Canadian Forces Base Trenton to the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario in Toronto for autopsy. The repatriation route took their bodies along Highway 401 in central Ontario, where thousands assembled on bridges above the highway to pay their respects. In this thesis, I detail the memorial landscape that developed around what came to be known as the Highway of Heroes, and I use this conception of the highway as a landscape to demonstrate the ways in which it participates in the ongoing remilitarization of Canada. Following the work of Judith Butler, I argue that the Highway of Heroes contributes to the production of a hierarchy of grievable subjects, and the act of memorializing soldiers is implicated in the erasure of other victims of state violence, including missing and murdered Indigenous women.

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Introduction

On the morning of April 22, 2006, I boarded an Air Canada flight to Vancouver with my grandmother, the first leg of what was my first international trip, and ultimately my first time travelling solo. As it was slightly before the days of seatback entertainment in economy class, I and the other passengers donned our headphones to watch the in-flight film, which was preceded by a special edited-for-airplanes edition of CBC News. The top story of the morning took up much of the broadcast's running time: a roadside bomb in Afghanistan had killed four Canadian Forces (CF) soldiers that morning. Despite the audio commentary playing directly into my ears, I could sense the uncomfortable silence around me on the plane as the names of the deceased were announced and the circumstances of the incident were narrated. It was the first time I remember seeing the solemn photographs of soldiers that came to be associated with the announcement of their deaths, and that morning's incident marked the beginning of their regular display in the press as more Canadian troops were dispatched to the increasingly dangerous Kandahar province.

Three weeks later, as my homesick self listlessly browsed Canadian news from across the Pacific, news of the first female Canadian soldier to be killed in combat operations was the top story on every site. It was around this time that I realized the extent to which Canada was involved in the war in Afghanistan. Despite the first CF deployments taking place over four years before, it was through the obituaries of the fallen in the press that the commitment was communicated to Canadians like me who weren't actively

following the war. I returned home to Toronto in June, at the beginning of a summer that saw another 15 soldiers killed. While watching the evening news one night, I saw coverage of a repatriation ceremony for the first time, where the flag-draped caskets carrying the remains of those killed were unloaded from a military plane and transferred to hearses at Canadian Forces Base Trenton, east of Toronto, for the journey to the coroner's office along Highway 401. I later learned of the regular assembly of members of public to mourn along the route to pay tribute to the dead in acts that collectively led to the dedication of nearly 200 kilometres of the 401 as the Highway of Heroes.

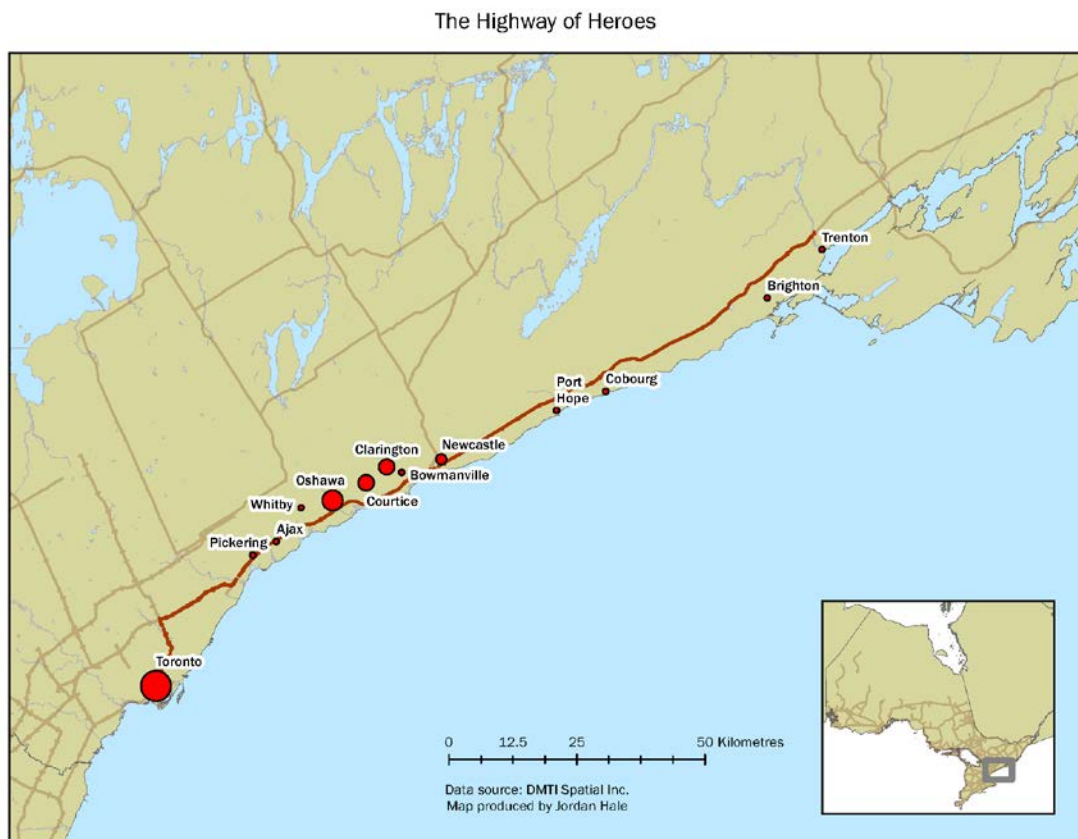


Figure 1: The Highway of Heroes and its location in central Ontario

Over the next few years, I watched several more repatriation ceremonies on TV, and attended the conclusion of several as a spectator, intrigued by the reverence accorded to military death as it moved through the city in a police-escorted funeral procession. As the solemn portraits of over 100 more soldiers graced the front pages of national newspapers, I questioned why the lives of others killed in the Afghan war were not given the same mention. While I understood the reasons for the focus on Canadian casualties at a base level, I wanted to better comprehend what role the pageantry of the repatriation ceremony and the rituals of public mourning realized alongside the highway played in this erasure of others killed in Afghanistan, particularly innocent civilian casualties.

I found a profound interrogation of such a hierarchy of casualties in Judith Butler's 2003 paper "Violence, Mourning, Politics", in which she argues that the ability to apprehend the lives of others as "grievable" can be directed towards a politics of nonviolence and resistance to global military operations. Butler constructs the concept of grievability by detailing the experience of loss itself, as well as the relations of care that are produced and bolstered through the process of mourning a loved one. Through her concentration on the emotional and psychological devastation that accompanies a loss, instead of concentrating on the acts of violence that cause such deaths, she argues for the humanizing capabilities of acknowledging grief in public. She asks what role rituals of public mourning play in producing the construct of a grievable life, pointing to large-scale memorial events in the wake of September 11, 2001, as well as the

newspaper obituary, as mechanisms that rendered some (American) lives as being more worthy of protection than other (Palestinian) lives. I saw the repatriation ceremony and the acts of memorialization along Highway of Heroes as participating in the creation of such a spectrum.

Over time, I became increasingly intrigued by the persistence of the rituals of mourning Canadian soldiers in the landscape, from the town of Trenton through rural central Ontario, to the suburbs east of Toronto to the downtown of Canada's largest city, and this interest became the basis for this thesis. I take Butler's premise of the differential grievability of subjects and examine it geographically, through the dimension of landscape. Through an investigation of the development of the landscape surrounding the repatriation ceremony – from the enacted performances of grieving that led to its materialization in space, to the archive of public memory that continues to exist in various cultural representations – I will demonstrate how the Highway of Heroes is entangled in a broader politics of violence. Following Butler, I argue that this public memorialization of military heroes in contemporary Canada, perpetuated through its traces in the landscape, contributes to an ongoing violence against members of certain racialized and colonized peoples, in which their lives are framed as “ungrievable”. This discursive violence lays the groundwork for the production of support for further acts of physical violence, such as those realized through military occupation.

Butler's commences her theoretical investigation by connecting one's exposure to violence to their complicity in it, suggesting that such complicity is diminished by one's vulnerability to loss and the grieving that follows it (2003,

9). She makes the claim that the task of mourning works to render our relations with and dependence on others increasingly tangible, and is ultimately productive in the formation of community. In other words, for Butler, mourning is not a privatizing act but rather productive of publics. Following that, while the trajectories and limits of trauma associated with loss cannot be estimated, she claims that experiencing loss and grief is universal to the human condition (12-14). A familiarity with the personal incapacity that follows the loss of a loved one can be transformed into the capacity to speak out against the possibility of others enduring that loss.

What stalls this transformation is the derealization of the lives of many victims of war, starting from the premise that they are not worth remembering. This takes place in part through the deliberate act of not naming them in death, while other “worthy” lives (for example, soldiers and white North Americans) are memorialized in the mainstream Western press. To Butler, the fact that these lives are never realized allows acts of war to be perpetuated without significant protest: “[v]iolence renews itself in the face of the apparent inexhaustibility of its object” (22). While this proposition can clearly be read with relation to the other victims of the war in Afghanistan – most notably, innocent civilian casualties, but also others displaced, injured or traumatized as a result of the more than ten years of military operations that took place. I argue that the practice of mourning alongside the Highway of Heroes is entangled in an instance of this discursive violence within Canada’s borders. Over the same period of time that Canadian soldiers were being memorialized along the 401, members of a marginalized community across the country were being mourned along a different highway.

In distressing contrast to the Highway of Heroes, innumerable women and girls, most of them Indigenous, have gone missing or been murdered in northern British Columbia, and many of these disappearances clustered around Highway 16, the sole east-west route in the north of the province. Since the early 21st century, the haunting moniker “Highway of Tears” has emerged to memorialize those whose lives have prematurely ended along the highway, as well as the lack of recognition given to this epidemic from the Canadian government, police, and national media. With the exception of one murder solved four decades later using DNA evidence in 2013 (following the death of the perpetrator), no cases along the highway have been closed. I suggest that these deaths leading to mourning along these highways exist on the same continuum of state violence.

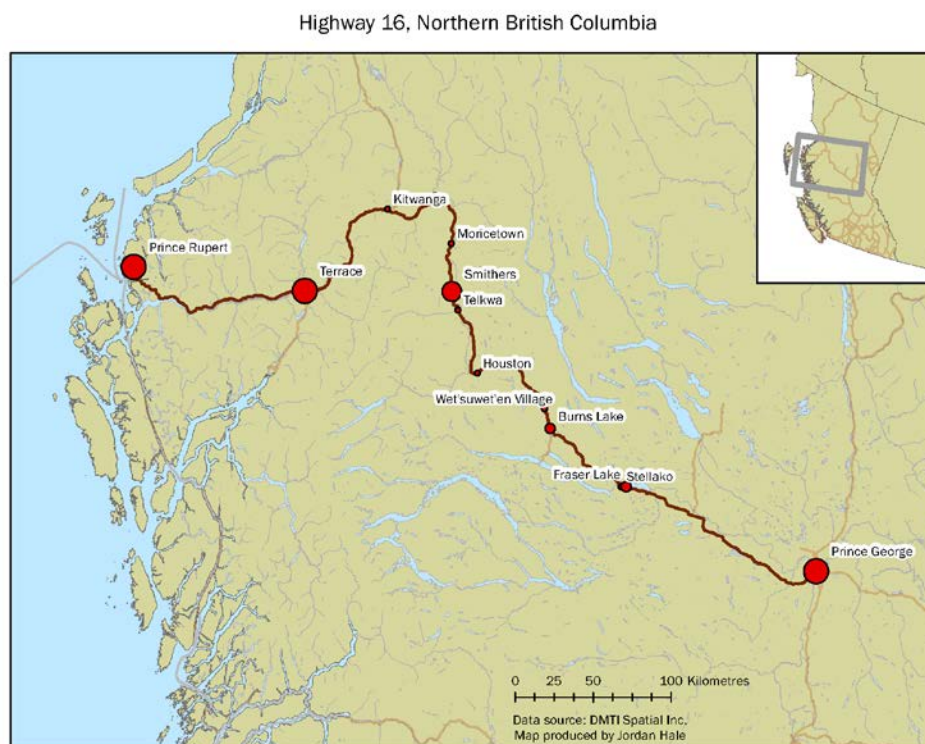


Figure 2: The Highway of Tears and its location in northern British Columbia

Highway 16 connects the port town of Prince Rupert on the coast with the city of Prince George over 700 kilometres to the east before continuing on past the provincial border into Alberta. A significant number of the towns located along the highway are amongst the least affluent in the country, and nowhere are these conditions of poverty more apparent than on the many First Nations reserves adjacent to the route, where structural racism partnered with economic downturns translates into 50% unemployment rates. I travelled to northern BC in the summer of 2012, driving from Prince George to Prince Rupert and back with my partner over the course of a week, gaining an understanding of the distance and time required to access basic goods and services unavailable in many communities, including healthcare, financial services, and nourishing food. Compounding the difficulty in accessing such basic needs is the lack of a public transit network connecting communities in the region, forcing many of those without access to a car to hitchhike. Driving back to the highway from several adjacent towns, we noticed large billboards bearing a haunting illustration of a ghost offering advice to a woman by the side of the road: HITCHHIKING...IS IT WORTH THE RISK? (Figure 3). As we entered other communities, other billboards exhorted us to keep an eye out for women who had disappeared, with collaged photographs of their smiling faces providing not just a visible reference for the missing, but a reminder of those grieving their interrupted lives (Figure 4).



Figure 3: Billboard on Highway 16 (photo by Jordan Hale, 2012)



Figure 4: Billboard on Highway 16 (photo by Jordan Hale, 2012)

We drove through the traditional territories of Tsimshian, Gitksan, Dakelh, and Sekani peoples, between fields now given over to agriculture and forest tracts rumbling with oversize logging trucks hauling old-growth trees eastward, diverted from the small town of Burns Lake after the Babine Forest Products mill was destroyed in a 2012 industrial accident that killed two and injured 20 workers (Bailey 2014). Tractor-trailers shuttling goods unloaded at the Port of Prince Rupert headed east, while European tourists in massive rented RVs made their way west to the coast. I thought of the many memorial actions I read about before our departure that took place along the highway: organized search parties, vigils, healing journeys, awareness walks, and the Highway of Tears Symposium, in which First Nations leaders, community organizations, local residents, and representatives of government came together in 2006 to discuss grassroots solutions for keeping women safe while advocating for inquiries into the disappearances that already occurred. I kept these happenings at the front of my mind as we drove through the awe-inspiring mountain ranges that the local tourism bureau foregrounded for outdoorsy travellers from outside the region. The overwhelming anxiety I felt as I explored this landscape of loss – both the acute grief of individuals and centuries worth of dispossession under colonialism – was heightened alongside these picture-postcard views, a landscape for recreation-minded outsiders.

