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Consigning to History

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> "We've been fighting for decades to be recognized as a present-tense people, modern and relevant, alive." (Orange, 2019)

Introduction

In recent years, philosophers have explored various ways in a which a society may wrong people by the way it remembers its past. This work has explored wrongs concerning the marginalization of certain groups from historical narratives and commemorative practices,[1] the celebration of those who played key roles in oppression[2], and failures to take responsibility for historical injustice.[3] My focus will be on a different way in which we may wrong people by how we remember the past: the consigning of people to history. This paper investigates the wrongs involved in collective narratives that consign certain identities to a country's past but not its present or future.

While the wrongs of such narratives have not received a great deal of attention in mainstream moral and social philosophy, related ideas have been explored in detail by decolonial theorists[4] and those engaged in the interdisciplinary study of the impact of deindustrialization.[5] The aim of this paper is to draw on both areas of research to explore the general phenomenon of consigning to history and to analyze it using the tools of moral and social philosophy. In doing so, I will provide a detailed understanding of what is wrong with narratives that consign people to history that is nevertheless open to the distinctive harms that may arise from such narratives when used against particular groups. I will argue that these narratives can wrong people by exiling them from the imagined community of a nation, which in turn leads to several other significant harms.

1. (Fabre, 2016; Archer and Matheson, 2022)
2. (Archer and Matheson, 2021; Burch-Brown, 2017; Frowe, 2019; Schulz, 2019; Lai, 2020; Lim, 2020)
3. (Margalit, 2002; Thompson, 2003; Blustein, 2008; Booth, 2019)
4. (Fanon, 1964; Smith, 2009; Coulthard, 2014)
5. (Stanton, 2006; Clarke, 2011; Clark and Gibbs, 2020)

This paper focuses on national narratives. By this I mean narratives that serve to construct a sense of national identity in a group of people. The nations these narratives are connected to may also be states but, equally, they may not. One of the examples of national narratives that I will consider in Section 2 will be those concerning Scotland, which is a nation within the state of the United Kingdom. Nations are not the only communities that are created in part through historical narratives. Sport fan communities, for example, have also been claimed to be formed in large part through the creation of historical narratives (Kalman-Lamb, 2021). I focus on national historical narratives in this paper because they are the paradigmatic instances of collectives that are created in part through historical narratives and so provide particularly clear examples of the phenomenon. I do not mean to suggest, though, that the phenomenon of collective narratives that consign people to history only exists in relation to national narratives.

I begin by examining the nature of these national historical narratives (Section 1) before exploring examples of such narratives that consign certain identities to history (Section 2). I will then articulate the distinctive wrong involved in consigning to history and the ways in which this can harm people (Section 3). Finally, I consider the ethical implications of these harms (Section 4) and argue that there is a *prima facie* duty to neither develop nor employ national narratives that consign people to history, and a responsibility to challenge and resist the use of such narratives. This responsibility will be especially strong for powerful and privileged people, for people with a special interest in resisting such narratives, and for those able to draw on the resources of existing collectives. However, there may also be exceptional cases when the use of such narratives is morally justifiable.

1. National Historical Narratives

Historical narratives have an important role to play in the construction of national identity. A nation, as Benedict Anderson has argued, is an imagined community: "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). Members of a nation imagine themselves to be similar to one another and many feel a close affinity and connection to one another, even if they have never met. It is this felt affinity that enables people to fight and die for their country. This similarity need not be based entirely on reality. Fellow nationals may believe themselves and their fellow citizens to be well-mannered, virtuous, and tolerant when in fact they are unfriendly, hostile, and xenophobic. This community is also *limited*; boundaries separate those who belong to this imagined community from those who do not (Anderson, 2006, p. 7).[6]

Historical narratives play an important role in creating these imagined communities. As Ernest Renan argued, "a nation is a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future" (Renan, 1990, p. 4). Stories about a nation's history of military triumphs, industry and creativity, as well as stories of military defeat and economic recession — i.e., shared struggle through dark times — can help to create a sense of a shared community. These narratives present a vision of the past that aims to inform the present-day understanding of what the nation is and what binds the members of the nation together. These stories are taught in school, widely repeated throughout society, and integrated with collective acts of remembering and

