

Commemoration and Emotional Imperialism

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ABSTRACT *The Northern Irish footballer James McClean chooses not to take part in the practice of wearing a plastic red poppy to commemorate those who have died fighting for the British Armed Forces. Each year he faces abuse, including occasional death threats, for his choice. This forms part of a wider trend towards ‘poppy enforcement’, the pressuring of people, particularly public figures, to wear the poppy. This enforcement seems wrong in part because, at least in some cases, it involves abuse. But is there anything else wrong with it? We will consider the various ways the existing literature on the ethics of commemoration might help us understand what is wrong with poppy enforcement. We will argue that this cannot provide a complete account of what is wrong with poppy enforcement. We then argue that such pressure can constitute two distinct forms of affective injustice, which are wrongs done to people specifically in their capacity as affective beings. In McClean’s case, we argue first that poppy enforcement is a violation of affective rights and second that he faces a particular type of affective injustice that we call ‘emotional imperialism’.*

1. Introduction

Commemoration plays an important role in helping societies come to terms with the losses of war.¹ Commemorative practices express a range of emotions and attitudes, such as grief, sadness, gratitude, and admiration. Commemoration can also take different forms: sometimes we perform ceremonies, sometimes we build statues, and sometimes we create symbols. The objects of commemorative practices also differ. These include battles, victims, leaders, and heroes. For example, Columbus Day commemorates Christopher Columbus’s arrival in the Americas while International Holocaust Remembrance Day commemorates the genocides committed by Nazi Germany. In the United Kingdom, the most well-known commemorative practice involves wearing a red poppy to commemorate those who have died fighting for the British Armed Forces.

While many people take part in the United Kingdom’s poppy practice, some choose not to do so. Notably, the Northern Irish footballer James McClean chooses not to wear a poppy because of the British Army’s behaviour in Northern Ireland. McClean cites the Bloody Sunday massacre as a key reason for his decision. This refers to the British Army’s killing of 13 unarmed civilians, wounding a further 15, on a peaceful protest on the streets of Derry on the 30 January 1972, which was acknowledged as ‘both unjustified and unjustifiable’ in 2010 by the then British Prime Minister David Cameron. Despite providing several public explanations for his decision not to wear a poppy, McClean has repeatedly received abuse, including hate mail and occasional death threats.

Is there anything else wrong with the abuse McClean has faced other than the fact it is abuse? This issue is not only important in addressing this specific case, but also as part of the wider issue of the permissibility of pressuring people to engage in commemorative practices. While the literature on commemoration has considered a number of ways in which commemorative practices can go wrong, this question is one that so far has received little attention. In this article, we use McClean's case to investigate whether the kind of pressure he receives can constitute a form of affective injustice that we call 'emotional imperialism'. In Section 2, we articulate the various meanings associated with the poppy in order to argue that it is not objectionable for McClean to refuse to wear the poppy. In Section 3, we explain why a full account of what is wrong with the pressure that McClean receives must go beyond the fact it is abuse. In Section 4, we examine whether the existing literature on the ethics of commemoration can tell us what these further wrong-making features might be. While the literature offers some guidance, it leaves a significant gap in accounting for why the abuse McClean receives is wrong – namely, it ignores the affective injustices to which he is subjected. In Section 5, we outline the concept of affective injustice, drawing on earlier work on the topic. In Sections 6 and 7, we argue that McClean is subject to two forms of affective injustice: affective rights violations and emotional imperialism.

2. The Poppy's Message

McClean refuses to wear the poppy because he finds the message that it has for him objectionable. He writes that:

I have complete respect for those who fought and died in both World Wars – many I know were Irish-born. ... I mourn their deaths like every other decent person and if the Poppy was a symbol only for the lost souls of World War I and II I would wear one. ...

But the Poppy is used to remember victims of other conflicts since 1945 and this is where the problem starts for me.

For people from the North of Ireland such as myself, and specifically those in Derry, scene of the 1972 Bloody Sunday massacre, the poppy has come to mean something very different. Please understand ... that when you come from ... the majority of places in Derry, every person still lives in the shadow of one of the darkest days in Ireland's history – even if like me you were born nearly 20 years after the event. It is just a part of who we are, ingrained into us from birth.

... for me to wear a poppy would be as much a gesture of disrespect for the innocent people who lost their lives in the Troubles – and Bloody Sunday especially – as I have in the past been accused of disrespecting the victims of WWI and WWII.

It would be seen as an act of disrespect to those people; to my people.²

On McClean's view, the poppy has a different meaning for the people of Derry (or at least the Catholic community of Derry) compared to people in other parts of the

United Kingdom. Importantly, he takes the message that it has for him to be objectionable such that it is permissible for him not to wear the poppy. In this section, we support McClean's stance.