Soon after my return to Toronto, I decided it was not my place to pursue further research on the Highway of Tears, and that scaling back my project was not just ethically appropriate, but a necessary self-care measure. For weeks I was haunted by the stories told to me by Gladys Radek, a Gitksan activist and

advocate for missing and murdered women, who contextualized her work within the violence perpetrated against her and her relatives through the residential school system, foster care apprehensions, and continuing acts of corporeal and sexual violence. Not only did I struggle to listen to our interview – let alone write about it – but I quickly realized that writing about such instances of violence and intergenerational trauma, even within the context of my broader project about whose lives are mourned, was inappropriate and unethical as a white settler researcher, a total outsider in the communities I travelled through. My withdrawal from this component of my research project is in no way meant to signal that the problem of missing and murdered Indigenous women is unworthy of additional study, but giving the subject its due care and attention proved to be much too large of an undertaking within the limits of a master's thesis and my experience as a researcher. I also felt exploitative and uncomfortable as I realized the extent to which I misjudged my ability to open up further discussion of the Highway of Tears, even within a project that aimed critique at the primarily white institution of the Canadian military and their public supporters. The incidents (and intimacy) of violence that I learned about while in BC were unfathomable to me, and upset me to a point where I had to set my research aside for several months, before ultimately deciding I could not go ahead with it. Instead, I encourage attention to the work of Sarah Hunt (2013, 2014a, 2014b), Naomi Sayers (2013, 2014), and the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (2014), whose compassionate advocacy represents a vitally important presence in national discussions of First Nations issues.

I present my research on military memorialization to think through how the conditions that produced the Highway of Heroes contribute to a particular hierarchy of grievable subjects in Canada, one built upon the negation of the lives of those grieved on the Highway of Tears. While the mourning of missing women along Highway 16 is accompanied by an activism that is exemplary of the politics of nonviolence that Butler suggests can form out of a state of grief, the memorialization of Canadian soldiers along Highway 401 does not work towards such ends, instead strengthening support for military operations. I suggest that one reason for this is that the majority of those paying their respects along the Highway of Heroes do not participate in a process of grieving, but are more engaged in a collective and militarized performance of mourning rather than an intimate process of grief.

My thesis is organized into two main sections. In the first, I offer the scholarly and political context of this project, beginning with an overview of a selection of theories on landscape that provide the analytical framework for my examination of the Highway of Heroes. As I take up the highway site as an example of a militarized memorial landscape in contemporary Canada, I then turn to recent theoretical work on both militarization and memorialization in North America, informing a short history of how the Canadian Forces were remembered in the twentieth century. I conclude this chapter by thinking through the highway as a component of a global transport infrastructure that gives rise to particular mobilities, encouraging attention toward other users who transit through this memorial landscape. This chapter lays the groundwork for

my review of my empirical research, which comprises the bulk of my second chapter.

The second half of my thesis begins with a narrative “drive” along Highway 401, describing the experience of a repatriation ceremony from various points between Trenton and Toronto, compiled from audiovisual archives, the published testimonies of attendees, and my own observation. The qualitative mixed-methods approach that informed the empirical research I present in this chapter considers the diversity of producers of and perspectives towards the memorial landscape around the highway, accounting for both the influences of state and corporate institutions as well as the efforts of individuals on the formation of a military community around it. I then turn to my history of the production of the Highway of Heroes, beginning with the performances of mourning taking place on overpasses above the 401 first observed in 2002. I identify the different actors whose interests are embedded in these acts of memorialization, and describe how it has become entrenched in the Canadian cultural imaginary as well as the landscape of the 401, ending with a review of the various politics entrenched in the Highway of Heroes. I conclude my thesis by returning to Butler’s notion of a differential grievability of subjects, drawing connections between the Canadian “heroes” memorialized along the 401 and the missing and murdered Indigenous women remembered along the Highway of Tears.

Chapter one: landscape, militarization and memorialization

The domain of landscape has been a highly contested one in human geography, with major debates pertaining to its definition slipping between the material, represented, and phenomenological. The conceptual fluidity expressed through such discussions makes landscape highly appropriate as an analytical framework for studying the realm of everyday life. In his 2007 review of landscape's role in human geography, John Wylie summarized several theoretical approaches to the concept as consisting of "tense and contradictory" processes and perspectives: proximity and distance, observation and inhabitation, eye and land, and culture and nature (2007, 1-11). His description of the core tenets that underlie this array of debates conveniently doubles as a metaphor for the differences between them: the act of reading these paradigms alongside one another indicates the tense and contradictory positions at stake between them. However, common to these diverse understandings of landscape is a conception of it as including "both the land and the gaze upon it" (ibid, 55). In this section, I present several variations on the concept of landscape, highlighting a number of frameworks that can be used in tandem to explore the history of the Highway of Heroes and consider its impacts on everyday life in Canada.

Carl Sauer introduced the concept of "cultural landscapes" in 1925. In his study culminating in the paper entitled "The Morphology of Landscape", he treated the observations from his fieldwork in Latin America as the result of a causal relationship between a region's settled population and the environment they inhabited, the imprint of "culture" on "nature". Studying the characteristics

of these places then yields a better understanding of the people who lived there and exerted an influence upon their surroundings. Sauer's work inspired subsequent generations of scholarship that took the cultural landscape as its object of inquiry, but as Richard Walker charges, much of this earlier work was "altogether too evasive about systematic forces of political economy...answering who and what, in fact, create urban and rural environments" (1997, quoted in Groth and Wilson 2003, 16). These questions of production and politics drove the work of several cultural geographers including Denis Cosgrove, beginning with his seminal text *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (1998 [1984]).

Cosgrove's early work on landscape developed it as a geographical concept in synthesis with a critical history of landscape traditions in visual art. He challenged the notion that empirical observation can lead to a singular true understanding of landscape, using prominent examples of European painting to contest the "realism" offered by linear perspective. These images, he argued, worked to conceal inequality, labour and lived experience amongst the population, by promoting a particular idyllic vision of landscapes in correspondence with elite interests. Following John Berger (1972), by foregrounding the idea of landscape as a "way of seeing", Cosgrove elicited consideration of the multiplicity of alternate landscape visions, prompting questions about how dominant ones are supported and the ramifications of these representations (1998 [1984]).

He expanded on these themes in his work with Stephen Daniels (1988), who similarly developed a cultural Marxist approach to landscape in the mid-1980s. Like Cosgrove, Daniels (1985, 1989) took up the concept of vision in a

critique of humanist geographers whose leanings towards the truth inherent in subjective, individualized experiences, he contended, avoided engaging with the presence and influence of elite and capitalist ideology in the realm of everyday life. He and Cosgrove argued that instead of relying on empirical observation to tell the story of how communities have shaped their environments, or humanistic explorations of individual experience in space, landscapes should be interpreted as “layer[s] of cultural representation” (1988, 1) that not only promote the ideologies of the ruling classes, but actively conceal the politics and lived realities of those who live within them.

In the introduction to his 1994 text *Landscape and Power*, W.J.T. Mitchell clearly explains the implications of this theoretical approach:

...landscape as a cultural medium thus has a double role with respect to something like ideology; it naturalizes a cultural and social construction, representing an artificial world as if it were simply given and inevitable, and it also makes that representation operational by interpellating its beholder in some more or less determinate relation to its givenness as sight and site. (1994, 2)

This understanding of landscape as an ideological mechanism that simultaneously conceals and cements its political underpinnings is critical to my analysis of the Highway of Heroes. This approach taken by Cosgrove, Daniels and others, which questions the relationship between landscape and capitalist ideology can be used to explore the link between landscape and militarism.

Don Mitchell’s work has similarly focused on the relations between landscape and capitalism, with his extensive research in the agricultural fields of California drawing attention to the role of labour in landscapes that promote the circulation of commodities and capital (1996, 2003, 2010, 2012). His materialist

approach foregrounds the *production* of landscape, going beyond discussions of the influence of culture and capital to concentrate on the individuals whose work is harnessed in the working of land, their bodies and lived experiences, and the broader networks to which their lives are tied. Mitchell looks deeper into the question of representation raised by Cosgrove and Daniels to better illuminate the stakes of these explorations:

Allowed to float free, untethered to any material world, representations of landscape become pure ideology, able to be reshaped by all manner of powerful interests, and available to be put to use to structure and control not just meaning, but also the lives of those who live in the landscape (1996, 9).

Mitchell's line of inquiry exposes the geographies of violence additionally concealed in landscapes, and the role that their maintenance plays in perpetuating injustices. However, he also seeks to highlight the acts of resistance that occur as individuals negotiate their existence within landscapes, emphasizing these narratives in broader networks of capital circulation. His recent research, sited in California, examined the role that racialized migrant labourers played in producing the aesthetics of the state's landscape (1996) and agricultural lands (2012). While Mitchell's primary focus is the reciprocal relationship between landscapes and economic systems, his interrogation of their means of production, exposing their implication in regimes of corporeal violence, is an appropriate model for the exploration of militarized landscapes.

Such calls for attention to the "veiling" potential of landscapes have been critiqued for their tendency to concentrate on the external structures and agents that overdetermine their aesthetic and material forms, while neglecting the individuals that exist and the activities that take place within them. Recently,

scholars including Tim Cresswell (2003), Peter Merriman (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007), John Wylie (2005, 2010) and others have framed such discussions in terms of *practice* in landscapes, a dimension operating in tension with their materiality and fixity. Landscape research proceeding in this vein attends to the “everydayness” of their existence, treating the routines and experiences of those who inhabit these landscapes as critical in the interpretation of them. Instead of operating from the point of view of a detached observer, perhaps via the perspectives offered up in visual representations, those who consider practice to be an integral component of landscape write from within them, often drawing upon a multiplicity of embodied understandings from those in direct engagement with their surrounding environments.

This turn to the everyday is not new: many academic researchers writing in the 1990s and 2000s credit J.B. Jackson, who began writing (about) the American landscape in the 1950s, with laying the groundwork for a conception of landscape that prioritizes the observations associated with “ordinary” individuals and their movements. To Jackson, the practice of everyday life – to borrow a phrase from the eponymous text by Michel de Certeau (1984) – is as much of a constitutive presence in landscape as the material world, and incorporating such an inclusive perspective in landscape interpretation allows for discussions of social and cultural processes that take place in direct conversation with those individuals they impact. However, such a sensitivity to practice, leading to an apprehension of what Cresswell describes as “actual living landscapes” (2003, 274), renders the reciprocal relations of production between these actors and their surroundings much more visible, demonstrating that the ways that

individuals understand and negotiate their environments on a daily basis is as important of an influence on landscape as external entities shaping land in the name of capital. Writing in an edited volume about Jackson's influence on subsequent scholarship, Richard Schein states:

the cultural landscape is an important, even constitutive, part of social and cultural processes (no longer simply inert, or just detritus or spoor, but something central to the reproduction of human activity)...Its role in mediating social and cultural reproduction works through its ability to stand for something: norms, values, fears, and so on. Through our ability to read landscapes, those very norms, values, and fears are perpetuated, reproduced, or challenged (2003, 202-203).

This respect for the role of practice invokes consideration of the relationship between landscapes and the mobilities that facilitate the journeys to and through them. Again, the work of J.B. Jackson provides a helpful precedent: his interest in promoting serious engagement with the vernacular landscapes of America stemmed from his time spent driving across the country in 1946, following his discharge from the military after serving in the Second World War (Groth and Wilson 2003, 9). His nuanced observations of the changing views out his window, in combination with a careful attention to the meaning of his role as a driver-spectator, offered insight into the transformative potential of newfound mobilities on everyday life and engagement with one's surroundings, a time associated with the construction of the interstate highway network and the declining price of air travel (Jackson 1956, 1957, 1994).

The British geographer Peter Merriman has long advocated for increased scholarly attention to highway spaces as sites of social and cultural production (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007). He argues against the claims of several humanistic

geographers that the inability for individuals to form meaningful attachments to objects in the environment rendered highways and other spaces for travel “non-places” (2004, 146), a designation that left their potential as political spaces underexplored in geography. The assumption that all who inhabit such spaces are in transit subsumes those who are not moving through (maintenance workers and people who are homeless, for example) into a homogenous public of travellers, ignoring their diverse experiences (152). Merriman’s work illuminates the many subjectivities produced on highways, speaking directly to questions of landscape, vision and practice.

Merriman engages drivers and passengers – as well as those outside of vehicles – as participants in a “distinct yet transitory social group” (158), governed by legal codes, traffic flows and the work of engineers and landscape architects. He identifies their respective mobile gazes as constitutive of different landscape visions, each conditioned by these technologies of control, while working to broaden conceptions of what takes place in highway space to encompass practices beyond driving. Acknowledging the perspectives of these users facilitates the understanding of highways within a landscape framework, one that attends to the politics, possibilities and mobilities that animate them.

In a 2008 panel discussion on landscape, mobility and practice, several scholars spoke to the utility of this entanglement of concepts in geographical research, allowing gestures to be made to power structures and the phenomenology of individual experience in a way that does not conceal the complexity inherent in such analysis (Merriman et al. 2008). I take up this trajectory of thought in my engagement with the Highway of Heroes, in which I

employed a qualitative mixed-methods approach to consider the means in which production, representation and movement converged in both individual experience and national media in the creation of a memorial landscape closely tied to a complicated affective politics of militarization. I now turn to a review of recent literatures on militarization in order to better illustrate the political stakes of this investigation.

Militarization

The term “militarization” refers to the range of processes and practices that work to transform civil society in ways that facilitate the production of violence.

Beyond the expansion of budgets for armed forces, the ideological promotion of militarism, and the glorification of warfighting in entertainment media, militarization also encompasses the fundamental restructuring of social formations, identities, discourses and space. These shifts entail the normalization of military values and logics into the domain of “common sense”, affecting how violence is comprehended, discussed and carried out in the realm of everyday life.

Militarization is enacted and realized at a range of scales, from the technologically augmented body of the soldier to increasingly global networks of bases and installations that comprise the territorial holdings of many nations’ militaries, but also reflected in the minutiae of everyday life. Though it is typically associated with the organized apparatus of the state, critically, militarization takes place both inside and outside of “official” governmental structures.