6. Exactly where these boundaries lie may not be clearly defined and may be contested both among members of nations and between members of one nation and members of another. This is especially likely for cases of nations that are not states. Nevertheless, there will still be much that is agreed upon in relation to these boundaries. Scottish people and English people, for example, may disagree about whether certain border towns should be considered part of Scotland or England. Beyond these details though, there is likely to be a great deal of agreement. There will not be many who disagree that Aberdeen is clearly in Scotland and Southampton in England. These boundaries are not only geographical. Scottish people may disagree about who exactly counts as a member of the national community, for example in whether new immigrants to the country or emigrants living elsewhere count as part of the national community. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pushing me to clarify this point.

commemoration. All this helps to foster a sense of national identity. Days of remembrance, such as the USA's Independence Day, the UK's Remembrance Day, and the Netherlands' Bevrijdingsdag (Liberation Day), involve narratives about the past that serve to foster a sense of national community in the present.[7] Statues, monuments, and other forms of public memorial play an important role in fostering a sense of national identity based on a sense of a shared history (Abrahams, 2022).

The historical narratives that contribute to this nation-building process are not simply given by past events, but rather constructed out of those events. Historical narratives are constrained but not predetermined by the events themselves.[8] Even selecting which facts to include in historical accounts involves shaping these accounts in one direction rather than another (Becker, 1932). The way in which historians, political officials, and the media develop these narratives has a crucial role to play in determining what those events mean to people.

Narratives about the past are likely to be constructed in service to the interests or concerns of those in the present. As Charles Cooley (1918, p. 114) argues, the people who are remembered from history are remembered because they serve some important function in the present, not necessarily because they played an important role in the past. While those we remember may *also* have played an important role in the past, this alone is not enough for enduring fame. Many who invented important machines or made important contributions to knowledge are forgotten, while their contributions remain. Only those whose lives can serve as useful symbols will be remembered. More generally, the historical stories that are told will be significantly shaped by the uses they can be put to in the present. For example, in the run up to the Brexit referendum in the UK, Penny Mordaunt, a government minister in favour of leaving the EU, wrote an article claiming that "the Dunkirk spirit will see us thrive outside the EU" (Mordaunt, 2016). While there is no disputing the historical importance of Dunkirk, the focus on this event prior to the Brexit referendum was useful to the political interests of the day.

The form of national identity that arises from these historical events is subject to dispute and contestation, as the example of Dunkirk illustrates. Those in support of Brexit invoked Dunkirk as a shining example of the British ability to succeed against the odds. In contrast, those who opposed leaving the EU claimed that Dunkirk is an example in which retreat was the only way to avoid disaster and that a similar retreat from Brexit would be advisable (Behr, 2017). While the national identities drawn from historical events are contested, it is also possible for dominant conceptions to take hold. Political commentators may dispute the form of national identity to be built from events at Dunkirk; but invoking the Second World War as demonstrating the enduring spirit and courage of the British people is rarely challenged.

In summary, nations are imagined communities, and historical narratives play a key role in the construction and maintenance of these communities. These narratives are constructed out of past events in ways that are likely to reflect the interests and concerns of the present. I will now explain how such narratives may consign people to history.

2. Consigning to History

The first example I will consider is that of North American cultural portrayals of Indigenous people. Thomas King argues that North American popular culture is obsessed with what he calls "Dead Indians" by which he means "the stereotypes and clichés that North America has conjured up out of experience and out of its collective imaginings and fears" (King, 2013, p. 53). The image of the "Dead Indian", King argues, is pervasive in North American culture. It consists of "war bonnets, beaded shirts, feathered lances, tomahawks, moccasins, face paint, and bone chokers" (King, 2013, p. 54). It appears in the names of products, such as Big Chief Sugar and Red Man Tobacco, and sports teams such

7. Some argue that individual memory always takes place in relation to these collective frames and references (see Halbwachs, 2020).

8. According to some philosophers of history, narratives are an essential feature of history (Danto, 1965; Ricoeur, 1990). It is enough for my purposes that history is *usually* told in narrative form.

as The Atlanta Braves and The Cleveland Indians. This image also dominates media portrayals of Indigenous people, particularly those to be found in Hollywood Westerns, and was a major theme in North American literature in the 19th and 20th centuries. As the Comanche author Paul Chaat Smith describes, this dominant message is part of a North American fascination with Indigenous people, "but not the ones still here" (Smith, 2009, p. 16), which amounts to "the absolute refusal to deal with us as just plain folks living in the present and not the past" (Smith, 2009, p. 18).