Let's first consider the various meanings associated with the poppy within the United Kingdom and how these have been claimed to change over time. After World War I, the poppy became a symbol to commemorate those who had died fighting for the British. The poppy continues to take centre stage during the United Kingdom's commemorative practices. On Remembrance Day, the poppy can be seen on every participant and is emblematic of the day itself. Given this, those who wear the poppy send the message that they commemorate the troops. Importantly, as Blustein claims, commemorative practices 'elicit emotions in participants (on an ongoing basis) by drawing their attention to emotionally laden events; they teach participants what emotions it is appropriate for them to have in relation to certain events'.³ We therefore need to know what emotions are expressed by this commemorative practice.

The organisation behind the poppy appeal, the Royal British Legion (RBL), once claimed that the poppy is a 'symbol of Remembrance and hope' that commemorates members of the British Armed Forces who have died in the line of duty and those who fought alongside them. They also explicitly pointed out that it is not intended as 'a symbol of death or a sign of support for war'.⁴ Given this focus, the poppy doesn't seem to have been intended as an expression of admiration for the British Army. However, the poppy's meaning appears to have changed over time.

The meaning of symbols is often not straightforward. For example, one can make an 'okay' symbol with one's hand without realising it has become a way to signal one's endorsement of White supremacy.⁵ While the meaning we intend a symbol to have is important, the meaning a symbol has to others might differ from our intended meaning. The meaning that others can justifiably infer from a symbol in a particular context is what we can call a symbol's public meaning.⁶ While a person may intend their hand symbol just to mean 'okay', there are many contexts where others could justifiably interpret it as expressing support for White supremacy. Importantly, a symbol can have different public meanings in different contexts – that is, the message it is reasonable to interpret a symbol as having can differ for different individuals and different communities. So, while many who wear the poppy may intend it to express a message of remembrance and hope, this is not the message that it sends to many Irish Catholics. Moreover, the way this community understand the message that the poppy is sending is connected to a salient part of its public meaning for many people in the United Kingdom.

What is the public meaning of the poppy? This has arguably changed since the poppy was first used as a symbol of commemoration. According to some, the initial emphasis was on the poppy being an expression of grief or sadness for the victims of World War I and of a hope to avoid unnecessary wars.⁷ It may have also expressed gratitude and admiration towards those who had fought the war. But apparently in part because of the war being fresh in people's memories, some take it to be clear that grief and sadness were prioritised over these other emotions.⁸

However, according to Harrison, the nature of war and British people's exposure to it has changed since the two world wars.⁹ While the United Kingdom has fought in many conflicts since World War II, they have involved comparatively few British injuries and fatalities. Few British people are now directly and personally affected by conflict; they are now much less connected to the horrors of war. It is possible that this lack of

connection caused the public meaning of the poppy to become malleable and open to influence.¹⁰ It is perhaps because of the need to boost sales and to compete with the rival charity *Help for Heroes* that the RBL decided to change its marketing strategy such that it now has a greater emphasis on soldiers being heroic and therefore being owed admiration and gratitude.¹¹ For example, the RBL's recent television advertisements refer to British combatants as 'heroes', and their website now sells books focused on the achievements of British combatants, such as *D Day Hero*. Further evidence for this change in (at least) public meaning comes from how the RBL have also subtly changed what they take the poppy to convey. In addition to remembrance and hope, the RBL now talks about Remembrance Day as 'a time to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces,' together with others who are 'honoured under the umbrella of Remembrance'. Notice that the message is no longer focused on those who have died or those who fought alongside them, but on the service and sacrifice of all members of the British Armed Forces. The new message makes explicit reference to honour. The claim that the poppy is not a sign of support for war has also been replaced with the claim that it is a symbol of 'hope for a peaceful future'.¹²

The upshot is that while the poppy may still have an admirable meaning for many, its public meaning is increasingly moving towards a more politicised meaning that expresses admiration and gratitude for British combatants just for being British combatants.¹³ This in turn risks glorifying war. This is not to say that such admiration is the entirety of its public meaning. It is still justifiably understood in many contexts as being an expression of grief and the desire to avoid unnecessary wars. But it is still the case that such admiration has become a more salient part of the poppy's public meaning over the past 20 years. In other words, the poppy's public meaning now seems to prioritise the emotions of admiration and gratitude over the emotions of grief and sadness.