Catherine Lutz (2002) explains militarization as a series of “tense and contradictory processes” that tie the technologies of wartime governance to

everyday life in realms ostensibly detached from the military. Such an expansion is enacted through institutional and economic restructuring as well as changes in political discourse, all of which have impacts on everyday social and cultural practices. Lutz links particular strategy and policy formations to distinct periods in the technological evolution of war, associating concepts such as widespread social benefit programs and civil defense with the industrial and nuclear modes of warfare, respectively (727). She also details the implications of these technological shifts on geographies of military labour and enlistment, using her ethnographic work in Fayetteville, North Carolina (home to Fort Bragg, a massive US Army base) to illustrate their impacts at the scale of the community. Her analysis encourages careful attention to the ways in which these processes unfold in the realm of everyday life.

Since September 11, 2001, the United States and its allies have been engaged in a state of permanent war, conducting combat operations and stationing security forces in several countries under the auspices of the Global War on Terror. The condition of perpetual military involvement in the affairs of other nations, which has required the training and deployment of hundreds of thousands of soldiers, established war as a “new normal” in America in the twenty-first century. Fundamental in this shift to conceptualizing war as an ongoing process of nation-building with indefinite objectives were processes of cultural militarization that serve to position the aims and values of a nation’s armed forces as aligned with the interests of its citizens, techniques developed during the Cold War (see Farish 2010). The terms of public discussion surrounding these matters were concurrently reconfigured. By binding ideas of

military strength to the perceived health of the nation (Lutz 2002, 724), tying past, present and future operations to the lives of “everyday people”, the lines between military and civilian life are blurred, while providing reminders of the military’s role in nation-building.

Such blurred lines are evident in the opening of Cynthia Enloe’s 2000 book *Maneuvers*, in which she describes her experience of encountering a can of soup in a British supermarket, its noodles explicitly shaped like weapons and satellites. The anecdote draws attention to the mundane means through which militarization takes root and shapes the lives of women around the world, and emphasizes that consumer items like the can of soup, camouflage-patterned condoms and khaki fashions have been deliberately and carefully designed to imbue everyday life with military values and aesthetics (1-2). (Deborah Cowen (2012) points out the militarized origins of the canning technique itself.) In the time since Enloe’s book was published, these products have been joined on the market by increasingly realistic objects and forms of entertainment that allow for the simulation of war using the assistance of sophisticated multimedia technologies.

James Der Derian (2009 [2001]) coined the term *military-industrial-media-entertainment network* to describe the nebulous, integrated consortium of public and private ventures that has transformed the ways in which war is conceived, as well as the ways in which it is fought. Gamers play multiplayer missions in immersive first-person shooters built on the same platforms used to train soldiers in situational awareness through scripted scenarios located in virtual Middle Eastern cities. The rise of precision bombing and “surgical strikes”

led to a new style of visualizing aerial warfare in the press, using maps and satellite imagery to illustrate news stories while minimizing impacts on the ground, thereby constructing cities as little more than targets for firepower (Graham 2006). These representational techniques are among an array of strategies used to increase the physical and discursive distance between members of the military community at large and those who live in the countries where they are deployed. Practices of cultural militarization play a significant role in sustaining the popular geographic imaginaries (Gregory 2004) that produce public support for the occupation of sovereign nations and the suspension of civil liberties “at home”. One discursive formation has been repeatedly engaged in a wide range of militarizing cultural practices in North America since the beginning of the Global War on Terror: the call to support the troops, symbolized in the form of the yellow ribbon.

Canadians have been called upon to “support our troops” since the CF’s Afghanistan mission officially began in 2002, though the motto was in active use in the United States since the Gulf War began in the early 1990s (Beamish, Molotch, and Flacks 1995; Coy, Woehrle, and Maney 2008; Stahl 2009; McCready 2010). The sentiment is frequently present in public dialogue about the war, allowing for pro-military discussion without directly engaging the terms of the conflict. The ambiguity inherent in the phrase is what makes it such a potent political tool, aimed at enabling the support of a diverse base of citizens. The simple statement begs the question: what does supporting the troops actually entail? The expression stands in for a wide spectrum of attitudes concerning the military, and is taken up by those who have family members in active service to

those who do not consider themselves political and those who may not support a particular mission, but care for the well-being of those deployed. Its success as a slogan lies in the fact that it is extremely difficult to argue against – to reverse the previous question, what does it mean to *not* support the troops? Is the opposite of support a desire to see them killed or injured?

As A.L. McCready writes, the motto's "very ambiguity...is not accidental, but works to delimit, enforce and militarize the borders of public debate" (2010, 33). Meanwhile, in a chilling statement, Roger Stahl claims that "the appearance of the phrase is often a signal that there will be no debate" (2009, 535). The notion of support for the troops has effectively transformed discussions of military operations in the public sphere by compelling politicians, peace organizations and activists to speak in these terms as well, lest they be stigmatized as unpatriotic (Richler 2012, 226; McKay and Swift 2012, 253). The motto serves to conflate support for individual soldiers with support for the mission and the nation (Heilbronn 1994, 162; McCready 2010, 43). Nevertheless, activism continues to take place through subversions of the message – for example, through the claim "Support Our Troops – Bring Them Home", or by questioning whose responsibility it is to support them, drawing attention to governments' inadequately funded programs for veterans.

In his study of the evolution of the "support our troops" discourse, Stahl (2009) attributes this transformation of public debate to two rhetorical tropes mobilized through its use: deflection, which serves to shift the focus of war from military administration and policy objectives to the welfare of individual soldiers, and disassociation, a technique that widens the discursive difference between

soldiers and civilians in order to position participation in democratic dissent as entirely oppositional and threatening to the soldier's well-being. He investigates the deliberate use of the term "troops" in the phrase (as opposed to "military", "soldiers" or "war") – this choice of words illustrates a shift in attention from policymakers to those carrying out orders, obfuscates the identities of individual soldiers in favour of a view that sees them as a singular entity, and collapses the distinction between the lower ranks and leadership (549).

While taking up the call to support their troops (often by reproducing the sentiment) is an inherently political action, its positioning in terms of participating in familiar relations of care between civilians and soldiers – not the state – leads many to believe that this statement is benign and apolitical.

McCready writes:

This ability to maintain conceptual discretion between soldiers and the wars they fight, far from offering a simple "out", however, foregrounds the need for broad public debate on the conditions we are willing to impose upon young men and women, and on what exactly might constitute adequate "care" and "support," even as it silences those very practices so necessary to full public engagement in this most pressing issue of public interest. (2012, 106)

The "support our troops" discourse has materialized in the form of the aforementioned yellow ribbon, which is frequently seen pinned to outfits, tied to trees, printed on flags and stuck to the back of vehicles. Wearing or otherwise displaying the ribbon can be read as a public expression of support, one that is simple for individuals to participate in due to its inexpensive, do-it-yourself nature. While typically seen as a grassroots gesture, with its folkloric origins appealing to a history rooted in the American Civil War (Marks 1991, Santino

1992, Heilbronn 1994, McCready 2012), the symbol is sold on a diverse range of household items, and is increasingly seen on public servants, buildings and vehicles as governments and councils have sanctioned its display in public space, providing “official” support of military operations.

In Canada, the rise of the Support our Troops slogan and the increased visibility of the yellow ribbon was concurrent with the onset of Canadian Forces fatalities in Afghanistan (McCready 2010, 43). The public sentiment associated with this discourse worked to limit critical discussion of Canada’s involvement in the war, illustrating the various ways in which dead bodies are involved and invoked in political debate. In this next section, I describe the ways in which the bodies of deceased soldiers are implicated in the politics of ongoing military operations while gesturing to their role as actors in the production of landscape.

Dead bodies

Though the corporeal death of a person ends their ability to initiate engagement with the world around them, it is a mistake to assume that their political life ends when their body ceases to be alive. Anyone who has lost a loved one is familiar with their emotional and social presence for those who remain, facilitating understanding with theories that position the dead as subjects that continue to yield political influence.

Recent studies of posthumous political life have proceeded from the recognition that “[c]orpses form a link between the living and the dead” (Young and Light 2013, 137). In cases of death resulting from violence, neglect or precarity, the conditions leading to an individual’s death connect personal loss to

the realm of the political. Michel Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France, published as *Society Must Be Defended* (2003) and *Security, Territory, Population* (2009 [2004]), used the concepts of *biopolitics* and *biopower* to locate politics and the control of populations at the individual level, emphasizing the importance of identifying such apparatuses of power in discussions of human agency. The regulation of life in service to governments and institutions works to solicit adherence to norms that police behaviours, actions and identities that are enacted and expressed at the scale of the body. The implications of such a reading of power are rendered chillingly clear in later works by Giorgio Agamben (1998) and Achille Mbembe (2003), who define the concept of sovereign power through the capacity to dictate who lives and who dies. Their writings clearly point to the extensive politics in play in acts of public mourning. Craig Young and Duncan Light (2013) argue for the expansion of "geographies of the body" to include those produced around corpses, claiming that "bodies quite literally underpin – both metaphorically and materially – everything that happens" in *deathscapes*, a concept I will return to at the end of this section. (Woodthorpe 2010, 64; cited in Young and Light 2012, 137)

The corpses of military servicemembers are imbued with a politicized identity that has come to be associated with a specific form of reverence towards their lives and bodies. In exchange for their service to the nation, soldiers have historically received social welfare benefits, a technique designed to encourage loyalty to the state and war efforts through the promise that soldiers and their families would be cared for in case of injury or death. As Deborah Cowen (2005, 2007, 2008) writes, this manner of rights-provision, contingent upon a particular

kind of nationalized labour, later laid the foundation for the initial form of the Canadian welfare state, one built upon an entitlement-based approach to social citizenship and individual rights. However, the Canadian Forces faced a crisis of enlistment as the benefits associated with soldiering were no longer considered extraordinary – alongside a reconfigured recruitment strategy that targeted aboriginal Canadians and ethnic and sexual minorities, the soldier was increasingly discursively positioned as the ideal national citizen (Cowen 2008). This is demonstrated through the ways in which soldier deaths are framed in the national consciousness.

Following their corporeal death, the identities of fallen soldiers maintain a political sociality that serves to solidify particular narratives and discourses surrounding warfare. Edward Luttwak's (1995, quoted in Wasinski 2008) claim that public support for war is conditional on the minimization of military mortality is taken up by Christophe Wasinski in his theoretical investigation into the politics of American soldier deaths. Wasinski traces the historical production of military casualties as a separate, singular category of death, one that is differentiated from other kinds of death by its institutional linkage to the state and its careful regulation by military administration. Taking Foucault's concept of biopolitics into the afterlife, he links the tightly controlled management of the soldier's body to the ability of the military to maintain discursive control over the circumstances of their death, as well as their postmortem identity.

Patricia Molloy (2005) recalls the outpouring of emotions and opinions in the Canadian press that followed the deaths of four Canadian Forces soldiers in the Tarnak Farm friendly-fire incident that marked the first Canadian casualties

of the Afghanistan mission (Department of National Defence 2002). The CF's involvement in the war was widely debated, with many urging the government to reconsider its partnership with the American military after President George W. Bush took several days to acknowledge their deaths (Molloy 2005, 6-8). Crucially, these deaths differed from previous Canadian military fatalities – including those of the 108 peacekeepers who had been killed over the previous five decades – in how they were discursively positioned in the national consciousness. Molloy contends that, unlike previous Canadian casualties, those killed in Afghanistan were memorialized as heroes across the nation in obituaries penned by journalists and politicians, deploying a trope that rapidly emerged in the United States following 9/11. The deaths of these four soldiers set the tone for the reception and reporting of future casualties, in a manner that would come to have a significant influence on public support for military engagement in Canada.

This production of reverence around the fallen soldier has been amplified by a post-9/11 cultural tendency to invoke a discourse of heroism around the deaths of men and women in uniform. When a soldier dies in battle, they are usually recalled as a hero and honoured for their courage, bravery, selflessness and their “ultimate sacrifice”. The term retains its classical definition, signifying the hero as one who possesses exceptional qualities and the utmost in values, typifying the “best” and “most valuable citizens” that a nation has to offer (Richler 2012, 153). These expressions distinguish soldiers from ordinary citizens by underscoring their willingness to serve their country in combat, a quality that tragically materializes in the events leading to their deaths.

However, what becomes of the remembrance of soldiers killed in accidents (such as at Tarnak Farm) or other non-combat circumstances? Should they be counted as heroes, Molloy asks, or are they victims? Returning to Wasinski's discussion of the social control of dead soldiers' identities, the hero designation becomes crucial in maintaining political and social order within and outside of the military community. The hero inspires his or her comrades to carry on fighting, while public recognition that they did not "die in vain" serves to stabilize support for military operations (2008, 121). The use of language steeped in mythology, linking young combat recruits to the embodiment of a militarized national essence, is entangled in simultaneous efforts to narrate the origins of Canadian nationhood as having been seeded in battle, realized in a suite of recent cultural productions aimed at retelling the nation's history through the lens of a warrior class for a contemporary audience.

The problems with such a reading of soldiering and heroism are illuminated when the demographics of the deceased are considered: the majority of North American soldiers killed in recent wars reflect not a warrior class, but the working class. The growing influence of neoliberalism on processes of militarization that shape the nature of contemporary conflict, including recruitment practices and the division of military labour, have disproportionately affected racialized people, women, documented and undocumented migrants, sexual minorities and lower-income populations, particularly as the transition to neoliberal capitalism has led increasing numbers to enlist in the military as a means to financial stability (see Harvey 2003, Giroux 2008, Graham 2010, Cowen and Siciliano 2011, and Gallaher 2012). Jennifer Terry (2009) has

interrogated the social and ethical conditions of military injury in her study of what she calls “woundscapes”. Such an attention to the broader demographic and socioeconomic narratives reflected, but obscured, in the coverage of soldier deaths yields insight into the extent and nature of the violence perpetrated and sustained by processes of militarization. The contrast between such uneven geographies of opportunity with the “sacred” space produced around the repatriation motorcade prompts investigation into how this space is produced, and what other geographies it intersects along the highway.

Young and Light argue that such examinations of “deathscapes” are sensitive to the ways in which emotion, politics and memory intersect in spaces of mourning and remembrance, and provide human geographers with a means with which to critically engage the affective politics of death in spaces of everyday life (2013). They advocate for an attention to the role that corpses play in the arrangement of actors and activities in space, providing a case for realizing the dead as involved in the production of landscape. My analysis of the Highway of Heroes proceeds from their perspective on the importance of considering “deathwork” in landscape, but first requires a review of some of the Canadian military memorial traditions engaged along the highway.