The dominant message in these portrayals is that Indigenous people belong to the past. This is often the case even when the portrayal is sympathetic. James Earle Fraser's sculpture *End of the Trail*, for example, portrays an exhausted looking Indigenous person slumped over his similarly exhausted horse. While the sculpture is clearly sympathetic to the plight of Indigenous people, the core message appears to be that they are "poised on the edge of oblivion" (King, 2013, p. 32). Similarly, King argues that sympathetic portrayals of Indigenous people in films such as *Broken Arrow*, *Little Big Man,* and *Dances with Wolves* all contain a core message that they have no place in the modern world. As King points out, this message is false. Indigenous people continue to exist, though they are quite different from the dominant image of Indigenous Americans: "Dead Indians are dignified, noble, silent, suitably garbed. And dead. Live Indians are invisible, unruly, disappointing. And breathing. One is a romantic reminder of a heroic but fictional past. The other is simply an unpleasant, contemporary surprise" (King, 2013, p. 66). This leads to living Indigenous people becoming invisible as "all North America can see is the Dead Indian" (King, 2013, p. 73). The cultural portrayal of Indigenous people in popular culture in Canada and the United States, then, is one that consigns them to history. While Indigenous people are part of these nations' history, they have no role to play in their future. As Chauncey Yellow Robe, an actor and activist brought up in the Sicangu Lakota tradition, argued in an address to a conference of the Society of American Indians in 1913: "We see a monument of the Indian in New York harbor as a memorial of his vanishing race. The Indian wants no such memorial monument, for he is not dead" (King, 2013, p. 36).

A particularly clear way in which the Indigenous Americans are consigned to history is through a narrative form which the historian Jean O'Brien calls "lasting", which she understands as "a rhetorical strategy that asserts as a fact the claim that Indians can never be modern"(O'Brien, 2010, p. 107). In her study of 19th-century New England local histories, O'Brien finds this to be a frequently used strategy by which historians presented the "immanent disappearance" of Indigenous Americans (O'Brien, 2010, p. 115). At its most explicit, this strategy names an individual or small group as the last of a particular tribe. James Fenimore Cooper's 1826 novel *The Last of the Mohicans* is a particularly famous example, but this can also be found in John Augustus Stone's popular 1829 play *Metamora: or, The Last of the Wampanoags* and even paintings such as Albert Bierstadt's portrait of Martha Simon which he titled *The Last of the Narragansetts* (O'Brien, 2010, pp. 109–113). As O'Brien explains, "such narratives performed the cultural and political work of purifying the landscape of Indians, using a degeneracy narrative that foreclosed Indian futures" (O'Brien, 2010, p. 143).

As Frantz Fanon makes clear, the consigning of colonial identities to history by the colonizers is not unique to North America. In his essay "Racism and Culture", originally written in 1956, Fanon discusses how colonizers shifted from trying to justify their view of racial hierarchy scientifically to an attempt to justify it by referring to cultural values and ways of life. By this point in history, Fanon claims that colonizers had for the most part moved away from biological accounts of racism to claiming that the culture of the native people is more primitive and less enlightened than that of the colonizers. However, rather than seeking to destroy the native culture altogether, they instead seek to preserve it in an inert and lifeless form:

> The setting up of the colonial system does not of itself bring about the death of the native culture. Historic

> observation reveals, on the contrary, that the aim sought is rather a continued agony than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture. This culture, once living and open to the future, becomes closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression. Both present and mummified, it testifies against its members. It defines them in fact without appeal. (Fanon, 1964, p. 34)

Rather than abolishing the native culture altogether, the colonizers preserve it as a historical curiosity. This mummified culture then serves as testimony to the fact that the local culture is more primitive than that of the colonizers. This, according to Fanon, is no mere accident but supported through "the setting up of archaic, inert institutions, functioning under the oppressor's supervision and patterned like a caricature of formerly fertile institutions" (Fanon, 1964, p. 34). By fixing the native culture in the past, the colonizers support the myth that the identity of the colonized people is one that is part of the past but does not belong in the nation's present or future.