Against this backdrop, we can see why it is not objectionable for McClean to choose not to wear the poppy. Its current public meaning sends the message that one holds all British combatants to be admirable just for being British combatants. This message is problematic for several reasons, one of which being that it appears to glorify war. This public meaning becomes more vivid and has another problematic implication when it is aimed at certain communities in Northern Ireland. Given the crimes committed by some British combatants in Northern Ireland, admiration for all British combatants risks sending a message of disrespect to the victims of these crimes. If McClean wore the poppy, it could be justifiably interpreted by Irish Catholics as a message of disrespect to Irish victims of the British Armed Forces. While it may be the case that the disrespectful message is sent regardless of who wears the poppy, it seems clear that it is not objectionable for McClean to refuse to wear something that would have this disrespectful message for his community. This is in line with the practice of wearing the poppy as the RBL intends it, according to which wearing the poppy is a personal choice.¹⁴

3. Abuse as Poppy Enforcement

The change in the poppy's public meaning has been accompanied by an increase in the professional and social pressure to wear the poppy.¹⁵ This pressure is what news presenter Jon Snow has called 'poppy fascism'.¹⁶ McClean, as we have discussed, has

suffered this pressure in the form of abuse. For example, McClean has been called a ‘fenian’ (an anti-Irish Catholic slur) as well as being told that Irish people are ‘subhuman parasites’ and ‘breed like maggots’ in response to his decision not to wear the poppy.¹⁷ While these may be the most extreme responses he has received, it has been widely reported that he continues to suffer anti-Irish abuse from football fans during matches. It is clear that there is an (albeit unorganised) attempt to pressure him to wear the poppy and perhaps also to use him as an example for others in the public eye who might also choose not to wear the poppy. Such abuse is clearly wrong. However, we don’t think that the fact it is abuse is a complete account of the nature of the wrong involved. In the remainder of the article, we attempt to give such an account. Before continuing, note three points.

First, to distinguish pressure from mere criticism, we will sometimes refer to the former as enforcement. Importantly, our arguments are not intended to rule out any and all criticism of not wearing the poppy.¹⁸ We agree that we ought to be free to criticise others for not wearing the poppy even if it is permissible not to wear the poppy, just as we ought in general to be free to criticise permissible actions even if our criticisms are mistaken.¹⁹ McClean, however, has been subject to more than just criticism. As noted above, he has had to suffer abuse, including death threats. This is objectionable in part because it aims to change McClean’s behaviour in an almost, if not outright, coercive way. Mere criticism, on the other hand, aims to convince and persuade rather than force a change of behaviour. As such, enforcement (but not mere criticism) is impermissible. While the line between mere criticism and abuse may not always be clear – criticism often appropriately expresses anger after all – one way to see the difference is to suppose that it is impermissible for McClean not to wear the poppy and then consider what would be an appropriate way to criticise him for acting wrongly. It seems clear to us that the abuse McClean has received would not be a permissible way to criticise him, because his wrong would not be sufficiently bad to merit the abuse he has received (indeed, perhaps no wrong merits such a response).

Second, we can of course resist such pressure and McClean certainly does as he has not yet worn a red poppy despite the repeated attempts to get him to wear one. Talk of ‘enforcement’ must therefore be understood as not guaranteeing that others comply. Even so, we take talk of ‘enforcement’ to be legitimate in part because it isn’t just about pressuring McClean to wear the poppy – that is, attempting to change his behaviour with implicit or explicit threats of harm. It is also about pressuring others to change their behaviour.

Third, it may seem that all that is wrong with the abuse that McClean has faced is that it is abuse and not just mere criticism. This, however, doesn’t touch upon what this abuse does – that is, what its function is. And we suggest that the abuse functions to pressure McClean and others to wear the poppy – that is, the abuse enforces the poppy practice. To compare, consider how homophobic abuse isn’t just wrong because it denigrates people who happen to be homosexual. It is also wrong because it contributes to a climate where homophobic abuse is condoned, where people who happen to be homosexual do not feel comfortable displaying affection in public, and so on. Among other things, then, such abuse functions to pressure people who happen to be homosexual from being open about their sexuality and pressures others to condone negative treatment of people who happen to be homosexual. Such abuse enforces these things even if some people will resist and (for example) display affection in

public nonetheless. In other words, homophobic abuse isn't just wrong because it is hurtful or offensive to people who happen to be homosexual, but also because of the homophobic climate it contributes towards. Likewise, we have to look beyond the abuse that partly constitutes poppy enforcement's wrongness to get a full account of why poppy enforcement is wrong. And while it is relevant that McClean has been defended in the press and by members of the public, such defences at best mitigate but do not undo the harmful effects of the abuse he has received.

In the remainder of the article, we attempt to give a fuller account of what is wrong with poppy enforcement. In the next section, we assess whether the literature on commemoration can help in this endeavour. We will see that each point we consider will have shortcomings that will point us towards two missing factors that we outline in Sections 5–7.

4. Why Else Is Poppy Enforcement Wrong?

A general problem with commemorative practices is that they are typically partisan – that is, they focus on commemorating combatants who died on a particular side.²⁰ This suggests that part of a full account of what is wrong with forcing McClean to wear the poppy is that the poppy is a partisan symbol of remembrance – that is, it only commemorates those who fought and died for the British. As such, it does not commemorate victims of the British Army, such as those killed in the Bloody Sunday massacre.