Military memorialization

“[T]he power of war as an agent of nation-building transcends the logistics of the implementation of state power. It is as if societies are hard-wired to always transform the grim realities of human sacrifice and suffering into collective psychic energy and a confirmation of putative national values.” (Osborne 2001, 52)

Patricia Durish (2004) encourages a reading of Canadian rituals of public military mourning as potent pedagogical tools with significant implications for the production of national citizenship: beyond the opportunities for storytelling and intergenerational engagement cultivated through them, they carry out critical work in the domain of civic education, connecting individuals with “official” knowledge through the medium of state-sanctioned public culture. In this section, I offer a brief history of Canadian military memorial traditions and commemorations that demonstrates this public engagement with particular politics and narratives.

Benedict Anderson identified cenotaphs and Tombs of the Unknown Soldier as the two most “arresting emblems” of modern nationalism (2006 [1983], 9), around which imagined communities are formed through demonstrations of a shared national consciousness. He points to the parallels between military remembrance and religious observances associated with death, probing the idea of the “ultimate sacrifice” to ask what leads citizens to give their lives to national service and the “deep, horizontal comradeship” associated with it (144, 7). Canada’s contributions to global conflicts are frequently invoked in discussions of Canadian national identity, and are recalled across the country through public ceremonies, monuments, and popular histories (Durish 2004, McCready 2012, McKay and Swift 2012, Richler 2012).

While statues dedicated to those who served in colonial wars were erected across Ontario and Quebec through the opening years of the twentieth century, it was the First World War that sparked widespread and enduring practices of public commemoration across the country. The war took place well after the

decline of a period that is now referred to by scholars as “statue mania”: across Europe and North America, monuments were constructed en masse as the governments of fledgling nation-states sought to instill and strengthen conceptions of a shared national identity among their citizens (Osborne 2001, 51-52; Doss 2010, 20-30). The likenesses of great nation-builders – mainly explorers, leaders and soldiers, the vast majority of whom were men – were produced to endorse and impart particular civic virtues while establishing the grounds for an “official” version of public memory.

As communities across Canada were affected by the monumental losses sustained on the battlefield, memorials to the nation’s war dead were dedicated all over the country, honouring those whose remains now lay in European cemeteries. Each November 11, organized Remembrance Day events take place across the country, giving Canadians the opportunity to pay their respects to veterans. Often taking place at the site of monuments, these highly visible ceremonies attract many in uniform, and typically involve moments of silence, the playing of the Last Post and reveille, the wearing of poppies, the laying of wreaths, and a recitation of “In Flanders Fields”, arguably Canada’s best-known poem. Remembrance Day traditions are institutionalized performances, taught to Canadian schoolchildren through solemn assemblies and lessons in military history, treated as a statutory holiday in most provinces, and frequently attended by public figures.

Erika Doss (2010, 13) describes contemporary memorials as “archives of public affect” that shape the production and reception of identity and collective memory through the materialization of emotional appeals to local, national, and

global audiences. Her survey of American memorial practice from “statue mania” through the early twenty-first century notes a shift from monumental state contributions to the urban landscape toward spontaneous, participant-driven interventions and the political mobilization of mourners outside of government institutions. She organizes commemorative practices around the different collective affects that they engage: grief, fear, shame, anger, and in the case of war memorials, gratitude. All of these emotions are harnessed through what Eric Hobsbawm (1983) named “invented traditions”. These secular public rituals that through repetition aim to establish identification with a sense of a shared historical past: of these five conditions, the production of a timeless nationalism is especially evident in formalized expressions of gratitude. Gathered in memory of Canadian veterans, the timely reenactments of mourners serve to establish military dead as exalted national subjects (see Thobani 2007), celebrating particular virtues as inherent to a quintessential and eternal Canadian identity, and producing sacred political space around the body of the “fallen” soldier.

Forty-eight hours after the deaths of the first Canadian Forces soldiers to be killed in combat in five decades, the bodies of Sergeant Marc Léger, Corporal Ainsworth Dyer, Private Richard Green and Private Nathan Smith were flown back to Canada on a military cargo plane, landing at Canadian Forces Base Trenton, approximately two hours east of Toronto in April 2002 (Yaniszewski 2007). In front of an audience of fellow soldiers, dignitaries and the media, their caskets were carried by their comrades from the aircraft to a funeral motorcade in a ceremonial transfer known as the repatriation ceremony. This solemn performance was televised live to a national audience, exposing many Canadians

to this military practice for the first time. When the soldiers' remains had been loaded into the waiting hearses, the cortège made its way towards the gates, commencing its journey to the office of Ontario's chief coroner in Toronto. Some residents along the route, watching at home on TV, made their way towards Highway 401, hoping to catch a glimpse of the motorcade as it passed below.

Since 2002, the repatriation ceremony has taken place for each of the 158 Canadian soldiers killed during the war in Afghanistan. Over the years, thousands of soldiers, veterans, first responders and "ordinary Canadians" have lined the more than fifty overpasses that span the repatriation route to pay their respects to the fallen and their families. What is now known as the Highway of Heroes emerged around a particular convergence of geographies and mobilities along one of the busiest highways in North America, as a Canadian public in mourning has produced a national military memorial landscape around the movement of the body of the "fallen Canadian hero".

Conclusion

After the repatriation motorcade leaves Trenton and starts its westbound journey, it is encountered by many workers critical in the operation of global supply chains, alongside commuters, travellers, and those just out for a drive. In his examination of the potential for spaces of mobility to play host to the production of meaning and "cultures of movement", Ole Jensen (2009) uses David Grahame Shane's concepts of "armatures" and "enclaves" to prompt consideration of the social relations and politics that are tied up in movement. Despite the tendency toward individual travel in private automobiles and delivery

vehicles along the armature that is Highway 401, involvement in the public spectacle of the repatriation ceremony and its rituals of public mourning is anything but a solitary experience. In the following chapter, I reconstruct the visual and affective experience of the drive, introduce the actors involved in the formation of a community around the Highway of Heroes, and detail the militarized politics embedded in the landscape. Recalling J.B. Jackson's emphasis on the importance of the perspectives of individual drivers, and Peter Merriman's arguments for the consideration of a highway as a space for the formation of political subjects, I connect the act of driving through the memorial landscape with the production of support for the troops.

Chapter 2: Exploring the landscape of the Highway of Heroes

In this chapter, I present the body of work gathered during my archival and field research surrounding military mourning on the Highway of Heroes. Through this textual reconstruction of the landscape of the highway, I will illustrate the means by which the politics of memorializing dead Canadian soldiers remains present in the realm of everyday life along the 401. I use this empirical work to ask: how does the presence of such a militarized memorial in and around Toronto contribute to the perception of particular lives as grievable? How do repatriation ceremonies and the Highway of Heroes participate in the production of support for a range of acts of violence, both “at home” and overseas? I use this case study to gesture to the implications of the politics embedded in such memorial landscapes.

This chapter draws upon multimedia archival work, semi-structured interviews with key informants, participant observation, and documentation of my own travels along and around the repatriation route. I combine my own engagement with the highway’s site and subjects with a variety of textual and visual representations of deceased Canadian Forces soldiers and the landscape they are memorialized along. This mixed-methods approach allows for simultaneous engagement with popular big-picture representations of the Highway of Heroes in the Canadian press and the nuances of localized tributes along the route, and speaks directly to the strains of landscape theory I presented in the previous chapter. As the highway memorial landscape cannot be seen in its entirety, I use the narrative form to offer an account of the repatriation journey

that speaks to the multitude of productions, performances, and perspectives that converge along the route.

Along the highway

Outside CFB Trenton, spectators begin to gather well in advance of the arrival of the repatriation flight, scheduled to arrive at two o'clock in the afternoon. From a distance, they can see officials arranging mourners on the tarmac beyond the chain-link fence to which many small Canadian flags are fastened. They see hearses and limousines – sometimes dozens of them – parked in formation, as well as many media trucks, if family members of the deceased consented to coverage. In the case that they didn't, the trucks line up alongside the fence outside the base, where camera crews frame their shots with a long zoom. Silence falls as the aircraft makes its approach and lands, coming to rest near the rows of family members and dignitaries.



Figure 5: Repatriation ceremony at CFB Trenton (Photo by Pete Fisher, 2010)

The belly of the plane opens as bagpipes break the silence and a team of young, uniformed pallbearers arranges to receive the flag-draped casket of their comrade. Repatriations on Airbuses feel a little more awkward than those on Globemaster planes: disembarking involves a mechanical lift transporting the party from the cargo hold to the ground, instead of a ramp unfolding that allows them to descend on their own (Johnston 2012). They cross the tarmac, gently placing the casket in the back of a waiting hearse. The process is repeated for each of the fallen. Family members, close to their loved ones for the first time since death, grieve openly as they approach the vehicle, placing roses on the casket before the back door is closed. They are ushered into limousines for the trip to downtown Toronto.

The cortège exits the base onto Highway 2, led by military and Ontario Provincial Police vehicles. The spectators who watched from the fence have moved onto the road, flanking the lane left open for the motorcade, which slowly makes its way through the gates, passing the photographers and the Support Our Troops banners and the honour guard of Legion members and the drivers who stopped their cars to get out and pay their respects. From the base to the 401, the drive is approximately five minutes long. The lead car turns right at RCAF Road, across the street from Bain Park, home to the recently constructed Afghanistan Repatriation Memorial, unveiled on Remembrance Day in 2012. They drive north, past the suburban neighbourhood of CF family housing, the Canex convenience store, the rec centre, and empty fields, turning left onto Hamilton Road, a residential street. Large blue signs with poppies on them mark the imminent start of the Highway of Heroes. Families stand at the ends of their

driveways, waving small Canadian flags, while someone has planted them every few metres by the side of the road. Yellow ribbons hang in windows and on doors. The motorcade turns right again at Glen Miller Road, heading towards the highway.



Figure 6: Local residents await the procession in Trenton (photo by Pete Fisher, 2010)

There are dozens of men, women and children on the bridge that crosses the 401, along with several police cars and an ambulance. OPP cruisers hold traffic on the highway below, causing a widening gap to form between the stopped cars and those in front of them. A team of construction workers was repairing the ramp when they saw the convoy approaching and lined up along the side of the road, removing their hard hats. The long line of funeral cars and emergency vehicles, lights flashing, drives through the gap in the throng gathered

to pay their respects, turning right onto the ramp to circle onto the Highway of Heroes.

The trip from Trenton to Toronto takes just under two hours if you're driving over the speed limit with a police escort. Several of those riding in the motorcade have done this trip numerous times and have witnessed the changes in the highway over the years, as more and more Canadians have become aware of the repatriation ceremony and the patriotic mourning rituals associated with it. The Ontario Ministry of Transportation put up new signs shortly after the 401 was officially designated the Highway of Heroes in 2007: several large blue ones with poppy icons, displaying the name in both official languages, and many small white shields, also bearing poppies, placed alongside the route-numbered shields that appear just after each onramp. At some point since then, an unknown party attached yellow ribbons to each one of these smaller signposts – it wasn't the MTO or one of their contractors, but someone pulling over onto the shoulder every few kilometres to make a personal contribution to the landscape (Doupe 2013). Some farmers whose properties abut the westbound lanes fly the Canadian flag at half-mast on repatriation days and climb their fences to watch the motorcade pass by. In 2012, signs were erected just west of Trenton announcing a landscaping project to plant rows of poppies along this side of the highway, a partnership between the provincial government and the Royal Canadian Legion. The highway passes through the rolling terrain of Northumberland County, through forests and fields, and there are sections at the crests of hills where you can see far enough into the distance to make out the large group standing on the next overpass.

It is these bridges that are the most iconic component of the Highway of Heroes. A handful of people came out to witness the first repatriation in 2002 – local residents who were watching TV at home, firefighters and police officers who learned of the procession over the radio – and they waved and saluted the hearses as they passed by underneath. Over time, more civilians, more uniformed personnel and more families turned out to witness soldiers' returns as news of the gatherings spread. They dress in red, hang banners, wave flags; the maple leaf, the provincial colours, Legion emblems, the yellow ribbon. The first responders park their vehicles on the overpasses, lights flashing, climbing onto the roof to offer a salute to the cortège. The scene repeats itself on every bridge. On some there are hundreds of people.



Figure 7: A crowd assembled on an overpass (photo by Pete Fisher, 2008)

The road widens from four lanes and six and then to eight. The fields end; the industrial sites and distribution centres and big-box stores begin. Their flags are lowered. Beyond the sound-dampening walls are suburban subdivisions. The

next three overpasses arrive in quick succession, and each one is crowded with people. Rush-hour traffic begins to accumulate, and some drivers in eastbound lanes see the flashing lights of the oncoming motorcade, pull over, and get out of their vehicles to lean over the median and watch. The police have blocked each onramp with their cars, their uniformed officers standing at attention on the shoulder, holding a rigid salute.



Figure 8: Memorial assembly over the Don Valley Parkway in Toronto (photo by Pete Fisher, 2009)

At the western border of Pickering, the OPP escort cars pull out of formation and Toronto Police units take their place, with additional cars blocking the weaves between the express and collector divisions of the now 16-lane

highway. The cortège passes factories, business parks, condo buildings, malls, parking lots, public transit stations, and hundreds of people on the bridges – more police, more firefighters, more EMS workers. Within minutes they turn south onto the Don Valley Parkway, the scenic route for driving into Toronto’s downtown core. Signs – again bearing poppies – indicate the beginning of the Route of Heroes and read “Lest We Forget”. The vehicles travel between office towers and apartment buildings and the green space alongside the Don River and under the fiftieth bridge and pull off at the next exit, following the direction of another sign with a poppy on it. A team of cops on motorcycles and bikes hold pedestrians and traffic back as the motorcade comes to a red light at an intersection in downtown Toronto. Their radios squawk out the names of cross-streets as the cortège crosses each one, giving their colleagues an idea of the procession’s ETA. The warning whoop-whoops of police sirens echo in the valley of Bloor Street highrises as the cars slowly proceed through streets whose signs bear small maple leaves, each intersection blocked by uniformed officers. On the crowded streets of one of the city’s busiest intersections, pedestrians look up unexpectedly as the procession drives by, most of them unaware of what is taking place. Many stop to watch until all of the vehicles have passed. The motorcycle officers at the lead turn left onto Bay Street between government blocks and people waiting for the bus. A bike cop blows her whistle to keep the street clear as the repatriation motorcade turns onto Grenville Street, where the coroner’s office is located.