A similar process can be seen in the quite different context of dominant national narratives concerning deindustrialization. In 2001, the French domestic appliance company Moulinex went into receivership. They were bought out by their main competitor, SEB, in a deal that led to the closure of four major factories. Over 3,000 people in Lower Normandy lost their jobs. The closure of these and other factories had devastating impacts on the lives of many who lost their jobs and was accompanied by a new way of portraying industrial workers in the French media. In post-war France, industrial workers had been portrayed as national heroes. From the 1980s onwards, this was replaced by a fetishism of the commodities they produced and the technology used in the process, consigning laborers to a marginal role. The closure of Moulinex, though, coincided with renewed attention to industrial work through the development of industrial heritage and memorialization (Clarke, 2011, p. 448). Former mines were turned into museums, disused factories became the subject of photography exhibitions, and books remembering the working-class life of the past became popular. Factory closures became an important focus in French culture and there was even a renewed growth in portrayals of working-class life in French cinema (O'Shaughnessy, 2008). The closures of the Moulinex factories were the subject of several documentaries, a creative writing project, a rap song, and a novel (Clarke, 2011, p. 446).

However, as historian Jackie Clarke argues, this new cultural attention paid to the lives of industrial workers was actually a new form of invisibility. Industrial workers were no longer being ignored; their stories were being portrayed sympathetically in films, novels, and songs. But in these cultural portrayals, they were given an historical role. As Clarke argues:

> The new representations of workers and factories that have come to the fore, notably in the coverage of factory closures, often operate in such a way as to relegate these people and places to a time and space outside the contemporary social world. (Clarke, 2011, p. 446)

These new cultural portrayals communicated that industrial workers existed in France's past but were not relevant to France's present or future. Work which sought to draw attention to the lives of industrial workers was built on the assumption that "the industrial world is dead and gone" (Clarke, 2011, p. 449). This assumption was false, as a significant proportion of the French workforce at this time were still working in the industrial sector (Clarke, 2011, p. 447).[9]

Portraying French industry in this way was, according to Clarke, a form of erasure:

9. Clarke gives the figure of 20% for 2007, though unfortunately the source she cites is no longer accessible. A more recent figure suggests 20% of French jobs were in industry in 2019 (International Labour Organization, 2021). It is worth noting, though, that this figure includes jobs such as construction and public utilities, which may not be so obviously seen as industrial and so may not be subject to the process Clarke identifies. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pushing me to clarify this point.

> The discourse that consigns factories and those who work in them (or used to work in them) to the past is itself one of the most common mechanisms by which a *France ouvrière* [a manual and industrial worker] that does exist is conjured away before our very eyes. (Clarke, 2011, p. 447)

While the intention may have been to celebrate these workers, the effect of this discourse was to render them invisible and thus, "in seeking to honour the past, it tends to present as complete and inevitable a process which is incomplete and historically contingent. In doing so, it consigns *la France ouvrière* to the past, symbolically erasing it from the contemporary social map" (Clarke, 2011, p. 449).

A similar phenomenon can be found in portrayals of former industrial areas of West Central Scotland, where several monuments have been erected to commemorate the region's industrial past. According to labor historians Andy Clark and Ewan Gibbs, these monuments form part of a broader historical narrative which paints a picture of Scotland as a post-industrial society with a thriving economy and a commitment to social democracy. A key part of this narrative involves "consigning industrial activities to the past" (Clark and Gibbs, 2020, p. 44). As with Moulinex, this narrative serves to erase contemporary industrial activity. For example, the monument *Endeavour* in Port Glasgow (a town 20 miles to the west of the city of Glasgow) has as its "stated intention" to "celebrate the area's shipbuilding past" but "is situated less than 1 mile from a working shipyard which has recently underwent significant expansion" (Clark and Gibbs, 2020, p. 50). Similarly, the monument *Shotts Giant* in North Lanarkshire depicts a foundry worker pouring iron. It is accompanied by old photographs of the area which, according to Clark and Gibbs, creates the impression that the industrial era was "a bygone world" (Clark and Gibbs, 2020, p. 50). The accompanying plaque lists the nearby industrial sites which are now closed and includes one brickworks which is still in operation, creating the impression that this brickworks is "a survivor from another period" (Clark and Gibbs, 2020, p. 50). In all these cases, the monuments involve generic depictions of the industry being represented, which creates the impression that it is the industries themselves that are being remembered, rather than particular individuals or events.