However, while this does point to a genuine problem with the poppy practice, it doesn't account for everything that is wrong with enforcement. Let's imagine that the poppy comes to commemorate the British Army and its victims. Could we then force McClean to wear the poppy? It doesn't seem so, because (aside from it involving abuse) the poppy would still express that one commemorates the perpetrators as admirable. Wearing the poppy would still therefore disrespect the victims. So while its partisan nature might be part of what is wrong with poppy enforcement, it doesn't account for all that is wrong with it.

Perhaps poppy enforcement is wrong in part because the poppy's meaning doesn't include minority perspectives. As Fabre discusses, this is also general problem for commemorative practices. This is a problem because it may lead to a 'particular kind of distortion – which takes the form of failures to mention truthful facts about the past or, worse, of outright lies about them'.²¹ And we cannot always expect minority groups to identify with the dominant historical narrative. While there have been efforts to highlight the minority groups who fought for the British, the poppy practice still seems to promote a particular narrative of Britain's past wars – in particular, one where British combatants are admirable and owed gratitude just for being British combatants. But making someone accept the dominant narrative does not account for all that is wrong with poppy enforcement. If the poppy's meaning were expanded to include minority perspectives, it would still be wrong to force McClean to wear one (again setting aside the abusive nature of enforcement). It would still express admiration for those who committed the Bloody Sunday massacre, so it would still disrespect his community. Again, while ignoring minority perspectives might be part of what is wrong with poppy enforcement, it doesn't account for all that is wrong with the practice.

A third possibility for what else is wrong with poppy enforcement is that the poppy commemorates injustice and so expresses bad ideals. It does so because it commemorates – that is, in this context, expresses admiration for – those who have committed atrocities in the name of the United Kingdom, such as the Bloody Sunday massacre. This in turn may express bad ideals, such as British supremacism or colonialism.²²

While the expression of bad ideals and the admiration of those who have committed atrocities is a problem for the poppy practice, it also doesn't explain all that is wrong with pressuring people to wear the poppy. To see this, consider a case similar to McClean's except for the fact that the United Kingdom's military actions were more plausibly justified. This case involves the footballer Nemanja Matic who also refuses to wear the poppy. Like McClean, Matic acknowledges why people wear the poppy and respects their reasons to do so. His explanation for his own decision appeals to the fact that the poppy is 'only a reminder of an attack that I felt personally as a young, frightened 12-year old boy living in Vrelo, as my country was devastated by the bombing of Serbia in 1999'.²³ The intervention by NATO in 1999 was provoked by war crimes committed by Yugoslav forces, including massacres, ethnic cleansing, systematic rape, crimes against humanity, and genocide, against Albanians, Croats, and Bosniaks which, according to a UN report, were committed in order to create an ethnically pure Serbian state.²⁴ Even if we accept the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia to have been overall just (even if not all of their actions were just), it still seems that forcing Matic to wear the poppy would be impermissible given that it reminds him of his fear and trauma as a child. So, the fact the poppy commemorates injustice and expresses bad ideals does not fully explain what's wrong with forcing people to wear the poppy.

A fourth possibility is that pressuring someone to wear the poppy violates their right to liberty.²⁵ While a threat to a player's right to liberty gets some of what is wrong with poppy enforcement, it still seems to leave an important element out. If we look at McClean's and Matic's explanations for why they don't wear the poppy, we can see what element is missing from the factors considered so far. McClean refers to disrespect, while Matic's refers to fear and trauma. Both involve the emotions, but the factors we have considered don't mention the emotions. A full account of what is wrong with the abuse that McClean has received therefore needs to refer to the emotions.

5. Affective Injustice

The points we considered in the previous section failed to articulate the distinct emotional harms that poppy enforcement has. To begin our effort to remedy this, we will outline the concept of affective injustice in this section, drawing on the work of Amia Srinivasan and Shiloh Whitney. In the two subsequent sections, we will draw on this concept to argue that poppy enforcement is wrong in part because it can constitute forms of affective injustice that have so far gone unacknowledged in the literature.

Srinivasan argues that those facing oppression often find themselves in situations where anger would be a fitting but counterproductive response.²⁶ In other words, while feeling anger would accurately represent the evaluative features of the situation they are in, the consequences of feeling anger would harm their interests.²⁷ Feelings of anger could, for example, lead to a hardening of the oppressor's attitudes towards the oppressed and exacerbate existing injustices. In this situation, the oppressed face two

kinds of injustice. First is the injustice of racist oppression. The second kind is what Srinivasan calls ‘affective injustice’ – that is, the injustice of having to navigate the psychological and normative conflict between one’s justified feelings of anger and the need to improve one’s situation.²⁸

Srinivasan’s account of affective injustice illuminates an important aspect of the experience of oppression. Her account, however, is best thought of as an account of a particular kind of affective injustice. There is no reason to think that there is only one kind of affective injustice. Following Whitney, we can hold that there are several distinctive affective forms of injustice.²⁹