A staff sergeant in dress uniform to attention – *“to our fallen comrade, salute!”* – and two lines of police officers, one on either side of Grenville, form an

honour guard for the incoming soldiers and their families, just behind police headquarters. The small parking lot next door is taken up by a veterans' motorcycle squad: their members, some in leather, some in uniform, take up the salute as well. The lot's attendant dons the red t-shirt that he keeps in his booth. The end of the street is blocked off by a fire truck and an ambulance, lights flashing, and two police officers on horseback, with representatives in dress from all three emergency services holding their respective colours. Some civilians gathered outside the housing co-operative on the north side of the street, a Support Our Troops flag hung from its façade, unfold their flags. A young father out walking with his daughter crouches to explain to her what is taking place in front of them.



Figure 9: Police officers and a veterans' motorcycle corps salute the procession on Grenville St. (photo by Jordan Hale, 2011)

It is eerily silent in this part of the downtown core as the motorcycles and cruisers and military police SUVs and limousines and hearses carrying flag-draped caskets and the bikes taking up the rear pass slowly through the crowd gathered on Grenville, past the TV cameras and photographers and pomp and circumstance and the man dressed in a personalized red and white track suit monogrammed with “Mr. Canada” and a Canadian flag cape. The motorcade pulls into a small laneway and descends down the driveway into the basement of the coroner’s office, one vehicle at a time, past a graffiti rendition of the Highway of Heroes, a tribute in teenage spraypaint. The garage door closes behind them.

The salutes fall but everyone remains. After a few minutes, a soldier in uniform emerges from the building and is greeted by the staff sergeant, who leads him over to the row of mourners lined up on the sidewalk. The woman closest to them extends her hand to the escorting officer, who has just accompanied the body of one of his closest friends home from the other side of the world, looks him in the eye, and tells him that all Canadians are mourning with him today. He nods, takes a deep breath and a step forward and accepts the hand of the person next to her.

The making of the Highway of Heroes

The political potency of the landscape of the Highway of Heroes is better understood by taking into consideration the actors who facilitated its production, while also keeping in mind the varied perspectives of those who drive along the route, exposed to a particular militarized politics in the course of their movements. Reading the landscape while thinking through the processes of

militarization reviewed in the previous chapter predictably implicates the Canadian Forces in discussions of its genesis. Indeed, the Highway of Heroes derives from several policy decisions made by the Canadian Forces around the onset of the war in Afghanistan. While the effects of these decisions were first realized in the public sphere through prominent coverage of repatriation ceremonies provided by national media networks, understanding these actions with respect to recent Canadian military history allows the associated politics to be read in the landscape.

The history of repatriation in the Canadian Forces

Canadian soldiers were buried in the countries where they died until 1973, as refrigerated cargo transport technologies fine-tuned in the previous decade allowed an airman killed in a training accident to be repatriated (Williams 2011). As the Canadian Forces had not participated in combat operations in the five decades before the war in Afghanistan, they lacked an internal mortuary affairs unit to deal with the fatal casualties of the Afghan war. However, as the peacekeeping missions of the 1990s resulted in the occasional loss of soldiers' lives, military administrators realized that more formalized protocols for handling death were required – the Canadian Forces did not have the necessary in-house expertise to respond to the possibilities of death in theatre, so the DND issued a request for proposals from specialized private enterprises to provide continuing mortuary services for the military (Cole 2012).

The Canadian Forces first contracted the services of Toronto firm MacKinnon & Bowes in 1997, who adapted procedures for the return of personnel

killed overseas based on protocols developed by the United States Army Mortuary Affairs Unit (ibid). MacKinnon & Bowes now dispatches their staff to manage the repatriation of Canadian soldiers, trains servicemembers in what to do in case of a fatality, plans response scenarios according to the hazards of particular missions, and coordinates all postmortem logistics for the deceased and their loved ones. Following an incident where M&B staff were suspicious of the cause of death given by a local physician after a Canadian peacekeeper died in Bosnia, arrangements were made for autopsies to be performed on all CF soldiers killed on deployments – these are conducted at the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario in Toronto, at the end of the Highway of Heroes.

While logistical preparations had been made for the possibility of multiple casualties, MacKinnon & Bowes director Allan Cole expressed in our 2012 interview that the 2002 friendly fire incident at Tarnak Farm that took the lives of four soldiers proved to be a significant challenge for the Canadian Forces (Cole 2012). The loss of troops as a part of the already-controversial deployment of CF soldiers to assist in the American invasion of Afghanistan prompted considerable anger in the Canadian press, particularly after the considerable time it took President George W. Bush to acknowledge the incident (see Molloy 2005). The sensitive politics of the fast-moving operation were highly visible in the outpouring of grief that followed, as criticisms of the governments involved were invoked in much public discourse surrounding the loss of Canadian life, as civilians questioned the circumstances and meaning of their deaths in combat, frequently ignoring the nearly 200 peacekeepers who had died while deployed over the previous decades (ibid; Cole 2012). During our conversation, Cole

showed me a photograph of the repatriation ceremony at CFB Trenton after the plane carrying the four soldiers had landed on the tarmac, noting that one group of constituents was visibly absent from the arrangement of political dignitaries on the ground – the Canadian Forces did not make plans for the families of the deceased to be in attendance. Instead, they watched the solemn ceremony live on television, the same broadcast that inspired some residents of eastern Ontario to head to the highway to witness the procession's journey to Toronto.

In reviewing a presentation he made to CF officers on mortuary affairs, Cole mentioned this incident and others where states were criticized for acts of disrespect towards their war dead as arguments for the importance of planning for the postmortem care of military servicemembers. He pointed to newspaper clippings documenting and reflecting the public outrage that accompanied a range of perceived violations of the sanctity of the bodies of the dead, from the use of incorrectly-sized flags on caskets to the misidentification of remains. While members of the Canadian Forces committed some of these errors in judgment and protocol, the more egregious examples that he raised were associated with the Spanish, Russian and Australian militaries. He positioned these incidents as linked to a particular national (im)morality, one supposedly inferior to the ethical standards held by Canadians:

It was just a comparison of what other nationalities did with their war dead. This was in Russia during the Chechen war, what they did with their war dead, they literally brought them home and put them on the floor of an un-air conditioned facility and asked relatives to come by to try and identify their loved ones. So you literally walk through what is like a gymnasium and look at what's left laying on the floor and see if you could find if that was your loved one. So I showed them this to show them, you know, the difference between Westernized philosophies and what the

obvious thing was, what the Russians, the former Soviets, presumed to be the standard level of care was way down here, and they felt that was acceptable. In North American society, our morals are such that we'd expect it to be way up here, we honour our dead, let's say. (Cole 2012)

A preparedness plan for military mortality that includes the demonstration of care for the deceased and their families works to reduce public criticism of the circumstances leading to their deaths, while ostensibly illustrating the superiority of North American values towards the lives of soldiers. With the assistance of its private sector mortuary services partner, the Canadian Forces developed a suite of protocols for handling the death and repatriation of soldiers with appropriate public reverence. This included the appointment of a Repatriation Officer (the individual tasked with liaising with the families of the deceased and taking care of their immediate needs soon as a death is confirmed), the standardization of the choreographed routine that is the repatriation ceremony, the development of a media and communications strategy, and extensive coordination with other public institutions, including police forces, to encourage the participation of their members as well as members of the public. Though not explicitly a government-led initiative, the Highway of Heroes became the landscape where these politically-charged relations of care were displayed.

The performance on the bridges

As noted previously, the live media coverage of the first repatriation ceremony led some residents living in communities near the 401 to drive to the highway in the hopes of witnessing the passing of the cortège after commentators announced the route on air. On the overpasses, they engaged in what became a routinized

memorial performance that served to transform the highway into a national memorial landscape for mourners and drivers alike. In a broad archive of photo and video documentation of repatriation ceremonies from bridges, I identified a repertoire of the key characteristics and behaviors observed among those gathered to pay their respects, many of them drawing upon symbols associated with the production of patriotism and nationalism. These memorial performances speak to the senses of mobility and practice that Cresswell, Merriman and Wylie argue are key components of landscape, demonstrating the diversity and depth of the social and political lives of those who inhabit them.

In interviews with me as well as with Pete Fisher, author of the 2011 book *Highway of Heroes: True Patriot Love*, those in attendance often justified their presence in two ways, expressing desires to witness the return of soldiers themselves as well as to express their condolences. While most observed the moment of the passing of the procession with a moment of silence, others performed their grief with a salute, placing their hand over their heart, or waving to the occupants of the vehicles. Those who came to witness the passing of the cortège spoke of feeling deeper connections to the CF through the sacrifices of soldiers, while others showed up to demonstrate their support for the loved ones of the deceased, as well as the Canadian Forces. I frequently encountered the statement that turning out to the bridges and expressing such gratitude in public was “the right thing to do”. This sentiment, expressed in moral terms and often without justification, dovetails neatly with the “support the troops” discourse examined in the previous chapter. The increasing national media coverage of

repatriation ceremonies serves as an implicit endorsement of this opinion, facilitating its reproduction without substantively investigating or challenging it.

Also frequently encountered was a metonymic placement of those in attendance along the highway as embodying the beliefs of “all Canadians”. The “sad-proud” hybrid emotion named by a team of Toronto political science researchers appeals to a widespread affective sensibility in a manner that normalizes the righteousness of intervention in Afghanistan. In their analysis of opinion poll data and their own interviews, Fletcher, Bastedo and Hove (2009) noted that attendance at repatriation ceremonies was correlated with transforming negative opinions towards Canada’s involvement in the war into feelings of support. A follow-up study (Fletcher and Hove 2010) confirmed that the visibility of flag-draped caskets in the media and in person at repatriation ceremonies served to bolster support for Canadian troops in Afghanistan, instead of lessening it. In charting longitudinal trends of support for the mission, the authors illustrate the political potency of this ritual by comparing the effects of repatriation ceremony attendance to the perceived results of the public engagement campaign conducted by the Government of Canada beginning in 2006 (Fletcher, Bastedo and Hove 2009). The “grassroots” memorial practice along the highway, initiated by individuals, proved to be more effective in swaying the opinions of selected Canadians than the government’s informational strategy, launched to counter flagging public support for the mission.

Over time, as news of the ritual grew, those gathered along the highway could generally be classified into three groups: civilians, veterans, and first responders (firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical technicians).

While civilians often came to the bridge in street clothes, those members of the other two groups (note that some belonged to both of these communities) tended to come in uniform. Many who came to pay their respects donned red t-shirts or clothing bearing other national symbols, such as the maple leaf (as spotted at several repatriation ceremonies, the attendant manning the parking lot across the street from the Office of the Chief Coroner in downtown Toronto kept a red t-shirt in his booth for repatriation days). The eventual presence of many uniformed personnel in the crowds pointed to a solidarity between the military and emergency services as sharing in a way of life that had the potential for mortality “in the line of duty”, as well as an indication of the cross-pollination between the two. After completing their tours, many former soldiers find ongoing careers in the police, fire, or ambulance services, and continue to feel a strong identification to the armed forces (Castle 2012). (I will return to the association of the emergency services with the repatriation ceremony later in this analysis, but wished to highlight the different manners of dress observed on the bridges.)

Visible in many photographs are objects brought by repatriation attendees to express solidarity with the Canadian Forces through the display of particular symbols and messages – the most popular items seen along the route are flags and homemade signs. The Canadian flag is the most commonly displayed, though provincial flags are also seen (especially noticeable when soldiers from Quebec are repatriated), the regimental colours belonging to military units and emergency services, and the “Support our Troops” flag bearing a yellow ribbon with those words on a red background. Flags are waved by individuals, attached to emergency vehicles parked on the bridges, planted by the side of the road, or

flying in the parking lots of businesses sited alongside the highway. In *Highway of Heroes*, the author writes of a Toronto firefighter and his lengthy campaign to request that companies whose properties abut the 401 lower their flags to half-staff on repatriation days, including a Hyundai dealership in Port Hope:

Bud Lauria of Lauria Hyundai in Port Hope has a 25-metre flag pole with a flag measuring five by nine metres. Though others had tried to get Lauria to lower the flag over the years, he said his biggest concern was if he wasn't able to do it for one of the soldiers for some reason, it might be perceived as disrespectful.

[The firefighter] Lalonde told him, "If you can put it down this time, put it down. If you can't put it down due to weather conditions, you can put it down the next time. You're putting it down for the sole purpose for the respect of our fallen soldiers."

After speaking with Lalonde, Lauria had a change of heart: "Within a couple of days I came to the conclusion that it's the right thing to do, and ever since then we've lowered the flag." (Fisher 2011, 133)

This quotation illustrates the importance placed on a gesture visible in the background of the sub/urban landscapes along the 401, the placement of the flag, a ubiquitous element of corporate and retail spaces in Canada. Such a show of support is legible only for seconds at a time as a driver or passenger in a car along the 401, and though directed at the Canadian Forces and the families and friends of fallen soldiers, it is ultimately realized as a politicized gesture in the quotidian space of those who move along it.

Also appearing in documentation of repatriation ceremonies are signs displaying messages of support for Canadian soldiers, including "Support Our Troops", "[name of town] Salutes You" and "We Will Remember Them". These messages, usually written by hand, echo phrases made popular by coordinated public memory efforts (Durish 2004, McKay and Swift 2012) and in

corporatized campaigns (McCready 2010) running across the nation. The ubiquitous documentation that has led to such an archive of study illustrates that such extensive media coverage of these public acts of memorialization has been critical in the transformation of the landscape along the 401 into the Highway of Heroes. These performances are no longer enacted just for the benefit of those riding in the repatriation motorcade or to fulfill a sense of duty felt in individual citizens, but are also directed to the media for communication to a wider public.

The role of media coverage

The father of photojournalist Pete Fisher, working for the local newspaper *Northumberland Today*, phoned his son as he watched the proceedings to alert him to the motorcade's presence and its movement. Fisher drove west from his home in Cobourg and pulled his car to the side of a rural road in the town of Port Hope to await their approach – after waiting well beyond his estimate for their arrival, he drove back east along the 401 to investigate their delay. He found the motorcade's hearses and limousines lined up at a service station, stopped to allow a participant to use the washroom. Seeing the camera equipment around Fisher's neck, a uniformed soldier travelling in the procession approached him with a request to not photograph the members of the party, so he returned to his car and drove westward again before the motorcade departed (Fisher 2012). Before he took up a vantage point from which to shoot the cortège as it passed, he noticed several local residents standing on an overpass, and pulled over to document them. Fisher's documentation of these individuals and others like

them who paid their respects to Canadian soldiers from the bridges over Highway 401, published on numerous occasions for a wider and wider audience, drew attention to the practice of awaiting the funeral motorcade along the highway and those who felt it important to witness. He covered the ceremonies from various locations along the route, and developed relationships with individuals and groups who repeatedly came out on repatriation days (ibid).