The problem here is not the fact that these monuments remember the past, but the way in which they do so. Clark and Gibbs claim that memorials to specific episodes or depicting specific workers can play an important role in helping communities find a sense of "continuity between the industrial past and the present" (Clark and Gibbs, 2020, p. 53). These memorials tend to be supported by the community rather than local authorities and depict specific events and people rather than a broad-brush depiction of a bygone era. Moreover, the problem that Clark and Gibbs identify is not so much with the memorials themselves but with the broader historical narrative to which they contribute. This narrative holds that industrial work is firmly a part of Scotland's past rather than its present or future. However, as Clark and Gibbs (2020, p. 56) make clear, industry continues to play a part in Scotland's economy (albeit a much smaller one). Moreover, the extent to which industry plays a role in Scotland's future is not a foregone conclusion, as the narrative they criticize suggests, but rather a live and contested political issue.

These examples form part of a general pattern of focusing on working-class communities as objects of heritage. As Kirk and colleagues explain: "The material world and cultural life of working-class communities across Europe have come to be regarded, it seems, as extinct or as increasingly obsolete and, in recent years, the object only of heritage spectacles and exercises in nostalgia" (Kirk, Contrepois, and Jefferys, 2012, pp. 8–9). Similarly, in her discussion of the public history in the postindustrial city of Lowell in Massachusetts, anthropologist Cathy Stanton claims that public monuments function "to praise *and* to bury" the industrial past (Stanton, 2006, p. xii). Moving beyond heritage, sociologist Tim Strangleman (2013) notes how deindustrialization in North America was accompanied by a growth in glossy photography books depicting the decline of the industrial world. As he notes,

the photographs in these books tend to contain no people, even when depicting factories which were still in use, again sending the message that the industrial world is a thing of the past.

These examples involve what I will call *consigning to history*, which I understand as the involuntary exclusion of certain people's identities from a community by narratives placing them in the community's past but not its present or future. In the examples I have considered, the exclusion is achieved using national narratives. There may be other ways of consigning to history but my focus here is on cases where this is achieved using national narratives. These narratives can consign people to history because nations are fundamentally imagined communities which are brought about in part through historical narratives that create a sense of affinity and community among people. When these historical narratives consign an identity to the past, this is likely to influence people's views of who is and who is not a member of that community.

3. The Wrongs of Consigning to History

Consigning people to history is an involuntary form of exclusion from the national community. As explained earlier, the imagined community of a nation involves drawing a boundary between those who are members of the community and those who are not. Moreover, as Benedict Anderson argues, an important pre-condition for imagining a nation is the modern linear conception of time, in which time can be measured by clocks and calendars and where past events cause future events but not the other way around (Anderson, 2006, p. 24). This way of viewing time is important because it helps to form an idea of a group of people existing together simultaneously and moving through time together, which plays an important role in helping to facilitate the imagined community of a nation. Those who are consigned to history are excluded from the shared community of members of the nation moving onwards through time together. This shows that the boundaries of the nation are temporal as well as spatial.[10] The distinctive wrong of consigning a group of people to history, then, is that it places them outside the temporal boundaries of this community. It is a form of exile: exile from the present.

It is worth noting that this exile is only a conditional one. The actual people working in industry are not completely excluded from the present-day national community; they are only excluded in their role as industrial workers. The other forms of identity they possess (men, women, parents, football fans, tenants, homeowners, Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, etc.) may still have a place in this community.[11] Similarly, Indigenous people were not excluded from society altogether, rather they were encouraged to give up on their cultural identity and to assimilate into white society (Smith, 2021, p. 265). This was often justified as being in the interests of Indigenous people. For example, in 1880, the Prime Minister of Canada John Macdonald claimed that giving up their cultural identity would advance "the interests of the Indians, civilizing them and putting them in the condition of white men" (Smith, 2021, p. 18).