Whitney begins by arguing that the withholding of ‘uptake’ of the affective experiences of oppressed groups ‘produces uniquely affective forms of injustice’.³⁰ Whitney explains her point through the following example.³¹ Suppose a man responds to a woman’s anger by viewing her as hysterical. In this case, the man isn’t focussing his attention on what the anger is about but rather on what it may reveal about the mental instability of the woman. In doing so he is refusing to accept that the woman’s anger contains meaningful content. In addition, he is refusing to grant her anger affective weight – that is, he is failing to allow her anger to emotionally move him or enter into his deliberations or evaluations of the situation. Whitney then draws on Miranda Fricker’s³² account of epistemic injustice to develop the following parallel account of affective injustice:

While *epistemic* injustice damages the credibility given one’s claims, *affective* injustice damages the weight afforded one’s feelings. The weight at issue is not that of belief, but of affective force: when my anger is unjustly refused uptake, it is not appropriately *moving* to others; it does not *affect* them as it should.³³

Whitney then outlines three distinctive forms of affective injustice, inspired by three of Iris Marion Young’s five faces of oppression.³⁴ The first is affective marginalization where one is excluded from the shared world of affect circulation.³⁵ The second is affective exploitation in which one’s affective labour is extracted by the powerful.³⁶ Finally, Whitney argues that the combination of the previous two forms of injustice constitute ‘a uniquely affective form of violence’.³⁷

Rather than viewing Srinivasan and Whitney as providing competing accounts, they should instead be seen as identifying different conceptions of affective injustice. While Whitney develops her conception of affective injustice in parallel to one form of epistemic injustice – namely testimonial injustice – we propose that we should instead look to Fricker’s general definition of epistemic injustice in order to find a general definition of affective injustice. Fricker claims that an epistemic injustice consists, ‘most fundamentally, in a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower’.³⁸ We propose the following parallel account of affective injustice:

Affective Injustice: An affective injustice is a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as an affective being.

This account can accommodate Srinivasan’s and Whitney’s conceptions of affective injustice, as both articulate ways in which a person can be wronged specifically in her capacity as an affective being. As Fricker notes, epistemic injustices can be highly localized, affecting people in relation to very specific areas of life.³⁹ They can also be

systematic, tracking people through various areas of social activity. These injustices are likely to be the result of prejudices relating to social identity. In the next two sections, we outline two forms of affective injustice that help to give a fuller account of what is wrong with poppy enforcement.

6. Commemoration and Affective Rights

One way that we propose poppy enforcement wrongs Matic and McClean is that it violates an affective right. Leif Wenar mentions the existence of these kinds of rights in his discussion of epistemic rights, providing the following examples: 'The right to be proud of what one has done, or the right to feel uneasy about the latest proposal'.⁴⁰ So, an affective right according to Wenar is a right to feel. If someone has an affective right to be proud, then this means they have a right to feel proud. We wish to add to this that affective rights may also concern affective expression. Just as someone may have a right to feel pride, they may also possess a right to express pride. According to Wenar, affective rights can only take the form of privilege rights.⁴¹ A privilege right to act in a certain way means that you have no duty or obligation not to act that way.⁴² So if someone has a right to feel proud, then they have no duty not to feel pride.

What affective rights are being violated by the enforcement of the poppy practice? We think it is plausible that there is a general right for people not to engage in commemorative practices that they do not wish to engage in. However, for our purposes here we only need to commit ourselves to the more restricted claim that people who have experienced trauma because of the behaviour of a particular army have a right not to engage in commemorative practices that honour that army. In the case of Matic, our proposal is that his right not to engage in such a commemorative practice is derived from a right to determine his own emotional responses to the traumatic experiences of his childhood. While such a right is circumscribed by reasonability constraints – he cannot respond in absolutely any way he likes – this still leaves a lot of leeway about how he can respond. Because of the fear Matic experienced whilst living through the bombing of his country as a child and because of the fact that wearing a poppy serves as a reminder of this experience, he is under no duty to wear a poppy. In the case of McClean, the right might be more plausibly viewed as a right not to express disrespect towards the members of his community who lost their lives in the Troubles (the name given to the conflict in Northern Ireland in the latter half of the 20th century). From these privilege rights, it follows that Matic and McClean have no duty to feel or express admiration for the British Armed Forces. There is also good reason to think that Matic and McClean possess claim rights. A claim right is a right that provides others with duties towards the bearer.⁴³ Given that Matic and McClean are entitled (within reason) to determine their own emotional responses to the traumatic experiences they or their communities have faced, they should not be put under pressure to feel or express certain emotions. In other words, their right to determine their emotional responses gives others a duty not to interfere by enforcing a particular kind of emotional response. This gives us good reason to reject Wenar's claim that affective rights can only take the form of privilege rights.