The *Toronto Sun*, a right-wing daily owned by national newspaper conglomerate Quebecor Media (whose holdings include Fisher's employer *Northumberland Today*), featured Fisher's images on its cover several times, offering significant exposure of his coverage of the ritual to a large metropolitan audience. In 2007, following a particularly dangerous period that saw a substantial number of soldiers killed, Fisher's close friend and *Sun* columnist Joe Warmington published an emotional appeal to his audience and politicians to recognize these acts of memorialization alongside the sacrifices of fallen soldiers, and to honour these displays of respect for the Canadian Forces by renaming the 401 the Highway of Heroes (Warmington 2007). After reading of Warmington's idea, a resident of London, Ontario created an internet petition calling upon officials to adopt the idea, which received over 50,000 signatures and significant media attention during an active campaigning period taking place just before a provincial election, during which it was suggested that Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government "listen to recommendations" that the highway be renamed (Canadian Press 2007, Walkom 2007). Approximately one week after the appeal was launched, the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario released a statement announcing the designation of the section of the 401 between the Don Valley

Parkway in Toronto and Glen Miller Road in Trenton the Highway of Heroes. Bilingual signage was erected the following week, with Fisher in attendance at the unveiling ceremony (Fisher 2011). Following Azaryahu (1996) and Alderman (2006), this dedication was formative in the realization and acceptance of the highway as a space for memorialization.



Figure 10: Toronto Sun cover, June 23, 2007 (photo by Pete Fisher)

Since the naming of the highway, the repatriation ceremony and the gatherings on bridges have received considerable media attention for every instance when a Canadian soldier was brought home, snowballing from covers and features in the *Sun*. While national news teams regularly broadcast repatriations live from the tarmac in Trenton, it became commonplace to dispatch TV crews to the overpasses, interviewing mourners while awaiting the passage of the cortège. The prominence of repatriation reporting had escalated after the symbolic dedication of the Highway of Heroes recognized not just the soldiers' deaths, but the memorializing practices of those along the route, and such coverage was augmented following the public outcry when news media were temporarily banned from covering the ceremonies at Trenton.

Canada's deployment of troops into Kandahar in the first several months of 2006 saw several deaths in a short period of time, and following the particularly deadly month of April, Captain Nichola Goddard was the first woman to be killed in combat while serving for the Canadian Forces. Shortly before her remains could be returned to Canada, a directive was issued by the office of recently-elected Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper that no coverage of repatriation ceremonies or flag-draped caskets would take place, ostensibly out of respect for the families of the deceased (Woods 2009, Fletcher and Hove 2010). Reminiscent of the American media ban on returning coffins put in place during the first Gulf War (and only lifted at the start of the Obama administration; Bumiller 2009), the Harper government received considerable criticism from those who believed that the sudden cut in coverage was intended to cover up the human cost of the war (Fletcher and Hove 2010). However, many others,

including Nichola Goddard's father Tim, speaking at her funeral, argued that such censorship prevented Canadians from adequately paying tribute to those who gave their lives in service. The swift outrage that arose in reaction to the sudden change in policy – particularly from the family of the deceased – alongside an expression of support for the troops led to the return of media crews to the tarmac in Trenton, with the clarification that in the future, family members would have the ultimate say as to whether or not coverage could take place (den Tandt and Walton 2006, National Post 2006).

Since then, the Highway of Heroes has received attention not just on repatriation days, but also as part of special news features produced around the globe. The UK tabloid *Daily Mail* republished Fisher's photographs alongside their own shots of the funeral motorcades containing the remains of British soldiers stuck in traffic, condemning the "lack of respect" shown to those in the processions as they made their way from Royal Air Force Base Lyneham to the morgue in Oxford (Almond 2008). While local residents had similarly turned out to pay tribute to the fallen, particularly in the small town of Wootton Bassett, it was the controversy over the perceived lack of response and respect from local officials sparked by the *Daily Mail* article that directed national attention to repatriation ceremonies. Jenkins et al. (2012) charted the increasing media coverage of British repatriations through the community following the *Daily Mail* article, demonstrating the influence that such attention to this space of memorialization had on political debates surrounding the war. These included protests lodged by anti-war groups on the town's main street, leading to requests from locals that the event not be "politicized" through the attendance of

politicians and journalists. While the British edition eventually developed a cultural identity of its own, Jenkins et al. (2012, 358, 361) note the significant influence of the Canadian Highway of Heroes on memorial practices in Wootton Bassett, where a local petition was lodged to dedicate their own Highway of Heroes through town (Browne 2009). As the nature of their repatriation journey led mourners to converge along the town's main street, instead of at various points along the route, the deep association of the town with public acts of military mourning led to its redesignation as Royal Wootton Bassett after processions through the town ended in 2011 (BBC 2011).

Two broadcast segments produced by the American network NBC introduced the Canadian repatriation ritual to their national audience. The NBC Nightly News program that aired on Veterans' Day 2008 featured correspondent Kevin Tibbles' interviews with Fisher and Darlene Cushman, mother of a dead Canadian soldier, in which they respectively described their reasons for advocating for the memorialization of fallen troops, and the reception of such public displays within the repatriation motorcade. Tibbles' investigation of the "grassroots phenomenon that has risen out of a nation's grief" used Fisher's documentation to tell the story of memorial practice along the highway, featuring images of individual civilians, families, and first responders at various points along the highway to illustrate the scene. In the preamble to the segment, the last in the evening's broadcast, newscaster Brian Williams framed such practices of public mourning in opposition to those taking place in the United States, where the return of the dead was rarely noticed, partially due to the legislated ban on media coverage in place at the time. One segment from Cushman's interview, in

which she recalled what the presence of local residents meant to her as the repatriation motorcade containing her son's remains made its way along the highway, offered her tearful and evocative description of a father and his teenage son saluting the hearse while standing in the bed of a rusty brown pickup truck in a field. Her emphasis on the vehicle's patina in an agricultural region of the country contributes to the air of folksy "genuineness" that such edited observations maintain around the Highway of Heroes, one that directly invokes the landscape of rural Ontario (NBC 2008).

Two years later, another significant segment aired on NBC just before the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, later uploaded to YouTube with the title "Tom Brokaw Explains Canada to Americans". To an audience of nearly 33 million viewers (NBC 2010), the veteran newscaster provided a voiceover to a montage of video clips featuring sweeping shots of the country's landscape, lauding Canada for its natural beauty, democratic values shared with the United States, natural resources, and its long relationship as an ally to the American military. To a backdrop of archival footage from several conflicts, Brokaw described Canadian participation in global conflicts in terms of dedication and sacrifice:

And if you're in a fight, you want the Canadians on your side. They were in World War II before we were. They were there on D-Day, in the air and on the beaches. They've been America's most reliable partners in Afghanistan, and it has been costly and painful. Now, when Canada loses a warrior in that distant land, the nation pauses and honours the fallen along what is called the Highway of Heroes outside of Toronto (NBC 2010).

The clips of mourners along the Highway of Heroes are set to a soundtrack of stirring strings, and contextualized within Brokaw's segment, convey that all Canadians express such gratitude for their military servicemembers, and Americans should share in honouring them.

Other cultural works

Beyond the coverage of repatriation ceremonies undertaken by national networks, the Highway of Heroes has also been extensively documented and depicted by musicians, artists, and other individuals whose creations have been social networking sites and other online repositories for user-generated content. While the majority of these personal reflections on the highway have flown under the radar of mainstream media, they nevertheless have contributed to producing a coherent sense of place along the memorial landscape of the highway.

Arguably the most well-known cultural work featuring the Highway of Heroes is the rock single bearing its name recorded in 2010 by The Trews, a band from Antigonish, Nova Scotia. It was released as a tribute to fellow Antigonish native Nichola Goddard, with proceeds going to the Canadian Hero Fund (a charity assisting the family members of fallen soldiers), and received regular airplay on mainstream rock stations. The lyrics are written from the perspective of a servicemember who “was called by [their] nation”, choosing to enlist “without hesitation”, and “served without question or personal gain” – in the plaintive chorus, the protagonist only hopes that if killed in action, they could receive the same

tribute as their fallen comrades. In the music video, footage of the band and members of a pipe-and-drum corps playing in a gallery space is interspersed with scenes of soldiers on patrol and interacting with locals in Afghanistan, and ending with saturated high-definition footage shot from different vantage points on the highway as the repatriation motorcade approaches. Both the video and the radio single received extensive airplay across the country.

In the realm of visual arts, two independent exhibits by Canadian painters produced portraits of each soldier killed in Afghanistan, based on the photographs of them circulated in the press accompanying news of their deaths. Though not explicitly featuring the Highway of Heroes, Toronto artist Joanne Tod, whose uncle was killed while serving for Canada in World War II, premiered her gallery of soldier portraits entitled *Oh Canada – A Lament* at Toronto's Harbourfront Centre in the spring of 2011, subsequently publishing them all in the centrefold of that summer's issue of *The Walrus* magazine. Concurrently, a veteran named Dave Sopha from Cambridge, Ontario produced a large-scale oil painting based on the same soldier portraits, which he toured around the country in a custom-made display trailer, exhibiting the work in 118 communities. In several locations, the artwork was welcomed into town with a police escort and colour guard parade similar to those assembled to accompany the remains of soldiers, and it received a royal visit from Prince William and his then-fiancé Kate Middleton in Calgary, where they lay a memorial wreath in tribute. Another Toronto artist, photographer Scott McFarland, produced a series of large-scale photographic works, entitled *Repatriation* – one image from this series, a

panoramic documentation of the crowd (including many uniformed first responders) gathered behind the coroner's office on Grenville Street in downtown Toronto, received a very prominent public installation adjacent to the Museum of Canadian Contemporary Art as part of Toronto's CONTACT photography festival in 2012.

The plot of *Sanctuary Line*, a 2010 novel by Canadian author Jane Urquhart (who resides close to the Highway of Heroes in Northumberland County), involves the death of a young woman while serving in Afghanistan, and her repatriation ceremony and the landscape of the 401 figure prominently in the story. An early chapter recalls the protagonist Liz's journey in the motorcade along the Highway of Heroes as a passenger in the cortège containing her cousin Mandy's body, and her subsequent journeys along the 401 are coloured by the grief she experienced on this trip. The narrator's evocative descriptions of the rural landscape along the highway in her day-to-day travels are transformed by the presence of mourners, and such memories and emotions are triggered in her later travels through this liminal space. To Liz, the highway landscape she associates with the day-to-day business of her uncle's fruit farm and her travels to work at a butterfly sanctuary becomes intertwined with her loss and the politics of a simultaneously distant and proximate war. Urquhart's inclusion of the repatriation ceremony and the memorial practice seen on the bridges resulted from her encounter of several hundred people gathered on an overpass she was trying to cross on a drive with a friend. She recalled her ambivalence towards the gesture, which she believed glorified war, as well as her unexpected emotional reaction in a 2010 CBC Radio interview about the book with Shelagh Rogers.

In the segment, Urquhart discussed her desire to engage migration, globalization, rurality and family through the realms of landscape and storytelling – Rogers commented that “the world is so present even in a rural place” in the novel (CBC 2010). The book was in part sparked by Urquhart’s earlier engagement with cadets in the English department at the nearby Royal Military College in Kingston, which inspired the backstory for the character of Mandy, who enlisted with the goal of becoming a peacekeeper before the Canadian Forces entered combat operations in Afghanistan, like many of the young people the author encountered at RMC. To the author, Mandy’s desire to “save” those in need and her headstrong, perfectionist tendencies led her to the “excellence” that a career in the Canadian Forces provided. Urquhart explains to Rogers that *Sanctuary Line* works to tell a story about the lives of rural Canadians, highlight the calling and virtues of a career in the Canadian Forces, and to “sentimentalize” landscape – she feels such elegiac creative dedications are necessary with both landscapes and livelihoods threatened by the patterns of global climate change (ibid).

At a different scale, a quick internet search for “Highway of Heroes” also yields many examples of personal contributions to the virtual landscape of the highway, as individuals seek to memorialize Canadian soldiers and document their experiences on the highway by sharing their media on sites such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr. Much of this work is documentary, consisting of photographs, video footage, and textual recollections of experiences witnessing the passage of the cortège along the repatriation route. The comment sections accompanying these items often turn into spaces where memories and

expressions of solidarity are shared. On Twitter, where real-time posts are frequently written to reflect events as they happen, the tweets of different users can be consolidated into a retelling of the experience of the repatriation ceremony from different places along the route. The topical hashtag #cdnrepat was adopted to mark tweets pertaining to the event, and following the timing and location of these posts allowed users to estimate the time of the procession's arrival. Public agencies sending their representatives to the bridges also made their presence known by tweeting in this manner, including the Toronto Police Service, whose social media officer Cst. Scott Mills coordinated "social media salutes" where their officers paid tribute to the deceased by joining in the conversation with photos and text before and after taking part in the honour guard behind police headquarters. While some of these online interactions are carried out for the purpose of noting one's presence at a given event and offering their observations on the experience, the institutional use of the medium in accordance with corporate communications policies demonstrates a particular political solidarity with the Canadian Forces that is permitted to be aired in public.

The online organization of user-generated content documenting repatriation ceremonies varies according to the individual user and the sites that their media are uploaded to. Photos and video can be uploaded as discrete objects to timelines and photostreams, or in the case of more involved repatriation documentarians, added to Highway of Heroes groups for consumption by a wider audience. Some videos posted to YouTube are edited into montages, adding captions and soundtracks in tribute to particular soldiers

or to the troops in general. Repatriation footage is similarly edited into other musical tributes uploaded to the site – in an interview with Pete Fisher, he recommended I seek out the self-released single *Highway of Heroes* by Cobourg singer Ginny McIlmoyle, whose acoustic folk tribute heralds the virtues of soldiers who gave their lives to “places like Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan, [where] the reaper lies waiting” before “the Highway of Heroes takes them home”.

In contrast to Fisher’s photojournalism and the videos aired on national news programs, the amateur documentation of the Highway of Heroes tends to lack the tight framing and crisp audio of the professionally-recorded moments published and broadcast to a wider audience. However, these collected works critically convey experiential details of the highway landscape edited out in more professional footage, such as the rushing of the wind produced by a volume of fast-moving traffic, the unavoidable nature of seasonal precipitation, and road construction taking place alongside agricultural labour. The mass of cultural contributions of “everyday people” documenting the Highway of Heroes, media recorded in a space of flows where people tend not to congregate, dovetails with the discourse of “ordinary Canadians” that is actively called upon in its production, the importance of which I will return to at the end of this thesis. The varied perspectives of these creators, based on their history and proximity to the highway (whether as local resident, media consumer, or intrigued artist) provide depth to the militarized “ways of seeing” the Highway of Heroes.

Police and first responders

The 401's trajectory through a number of different municipalities means that first responders belonging to many different stations and detachments are in attendance, and many emergency workers arrive with the endorsement of their services behind them, as seen by the many different vehicles present in photographs of repatriation ceremonies. Though the memorial tributes along the Highway of Heroes are often described as a "grassroots effort" by "ordinary Canadians", the institutional relationships between the Canadian Forces and the civilian agencies that offer their backing to the memorial are worthy of analysis.

While emergency services are notified of and involved in the logistical arrangements of the repatriation ceremony, given the traffic management that takes place around the procession, many of their members appear along the route, either on-duty or off. In an interview with Mark Castle, an EMT with the City of Toronto, Canadian Forces Reserves veteran, and emergency medical liaison on duty for several repatriation ceremonies, he informed me that Toronto EMS allows its off-duty members to borrow ambulances to take to the highway to demonstrate their affiliation as they mourn (Castle 2012). However, given the relative size and dispatch patterns of Toronto fire trucks, they are not permitted to park on bridges within the city to watch the procession (Cole 2012). The size and flashing lights of ambulances and fire trucks offer a highly-visible expression of solidarity and sadness to those travelling on the highway, and also convey the impression that the rhythms of everyday life have paused in tribute to the troops. It is important to investigate why such solidarity is displayed between the services, as the increasing intermingling and cooperation between them (Castle

2012) is demonstrative of the politically charged issue that is the ongoing militarization of Canada.

Many police officers, medics and firefighters come from a military background, as the skills, protocols, and command structures associated with military service transfer well to such occupations. Military personnel and first responders similarly share the possibility of encountering dangerous conditions in their day-to-day work, and “wearing the uniform” has become shorthand for enlisting to act at this front line of danger. However, the commonalities in their labour are not the sole reason behind such displays of support for Canadian troops. The 21st century has seen the increasing adoption of military tactics and equipment (including weaponry) by police forces across North America, and soldiers are increasingly dispatched on domestic deployments for the control and surveillance of populations around special events, from sporting championships to political conventions and global summits. Following the 9/11 attacks, interjurisdictional joint task forces involving militaries and emergency services were created across Canada and the United States in order to develop coordinated responses to threats of terrorist attacks (one of my interview participants, Mark Castle, represented Toronto EMS on one of these bodies), paramilitary powers were disseminated to different local agencies under the broad auspices of “fighting terror”, and training exercises are developed with inter-agency cooperation of these different institutions in mind (Graham 2010, Williams, Munger, and Messersmith-Glavin 2013, American Civil Liberties Union 2014, 17). The Canadian Forces has increasingly participated in the domestic policing of public order, as political demonstrations and assemblies around what

has been labelled “critical infrastructure” are now deemed threats to national security (Wood 2014) – their particular dedication to monitoring the activities of Indigenous peoples is especially concerning (Ling 2013).

While emergency personnel are present across the length of the repatriation route, they are most concentrated at its conclusion in downtown Toronto, where representatives from all three emergency services gather outside the Office of the Chief Coroner on Grenville St., located between police headquarters and the city’s busiest fire station. On repatriation days, the block of the narrow street is lined with their members (many of them in dress uniform, including one or two police horses) and typically blocked to traffic at one end by a fire truck and an ambulance. As traffic control officers guide the repatriation ceremony onto Grenville, those flanking the street are directed to salute the cortège until all of the vehicles have descended into the garage of the coroner’s building. Those who come to watch the end of the procession tend to linger around to personally deliver their condolences to the escorting officer. TPS officers and civilian employees working at headquarters are notified of the repatriation’s arrival and given the opportunity to come downstairs to pay their respects (Mills 2013).

From my observations attending approximately one dozen repatriation ceremonies on Grenville St. and upon review of numerous photo and video archives posted online by media and members of the public, I estimate that, at a minimum, approximately 60 to 70 first responders attend repatriation ceremonies on Grenville St. These numbers can vary depending on the number of casualties, the time of year, the day of the week and the time of arrival in the city

(after the arrival time of repatriation flights was standardized to 2 pm, the procession tended to arrive in Toronto just before 5 pm). However, when the Group of 20 (G20) Summit was held in Toronto in 2010, nearly 21,000 security personnel (including police, soldiers, and security guards) converged on the city to police the events (Office of the Independent Police Review Director 2012), which coincided with the June 25 repatriation of a soldier killed in Afghanistan several days before. While many community groups and individuals participated peacefully in the Justice for our Communities march along College St. on the opposite side of TPS headquarters, I witnessed a very large crowd of officers in riot gear assembling to form an honour guard on Grenville, attempting to negotiate a salute to Sgt. James MacNeil without losing grip on their helmets, shields and batons. As the cortège descended underground just before 5:00 pm, the officers suited up and jogged in single file south to College St., beating their shields rhythmically with their batons, and storming the march outside police headquarters. It was at this time that reports of violence at this location erupted on Twitter – the incident was described in a Toronto Police report as “a melee between officers and protestors in front of TPS Headquarters” (Toronto Police Service 2011, 13).

Beyond the timing of these two events, in which police officers had the opportunity to pay their respects to the dead before “maintaining order” with violence at the march, the events surrounding the repatriation ceremony were discussed during an interview with Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair by *Globe and Mail* columnist Christie Blatchford the Wednesday following the summit. After defending the orders given to police officers by justifying their presence and

actions against the small percentage of protestors using Black Bloc tactics, Blair described how the procession was necessarily rerouted away from the coroner's office minutes before its arrival due to the imminent threat of "the Black Bloc", which he said was "trying to charge up Yonge Street, trying to charge up the alley, trying to loop around from the other side up Bay Street, and we're trying to block them from coming up here" – "as a matter of fact the repatriation was kind of interrupted" (Blatchford 2010). Blair's statement directly contradicted the experiences of and media captured by observers on the ground (myself included), which illustrate an uninterrupted procession reaching its final destination, and demonstrate how it can be argued that the solidarity ostensibly shared by police officers and soldiers allowed for the fallen soldier to be used as a pawn in a move against legal political protest by the chief of police, a decision condemned by self-described veterans in the online comments accompanying the interview. In the Toronto Police Service After-Action Review published one year after the G20, which offered their description and justification of the summit's events and security measures, it is quietly noted that "[t]he repatriation was [sic] concluded successfully without incident or disturbance", without reference to Blair's contradictory statements made the previous June (Toronto Police Service 2011, 13).

Later in the summer, another intervention along the Highway of Heroes took place behind police headquarters. Along with the aforementioned "social media salutes" that Cst. Scott Mills orchestrated, he facilitated the production of a low-key but important part of the memorial landscape in the city. Tucked away in an alley just off the busy Yonge St. corridor, a graffiti tribute to the Highway of

Heroes is painted on the rear wall of a sushi restaurant, adjacent to the driveway descending into the garage of the coroner's office. Originally painted by a group of inner-city youth in the summer of 2010 participating in the city's Legal Graffiti Program, the depiction of five soldiers preparing to salute the cortège of a comrade was "the last thing the families [of the deceased] see" (LegalGraffitiArt 2010a) on the repatriation route until it was vandalized in September 2013. While it has since been repainted, the original concept and its execution are worthy of careful attention in this discussion of the militarized memorial landscape of the Highway of Heroes. I am fortunate that the production of the mural was very well documented: given Cst. Mills' roles as both TPS' social media officer (known online as "GraffitiBMXCop") and coordinator of the Legal Graffiti Program, he posted a number of videos to YouTube over the course of its creation, interviewing the artists, program participants, and several individuals moved by the memorial. This section draws upon this video archive as well as an interview I conducted with Mills and the lead artists in March 2013.

I first learned of the mural's existence when I received a Toronto Police press release announcing its unveiling in August 2010. Conceived as part of a summer arts program for youth in the Toronto community of Flemingdon Park, the project was designed and spearheaded by graffiti artists Kedre Browne (also known as Bubz) and Jessey Pacho (Phade) with Mills' logistical assistance through the TPS Legal Graffiti Program. Five young artists from Flemingdon Park worked with their graffiti "mentors" to realize one of Pacho's designs, one of two concepts presented to the property owner, proprietor of Sushi Sky, after Mills approached him earlier in the summer to see if he was interested in donating his

wall. The original tribute depicted five silhouetted soldiers standing on a bridge at sunset, saluting in anticipation of the arrival of the repatriation motorcade. The Highway of Heroes runs through the centre of the composition from the foreground to a vanishing point on the horizon. Reddish-brown hills, intended to represent the mountains of Afghanistan (LegalGraffitiArt 2010a), bracket the scene in the background, giving way to the green grassy fields of Ontario in the foreground, which are covered in poppies (intended to be a memorial symbol, yet calling to mind Afghanistan's heroin trade). A red-winged dove with a maple leaf on its breast flies overhead, and the words "Highway of Heroes" overlay the scene in a youthful script.



Figure 11: Highway of Heroes mural, 2010

Based on media coverage of the mural's unveiling and the dialogue recorded in the YouTube documentation, it would appear that the Highway of Heroes mural arose as part of a police-led summer make-work project for racialized youth in an underserved neighbourhood of Toronto, one that has seen its fair share of police violence against the community in the form of massive militarized raids and surveillant profiling patrols. The police's cooption of an insurgent art form borne of urban communities of colour – that is, the graffiti

memorial mural – to commemorate the losses of an invading military force overseas, and the employment of underprivileged teenagers in order to paint such a politically charged message, points to the extent to which the banal militarism of the support-our-troops discourse reproduced through the Highway of Heroes ceremony has been taken up by the powerful institution of the police. However, I learned from my interview with the lead artists and Cst. Mills that the story behind the mural is more nuanced than this problematized assessment presents, but nevertheless is indicative of the ongoing militarization of life in Canada's largest city.

As incorrectly reported in the press, the idea for the piece came not from Mills, but from Kedre Browne, who initially became involved in the police program after becoming frustrated with many near-misses with law enforcement while engaging in illegal graffiti. The two were stuck in a traffic jam related to a road closure around a repatriation ceremony, and Mills encouraged Browne to get out and watch the procession pass, after which he reported feeling extremely moved by the experience, and immensely sympathetic to the potential for loss that those in uniform experience on a daily basis. The idea for a tribute mural came from his desire to convey this sentiment to members of his community – as his friend Jessey had recently been hired by Flemingdon Neighbourhood Services as a mural artist mentor for their summer program, he offered him the idea.

The organization immediately objected to the idea of supporting a production that glorified war – Pacho's defense of the concept defined the mural in terms of peace, hope and respect for fallen soldiers and their families. This explanation was apparently enough to get the mural approved, and five teenage

assistants from the neighbourhood were hired for its production, including a recent immigrant from Afghanistan. In an interview with the Toronto Star, he noted that while local residents normally looked upon him with suspicion, even when working on legal projects, his work on the Highway of Heroes mural led many to engage him in conversation (Dempsey 2010). Despite Mills' involvement in helping the crew locate an appropriate wall for the mural to be painted, he claims he had little else to do with its production – in fact, both Browne and Pacho adamantly note that they don't work with Toronto Police, but with Scott Mills, a friend and facilitator who happens to be a police officer (though the degree to which the two can be separated is certainly questionable).

Together, they reported immense support for the project from local residents, as well as from the Afghan Women's Organization and the family of a fallen soldier (LegalGraffitiArt 2010b, LegalGraffitiArt 2011). Despite the contentious politics between young men of colour and an urban police force increasingly integrated with military tactics and personnel – this creative undertaking can be read as coercive when read through such a framework – it is impossible to neatly impose a narrative of police control over this particular scenario. However, the desire to memorialize members of the Canadian Forces killed in Afghanistan in such a location – prompted by the constable's explanation of why it was important to witness the repatriation ceremony, and illustrated by the acceptance of their graffiti work when other subject matter likely would not be condoned – is nevertheless indicative of the ascendance of such militarized values in the city.

In early September 2013, the Highway of Heroes memorial mural was vandalized by an unknown party and entirely obliterated by large, opaque black tags, in an incident that received widespread condemnation in the Toronto press. Browne and Pacho quickly set out to repaint the mural, though realizing an entirely different design that also demonstrated their evolving skill as artists. The resulting composition shows two white doves flying skyward from dark clouds into a blue sky, with a Canadian flag and poppies included as symbols of the soldiers' sacrifice and the words HIGHWAY OF HEROES filled with a pattern reminiscent of the rural landscape above the highway. Following the unveiling, the artists received criticism on Twitter and in the comments of a *Toronto Star* article (Eastwood 2013) regarding the placement of “bits” (a typographic element in graffiti meant to draw a viewer's attention to a word or phrase) around the word “heroes” – these additions were interpreted as quotation marks around the word, akin to “air quotes” used to express disagreement with the use of such language. Browne and Pacho returned to the mural following its unveiling to remove them, in agreement that this design decision made it look like the memorialized were not worthy of such a designation.



Figure 12: Highway of Heroes mural, 2013 (photo by Jessey Pacho)

Another hero on the highway

When Jack Layton, leader of the federal New Democratic Party, passed away in August 2011, a national outpouring of grief took place, concentrated at the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa and at City Hall in his home of Toronto. His body lay in state for two days in each city, and before arriving in Toronto, drove along Highway 401 under police escort. Echoing the precedent set on repatriation days, several hundred local residents converged on the overpasses above to pay a final tribute to the beloved politician, waving flags (the maple leaf and the Pride rainbow), attired in orange, and holding homemade signs with messages of thanks, along with NDP lawn signs from previous elections. The instinct to head

to the bridges to mourn someone who was considered a Canadian hero provided many located outside of Ottawa and Toronto with an opportunity to mourn his passing – but despite his considerably higher public stature, his journey down the Highway of Heroes barely registered in the press. The highway landscape has become inextricably linked with the mourning practices memorializing Canadian Forces soldiers, but its military connections were left unmentioned.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described in detail the various material, practiced and represented elements that, in combination, comprise the memorial landscape of the Highway of Heroes, and contextualized these observations within broader discussions of the Canadian military by detailing a variety of public responses to the highway. After reviewing the various mechanisms that have served to produce the grievable life of the heroic fallen soldier, killed while on a righteous mission, in the realm of everyday life, I then ask what lies at stake for other lives taken in acts of violence in the conclusion to this thesis, and what role landscape could play in remembering these lives as grievable.