This account of what is wrong with poppy enforcement is an advance on the point we considered at the end of Section 3. While it is true that Matic and McClean have a

liberty right not to wear the poppy, they also have affective rights that make it permissible for them not to wear the poppy. By explaining this in terms of affective rights, we are able to see that the pressure to wear a poppy wrongs them in their capacity as affective beings and so constitutes an affective injustice. This wrong involves an expressive harm. According to Richard Pildes and Richard Niemi, ‘An expressive harm is one that results from the ideas or attitudes expressed . . . rather than from the more tangible or material consequences the action brings about’.⁴⁴ So, McClean and Matic would expressively harm their community or themselves by wearing the poppy. Their affective rights protect them from being forced into committing such harms. Poppy enforcement thereby violates their affective rights.

Analysing this case in terms of affective rights makes an important advance on the other explanations we have seen so far. Importantly, it correctly identifies the emotional nature of the wrong. However, in the next section we provide an additional analysis of the affective injustice involved in at least some cases of poppy enforcement that we will argue provides a fuller account of what is wrong with poppy enforcement.

7. Commemoration and Emotional Imperialism

Our proposal is that McClean not only suffers an affective rights violation, he is also subject to another form of affective injustice. This form of affective injustice draws on the notion of cultural imperialism. Imperialism is described by Michael Doyle in the following way:

Empire is the relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence. *Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire.*⁴⁵

Based on this notion of imperialism, it is natural to understand cultural imperialism as the cultural means by which an imperial force controls another society. For example, Edward Said argues that the novel is a key cultural form through which Western colonialism was fortified.⁴⁶ Similarly, Maria Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman claim that White feminists in the United States have made claims about women’s experience, drawn exclusively from the perspective of White women but that claim to describe something universal.⁴⁷ And Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant argue that a number of sociological ideas originating from the United States at a particular point in history ‘have been imposed, in apparently de-historicized form, upon the whole planet’.⁴⁸

Cultural imperialism, then, is a form of domination that involves a powerful group imposing its culture on a less powerful group. However, cultural imperialism is not only cultural domination, it is a particular form of cultural domination in which the powerful establish their perspective as both right and normal, while all other cultural perspectives are categorised as inferior and abnormal. According to Young: ‘To experience cultural imperialism means to experience how the dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one’s own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one’s group and mark it out as the Other’.⁴⁹ It involves, ‘the universalization of a dominant group’s experience and culture, and its establishment as the

norm'.⁵⁰ For example, the experience of heterosexuals may be taken to be representative of human experience in general, even though the experiences of homosexuals may be very different. As Young points out, the experience of a nondominant group is typically not only marked out as different but also as deviant and inferior for its failure to live up to the cultural norms of the dominant group.⁵¹ The injustice of cultural imperialism, according to Young, consists in the fact that the dominant culture pays little attention to the experience of the oppressed while at the same time imposing their own dominant culture upon them.⁵²

Young's definition of cultural imperialism is not restricted to the cases of one society culturally dominating another as part of an imperialist project. Rather, Young uses the term more broadly to refer to any situation in which a dominant group imposes its culture on another group whilst marking out the other group as deviant and inferior. This includes, then, the imposition of heterosexual culture onto homosexuals. In our articulation of emotional imperialism, we will follow Young's use of the term, although we do not wish to take a stand on whether this term should be restricted to colonial or postcolonial forms of domination. As we will show, the case of McClean is both a clear case of cultural imperialism, as Young understands it, and an instance of post-colonial domination.

A core part of any culture is a set of understandings, norms, and values that relate to affect. As Stuart Hall puts the point, 'culture is about feelings, attachments and emotions as well as concepts and ideas'.⁵³ Cultures not only involve shared affective experiences but also standards, norms, and expectations regarding the emotions. As Alison Jagger observes, emotional standards and norms are embedded in our emotional language so that learning a language of emotion often involves internalizing its norms and values.⁵⁴ The emotion of betrayal, for instance, would not make sense in a society that lacked social norms relating to fidelity. Jagger notes that in a society with hierarchical power relations these emotional standards are likely to promote the interests of the powerful. In some cases, these dominant emotional standards will be so pervasive that they will form what Jagger calls an 'emotional hegemony' in which one set of affective standards dominates a particular culture.⁵⁵

What we will call emotional imperialism is a form of cultural imperialism that involves emotional experience.⁵⁶ Emotional imperialism involves a powerful group imposing aspects of its culture's emotional norms and standards on another less powerful group whilst at the same time marking out the other culture's emotional norms and standards as deviant and inferior. There are various forms that emotional imperialism might take. First, it might involve projecting and reinforcing that the emotional responses the dominant cultures take to be fitting or appropriate are objectively those that are fitting or appropriate, which involves bringing other groups under the measure of its emotional norms. For example, a dominant group may take its country's history to be a fitting source of pride or admiration and impose this reaction on other less powerful groups, marking out as inferior and deviant anyone who fails to conform to emotional norms that require people to express admiration for the country. This can be done through enforcing that they honour the flag, sing the national anthem and accept glorifying historical narratives. Second, it might involve projecting and enforcing how the dominant culture prioritises its affective responses. This form of emotional imperialism allows that a nondominant group's emotions are fitting, but it enforces the idea that the dominant group prioritises them in the only correct way.

This could involve, for example, accepting that some aspects of a country's history are shameful but that we should prioritise our feelings of pride over feelings of shame and that anyone who fails to do so is deviant.

The enforcement of the poppy practice is a clear illustration of emotional imperialism. It involves the dominant group imposing their affective responses to British combatants on a less powerful group and marking out those who do not conform to these responses as deviant and inferior. Those who choose not to wear a poppy face abuse for failing to display the appropriate emotional responses of honour and admiration towards British combatants. They therefore face significant social pressure to disregard their own emotional responses toward the British Armed Forces, as well as the patterns of feeling characteristic of the communities with which they identify. We can understand this pressure in one of two ways. First, we might understand it as the pressure from the dominant group to accept that British combatants are fitting targets of admiration and not fitting targets of resentment, indignation, or blame. Alternatively, we might understand the pressure to take the form of accepting that British combatants may also be fitting targets of these negative emotions but that (at least at certain times of year) it is appropriate to prioritise the positive emotions that may also be fitting.

In McClean's case, he is being asked to express admiration for an army that shot 28 people from his hometown, killing 13 of them. Remember, we are not arguing that it is wrong to commemorate such an army. Rather, we think that given this context, McClean is fully entitled to choose not to commemorate them. He is entitled to instead be respectful of the meanings that this expression would have for the citizens of Derry. To pressure him to wear a poppy and express his honour and admiration is to attempt to get him to conform to the poppy narrative and accompanying emotional responses that are dominant in the United Kingdom. It is, in other words, to insist that McClean endorses and helps to promote the emotional responses endorsed by the dominant group, whilst ignoring those of the minority group of which he is a part. And it is not just any pressure; it is often pressure that also implies that McClean's culture is deviant and inferior. This is shown through the uses of the anti-Irish Catholic slur 'fenian', along with the suggestion that Irish people are 'subhuman parasites' and 'breed like maggots'.

There are several benefits of analysing this case in terms of emotional imperialism. First, unlike the points considered in Section 3, this analysis focuses explicitly on the emotional nature of what McClean is being pressured to do – namely, that he wears a symbol that expresses honour and admiration towards the British Armed Forces. He is then being called upon to show the outward signs of emotional responses demanded by the dominant group's structures of feeling. Analysing this case in terms of emotions therefore appears necessary in order to accurately articulate the wrong in this case.

In addition, analysing this case in terms of affective injustice highlights the connections to the kinds of injustice described by Srinivasan and Whitney. Having to manage apt but counterproductive anger, being denied affective uptake, and being vilified for choosing not to honour an army that has colonized, oppressed, and murdered your compatriots are all ways in which people can be wronged as affective beings. Analysing the problem in this way highlights this connection and also helps to show the variety of forms that affective injustice can take.

The analysis of emotional imperialism as a specific form of cultural imperialism also highlights the connections between the behaviour McClean is being pressured into and the wider system of oppression facing Irish people living in the United Kingdom. In contrast to viewing this simply as a problem of the violation of affective rights, analysing this case as a form of oppression shows that the problem is not simply an individual instance where a right is violated. Rather it is part of a long history of oppression and domination of Irish people by the British: a history that involves colonial rule, state-supported murder, the suppression of language and religion, discrimination in employment,⁵⁷ racist abuse and humiliation,⁵⁸ and cultural representations of Irish people as drunks and criminals.⁵⁹

Analysing this as a form of oppression also allows us to connect this enforcement to acts of anti-Irish racism in the United Kingdom today: such as the continued stereotyping of Irish people as drunks⁶⁰ and the singing of anti-Irish songs at football matches and loyalist marches. These songs include the Famine Song, which mocks victims of the Irish potato famine by calling on Irish people 'to go home' because 'the famine's over'.⁶¹ By linking the treatment of McClean to these cases of anti-Irish racism – which also seem to imply that Irish people are inferior and that their culture is inferior – we can see more clearly the oppressive context in which this enforcement takes place. Highlighting this oppressive context also makes clear that this is not merely a localized problem but a systematic one that tracks Irish people through a range of areas of social activity in the United Kingdom.