The Highway of Heroes' presence in the realm of everyday life works to normalize the visibility of soldiers and the military on a quotidian basis in Canada. Such acts of normalization are at the core of the process of militarization itself, which works to render the military's presence in society and as part of a "national culture" increasingly visible and, importantly, something that transcends political debate. (The important corollary to such cultural shifts is that wartime states of exception are similarly normalized, allowing for the

suspension of due process and the infringement of individual rights.) The memorial landscape remains in the public consciousness through the act of its dedication, as well as the ongoing use of that name: beyond the prominent signage along the 401, the name Highway of Heroes is visible on maps and heard on the announcements made on Toronto Transit Commission bus routes that stop adjacent to it. The large archive of documentary and creative media that has grown around the repatriation ceremony works to foster associations between the transitory space of the highway and the mourning of Canadian military casualties. Of course, such associations are promoted with a particular set of values in mind, regarding the righteousness of their missions, their roles within the Canadian Forces, and the sanctity of the mourning process, and as a result of the last of these, these beliefs are not up for public debate. Additionally, “in image-based cultures of militarization the political runs the risk of being ‘increasingly constituted outside of the law’” (Berland and Fitzpatrick 2010, 11; quoting Giroux 2006, 13-14) – the tamping down of military criticism around the repatriation of casualties contributes to silencing the public struggles of other communities where the lives of individuals may be at stake.

The Highway of Heroes builds upon the legacies of the Canadian Forces reviewed in the previous chapter, including the mythology of the Canadian peacekeeper and histories of valourous service in battle, while in conversation with contemporary efforts to “support the troops” that similarly set the tone for public conversations about the military. Some of these productions (including the recent National Day of Honour in Ottawa, which took place in May 2014 and marked the end of Canadian involvement in Afghanistan, the dedication of the

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in 2000, and annual Remembrance Day ceremonies that take place across the country) are the result of initiatives led by governments and public institutions, and to Patricia Durish (2004), exist as potent pedagogical tools for informing Canadians about the relationship between the nation and its military. In recent years, businesses have taken to demonstrating their solidarity with the Canadian Forces – while commercial messaging in support for war efforts has accompanied wartime industry in Anglo-American nations since the early twentieth century, Canadian private sector firms are now increasingly participating in acts of public memorialization. Along with the decisions of a number of companies to take part in the lowering of flags along the highway, several corporations proffered the funds to install bronze relief plaques illustrating flag-waving mourners on 26 bridges spanning the 401, a project led by the True Patriot Love foundation, a charity with the goal of supporting the families of deceased soldiers. While the rationales behind individual companies' acts of support cannot be generalized, this stewardship of initiatives intended to care for the families of servicemembers has the ability to pay off in the form of positive PR related to their platforms of corporate social responsibility. Nevertheless, such endorsements of soldiering contribute to the normalization of the profession as one of the most honourable and heroic of roles, without engaging the politics that underlie the application of military force to overseas conflicts.

Of note is the geography of the everyday landscape of the Highway of Heroes in particular localized processes of militarization. Given the spatial patterns of recruitment and enlistment in the CF in recent decades, the

awareness of military service on a day-to-day basis is much more acute in smaller, more rural communities across the country than in cities like Toronto, where a multitude of socioeconomic factors result in a smaller proportion of the population electing to serve in the military (see Cowen 2008 for an in-depth examination of the factors particular to Canada). The Highway of Heroes brings soldiers and solidarity into the suburbs and city centre, where such acts of memorialization take place amongst those who are less likely to have family members or friends in the enlisted ranks. While monuments to earlier wars exist as familiar landmarks across the urban landscape (and may go overlooked in the course of everyday movements through the city), the Highway of Heroes (and the Route of Heroes, the final section of the route to the coroner's office) provides a contemporary acknowledgement of military mortality in contemporary conflicts, again normalizing particular discourses of honour and sacrifice in the process without reflection on the broader causes and other costs of war.

Examining the discourses of heroism and sacrifice that surround the Highway of Heroes and the repatriation ceremony call into question the relations of care that link the Canadian Forces and fallen soldiers and their families. While many come to the highway to "support the troops", bearing yellow ribbons and other related merchandise licensed for sale by the Canadian Forces (McCready 2010, 2012), the CF has been criticized for providing insufficient material support for not just those dealing with the death of a loved one in service, but other surviving casualties of the war in Afghanistan. When this narrative of care is juxtaposed with evidence of the precarious state of many

military lives, the appropriation of the dead soldier's body for political ends is made tangible.

In a 2012 interview with former repatriation officer Capt. Wayne Johnston, the founder (and until recently, a board member) of Wounded Warriors (a charity for soldiers recovering from the physical and mental wounds of war) he openly criticized current CF policies intended to care for veterans and their families, suggesting that efforts to enhance the memorial landscape of the Highway of Heroes should be directed towards healthcare for soldiers. He is not the only veteran to call into question the discrepancy between the Department of National Defence's public promises to care for soldiers and the reality of accessing that care – the recent spate of soldier suicides (Campion-Smith 2014), one of which resulted in the deceased's relatives receiving a benefit cheque for one cent (Carter 2014), prompted extensive criticism from others who experienced significant challenges returning to civilian life. While the federal government has committed to studying the plight of returning soldiers (through instruments such as the longitudinal Life After Service Survey) and developing additional programs to support veterans and their families (including those of fallen soldiers), recent years have seen charities like Wounded Warriors, the True Patriot Love Foundation and the Canadian Hero Fund stepping in to provide support for the military community. While the Canadian Forces and the federal government find material value in the soldier's body while serving in active duty and discursive value in their "heroic" status, such value has not translated into care for those who have "given their life for their country".

Johnston, who continues to struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder acquired while serving as a repatriation officer, disputed the idea that soldiers are automatically heroes by virtue of their service, and are just performing their job in a “fight-or-flight” manner on the battlefield – he also noted “in this country, if a guy scores a hat trick he’s a hero” (Johnston 2012). He felt that the Highway of Heroes moniker served to erase the many challenges that soldiers face away from the front lines, including working up the courage to access mental health care, as the expression of such needs runs contrary to the masculine stereotype of the national hero – he suggested the “Highway of Misfortune” would be a more appropriate name to recognize the unfortunate deaths of “poor people trying to make the world better”. When driving east or west from his home in the town of Brooklin, northeast of Toronto, he avoids taking the 401 due to the landscape’s associations with the ongoing trauma in his life.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have endeavoured to demonstrate the connection between soldier repatriations and the production of support for military operations, arguing for a consideration of landscape's role in embedding the politics of militarization in everyday life. Through the efforts of civilians, veterans, the media, and the government, the memorial landscape of the Highway of Heroes normalizes discourses of heroism and sacrifice in the remembrance of Canadian Forces soldiers killed in combat, a process that erases the other lives lost in combat while discouraging opposition to the war from being voiced. My theoretical approach to the highway landscape incorporates its material transformations, mediated and creative representations, and enacted performances into a unified object of study. This allows me to consider its potential influence on populations from the military community, local residents, consumers of national news media, and drivers making their way along the 401.

The dedication and production of this contemporary war memorial, one commemorating soldiers lost in decidedly different circumstances than those honoured with monuments across the country, emerged following the development of a repatriation ceremony that foregrounded the dead as individuals embodying essential Canadian values. Such acts of dedication were not provided to others lost in the war, who were rarely enumerated in the Canadian press, let alone named. The simple act of naming the dead, argues Judith Butler (2003), assists in rendering lives lost as "collateral damage" as human, which marks an important first step in promoting resistance to militarism. She claims that a politics of nonviolence can be cultivated by

recognizing the dead as individuals with loved ones and communities who are grieving them, and by illuminating the relations of care that bind us to one another that are expressed in acts of mourning. This possibility stems from what Butler believes is a universal human condition: that of the entirely disarming experience of undergoing loss. The tendency of media outlets to recognize only some lives as grievable is furthered by the selective coverage given to acts of public mourning: writing after September 11, 2001, she emphasizes the disproportionate coverage given to telling the stories of the victims of the World Trade Center attack and the American journalist Daniel Pearl, while eliding the many thousands of lives lost in the misguided Global War on Terror (25-26).

Though the Canadian Forces withdrew the last of their troops from Afghanistan earlier this year, the memorial landscape persists, and will inevitably commemorate soldiers killed in future conflicts, where “everyday Canadians” will turn out to pay tribute during their repatriation ceremonies. This landscape reflects a history of military memorial traditions in Canada while drawing upon a variety of patriotic and nationalist icons, and leverages the cooperation of grassroots networks with government and corporate institutions, as well as the use of particular information and communication technologies. The diversity of sources I have documented will continue to remind not just CF supporters, but drivers along 401, of a particular kind of heroic military death, transforming this component of an international infrastructure of automobility into a place where the political lives of the dead are maintained.

While I have laid out the ways in which the Highway of Heroes participates in the militarization of Canada, I conclude by returning to another

instance of mourning along a highway that illustrates how the humanization of victims of violence is carried out in the landscape of everyday life. If, as Butler says, “humanization takes place differently through variable norms of recognition” (2003, 30), how can the techniques and technologies used to produce the Highway of Heroes be used to render the lives of others grievable? In the case of Highway 16 in northern British Columbia, now hauntingly well-known by the name Highway of Tears, a variety of interventions along the route offer an idea of landscape’s power to stimulate calls for an end to violence against Indigenous women and girls.

As mentioned in my introduction, the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women has been ongoing since the colonization of the western half of the country by white settlers in the 19th century, but since 1980, over one thousand women are acknowledged by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as unaccounted for (2014). The efforts of local activists, many of whom count mothers, sisters, and daughters amongst the missing, have been critical in bringing attention to the issue, historically without the assistance of large-scale media reportage or government assistance. (The federal Conservative government again denied in August 2014 that a national inquiry was necessary [CBC 2014].)

These community-led efforts, coincidentally concentrated in the same time frame as the war in Afghanistan, helped produce the Highway 16 corridor as a national memorial landscape, but without much of the governmental and institutional support seen along the Highway of Heroes. The first such actions, taking place on the lands surrounding the highway, were search parties,

coordinated by community members frustrated with the lack of attention given to missing Indigenous women by local police forces. (Contrast this to the mandated investigation of military deaths by Canadian Forces protocol: the Highway of Heroes exists alongside the route from CFB Trenton to the Office of the Chief Coroner, where investigative autopsies are automatically ordered even if causes of death are apparent.) In fact, attention to the problem of missing women only began to grow when a white woman named Nicole Hoar, who worked as a tree planter outside of Prince George, disappeared in 2002 – it was around this time that the name “Highway of Tears” gained currency as a moniker that pointed to the troubling history on the route (Highway of Tears Symposium Report 2006, Radek 2012). After searches have been called off, family members and friends continue to pay tribute to their loved ones through vigils along the highway, retracing the steps of the missing to the places where they were last seen or where their remains were found.

The extension of these grassroots efforts to search for missing women and lobby politicians and police officers to take the problem seriously was the coordination of a Highway of Tears Symposium in Prince George in 2006, from which a report and recommendations for increasing the safety of community members and caring for the loved ones of the missing were drafted. The start of the First Nations-led symposium coincided with the arrival of the Highway of Tears Walkers, a group of family members and supporters who walked the 720 kilometres from Prince Rupert to Prince George in a combination awareness walk/healing journey. A number of such walks have taken place since then,

including the annual Walk4Justice founded by Gladys Radek, and many smaller, private healing journeys, one of which we drove past near the town of Terrace.

There are a number of billboards and road signs along the highway, giving different directions than those aimed at drivers keeping an eye out for roads and lodging – these ones referred to the highway by its haunting memorial name, urging those in cars to keep their eyes out for missing women, and those on foot to refrain from hitchhiking, pointing to the violent circumstances that befell others who had no other transportation choice. (It is important to note that many missing women were not hitchhiking, and such an emphasis on this mode of transport has been criticized for the implications that the victims' choices were to blame for their disappearances [Radek 2012].) As we drove from east to west on our first trip along the highway, I wondered whose faces I would see on these signs, and where: I had spent the several weeks before our departure looking over maps of the highway that located the last known positions of the women who disappeared, and their names became associated with locations on the ground in my mind the same way that I anticipated our arrival in upcoming towns from the road map on my lap. The act of producing and reading maps aimed at both solving these crimes and remembering those who were lost also imbues the landscape with memories of the lives of the dead and a palpable sense of the grieving that continues to take place.

Though the survey I have offered of the various memorial interventions along the landscape of the Highway of Tears is brief, it is important to note that these community-led efforts have lacked the power, communications reach and financial backing afforded to groups leading military memorialization initiatives.

The goals of never forgetting the dead and the circumstances that prematurely ended their lives are the same along both highways, but efforts along the Highway of Tears have the additional aim of naming the acts of violence that have stolen these women from their families and communities as a national shame, and a dedication to preventing further disappearances from taking place. Building upon landscapes that have come to be associated with economic productivity (along the 401) and majestic wilderness (Highway 16), these two memorial highways prompt consideration of the violence that takes place in the name of nation-building, through global military operations and ongoing colonial dispossession.

The act of driving through memorial landscapes like that along the Highway of Heroes with an awareness of the lives commemorated there has the potential to prompt a commitment to “support our troops” along the 401, as well as experiencing the feelings of distress and shame that accompany the realization of how many lives have prematurely ended while attending to the necessities of daily life in circumstances that have been shown little regard by colonial governments. The “official” naming, national media coverage, and funded material transformations afforded to the landscape of the Highway of Heroes are additionally bolstered by the sentimental foregrounding of “ordinary Canadians” along the route, the vast majority of whom are white. By drawing upon this normative, idealized version of Canadian citizenship, one that dovetails well with the figure of the Canadian hero discussed throughout my thesis, the loss expressed by on and around the highway can be leveraged by national media and politicians offering tributes to not only be representative of a homogenous

national sentiment. It also contributes to the erasure of losses experienced by other communities in Canada, including those that continued to be suffered by First Nations peoples.

What connects these landscapes are the practices of public memorialization honouring the lives of those killed by state violence: in one case, in military service, in the other, acts reflective of ongoing colonialism. The material and discursive support shown to commemorative initiatives along the Highway of Heroes demonstrates concordance with policies that promote a militarized ideal of national citizenship, while extending such support to those mourning missing and murdered Indigenous women would proceed in conflict with these aspirations, which proceed from an assumption that the lives of some are expendable in processes of nation-building. Nevertheless, as I have documented in this thesis, though the visibility of memorial acts in these landscapes are uneven, the humanization that occurs through them is nevertheless productive, and contributes to a broadening of the conception of whose lives are considered grievable and worthy of care.

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