8. Conclusion

We have investigated ways that commemorative practices can go wrong by focusing on the poppy practice in the United Kingdom. While existing critiques of commemorative practices offer useful insights, we argued that they were unable to offer a full account of what is wrong with the enforcement of the poppy practice. We then proposed two new forms of affective injustice that help to provide a fuller explanation of why enforcement is wrong. First, it can be viewed as violating an affective right. While this explanation makes an important advance, it does not fully explain what is wrong with the pressure that McClean is subject to. This, we argued, should be viewed as a form of cultural imperialism that we have called emotional imperialism. Viewing things in this way not only emphasizes the emotional nature of the injustice but also highlights the connections between McClean's case and the wider system of oppression facing Irish people living in the United Kingdom. This may not fully explain what is wrong with poppy enforcement. Nevertheless, it does provide a more complete picture of the wrongs involved in poppy enforcement.

While we lack the space to do so here, future work could investigate whether this criticism can also be applied to other commemorative practices. And while we have focused on pressure via the medium of threats and abuse, we believe our points apply to other forms of pressure (i.e. anything that tries to change a person's behaviour in a coercive way). One problem that must be dealt with in future work concerns cases where it seems permissible to pressure someone to engage in a commemorative practice. For example, it seems permissible to pressure someone to commemorate the Holocaust and to acknowledge that it was morally wrong. This is what Blustein calls

‘disciplined emotionality’.⁶² This is of particular relevance to McClean’s case. Suppose that the poppy came not to express admiration for all British combatants, could we then pressure McClean to wear the poppy? Answering this question will involve weighing up rights to liberty that speak against any form of enforcement against the apparent permissibility of enforcing certain reactions to past atrocities. Of course, it would still be the case that certain forms of enforcement – e.g. abuse and threats – would likely remain impermissible.

Future work could also seek both to investigate other areas where such injustices occur and to further expand the list of different types of affective injustice. Given that Whitney has explored forms of affective injustice related to three of Young’s five faces of oppression (marginalization, exploitation, and violence) and that we have explored another (cultural imperialism), an obvious place to start would be to investigate a form related to the remaining face of oppression: powerlessness. We suggest that an investigation of affective powerlessness should also be combined with a more general investigation into the nature of affective power. We believe that this work could make an important contribution to analysing the harms involved with other kinds of enforced expressions of affect, such as the common demand made of women to smile more. An important task for such work will be investigating the relationship between affective power and affective justice. Finally, future work could also expand the account of affective rights we have sketched to include power and immunity rights, as Lani Watson⁶³ does for epistemic rights.

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NOTES

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- 3 Blustein op. cit., p. 207.
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- 8 Harrison op. cit.
- 9 Harrison op. cit.
- 10 Of course, it may be that the poppy has always had the public meaning we later argue it now has. This would only make our point stronger. We present this story of the poppy's past public meaning in order to give the poppy the benefit of the doubt and not because we are committed to its accuracy.
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- 12 Royal British Legion. 2019b. "The Story of the Poppy." <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/remembrance/how-we-remember/the-story-of-the-poppy/>. Accessed 26 September 2019.
- 13 The question of whether or not the poppy is a political symbol is important, as FIFA, the governing body of international football, prohibits the wearing of political symbols during international matches and fined the Scottish and English Football Associations after their national teams wore poppies in a match in 2016. The association has subsequently relaxed its approach to allow poppies to be worn if the opposing team agrees Slater, Matt. 2017. "FA Claims Victory in Row over Players Wearing Commemorative Poppies as FIFA Backs Down on Ban." *The Independent*. <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/football-poppy-ban-fa-fifa-a7965206.html>. Accessed 16 December 2019.
- 14 Royal British Legion 2019b op. cit.
- 15 While McClean opts out of this practice, it is noteworthy that many football teams in England's Premier League did not wear a poppy on their shirts until a *Daily Mail* campaign shamed them into doing so, eventually resulting in all Premier League teams adorning their shirts with the poppy (Sale, Charlie. 2009. "Poppy Power! Now Only Three Premier Clubs Are Still Refusing to Back Sportsmail's Campaign to Honour Our Heroes." *Daily Mail*. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-1225325/Poppy-power-Now-Premier-clubs-refusing-Sportsmails-campaign-honour-heroes.html>).
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- 22 See Burch-Brown, Joanna. 2017. "Is It Wrong to Topple Statues and Rename Schools." *Journal of Political Theory and Philosophy* 1: 59–86, Fabre op. cit., p. 292 and Schulz, Johannes. 2019. "Must Rhodes Fall? The Significance of Commemoration in the Struggle for Relations of Respect." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 27(2): 166–86 for discussions of how bad ideals and ideologies are problems for commemorative practices.
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- 27 Srinivasan op. cit., p. 129
- 28 Srinivasan op. cit., p. 135. Archer, Alfred, and Georgina Mills. 2019. "Anger, Affective Injustice and Emotion Regulation." *Philosophical Topics* 47: 75–94 analyze this form of affective injustice as a demand that victims of injustice engage in emotion regulation and argue that all of the existing strategies for emotion regulation are likely to either be inappropriate or harmful in this context.
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