As this rather shocking quotation from Macdonald makes clear, conditional exclusion is an operative and accepted practice in many oppressive societies. In the words of the National Indian Brotherhood, the Canadian government's attempts to force Indigenous people to assimilate amounted to "the destruction of a Nation of People by legislation and cultural genocide" (Smith, 2021, p. 265). Though their situation was less drastic, former Moulinex workers felt forced to choose between being consigned to the past or rejecting their old identity: "The stark polarization of past and future, and the insistence that entry into the latter was dependent on a radical rupture with the former, offered a choice between being consigned to the past or disavowing it"

10. Note that my claim here is different from the claim made about the temporal borders of the state by Elizabeth Cohen (2018). I return to this point in the conclusion.

11. Though they may also face marginalization and exclusion in relation to these identities as well. French Muslims, for example, face significant forms of exclusion and marginalization within France.

(Clarke, 2015, p. 119). For those unwilling or unable to abandon their old identity, this was a genuine form of exclusion. While this exclusion may be conditional, that makes little difference for those unable or unwilling to meet the conditions for inclusion.

This discussion of conditional exclusion highlights an additional form of exile that takes place in the case of Indigenous people, for whom the exile from the national settler community is not the only form of exile that takes place. Part of what is involved in consigning Indigenous people to history is consigning national or tribal communities to history. As the earlier quotation from the National Indian Brotherhood makes clear, assimilation involves "the destruction of a Nation of People" (Smith, 2021, p. 265). The nations of Indigenous people are also richly developed imagined communities with their own historical narratives that help to foster affinity and connection. The forced assimilation into settler communities consigns these imagined communities to the past. This, then, can be considered a double form of exile. Indigenous people are excluded from the present-day imagined community of the settler nation by narratives that place them in that nation's past but not in its present or future. But Indigenous people are also excluded from their own imagined communities when their sovereignty is ignored and their nations are consigned to history.

The exclusion involved in consigning to history can be understood as a denial of recognition. While recognition theorists debate how exactly the concept of recognition should be understood, it is enough for my purposes to emphasize that mutual recognition involves positively affirming and acknowledging other people and receiving this positive acknowledgement from them in return.[12] Receiving recognition from other people is a basic human need. Without this, a person will be unable to develop a sense of their own autonomy nor a sense of themself as a moral agent (Hegel, 1977; Fichte, 2005). As a result, they will be denied the possibility of developing their own practical identity (Honneth, 1996). It is not enough to receive recognition simply as a person, one needs to be recognized in relation to one's own view of their own identity. This is the reason why political movements campaigning for the rights of marginalized and excluded groups demand to be recognized in relation to their distinctive group identity (Taylor, 1995, p. 38). Recognition of these identities involves attending and responding to the differences between these identities. This may mean, for example, that Indigenous people would receive different rights from other Americans, or that Indigenous languages receive greater levels of support and funding than other languages.[13]

It is this identity-related form of recognition that is denied when a group of people is consigned to history. This lack of recognition may involve failing to recognize that someone is currently a member of their identity group or that that group has a future. King describes how the preference for the romantic historical vision over the present-day reality leads many North Americans to fail to recognize contemporary Indigenous people as such: "In order to maintain the cult and sanctity of the Dead Indian, North America has decided that Live Indians living today cannot be genuine Indians" (King, 2013, p. 64). Similarly, O'Brien describes how lasting narratives contribute to a refusal of non-Indigenous people "to recognize Indian peoples as such" (O'Brien, 2010, p. xv). This lack of recognition may instead involve a refusal to approvingly acknowledge an identity as having a role to play in the nation's present or future. People may be recognized as industrial workers, but those identities are not recognized as having a role to play in the nation's present or future.

12. For an overview of these debates, see (Iser, 2013).

13. Though in the case of Indigenous people in North America there are reasons to worry that a focus on recognition can end up furthering colonial power by encouraging the colonized to accept recognition on the colonizer's terms and in doing so identify with asymmetrical and nonreciprocal forms of power (Coulthard, 2014). Recognizing Indigenous people as existing in the present may also be a way to implicitly impose settler temporal frameworks (Rifkin, 2017). This suggests that fighting for recognition on the colonizer's terms may not be the best way to respond to Native Americans' denied recognition through being consigned to history. This is consistent, though, with the fundamental wrong of consigning to history being a denial of recognition.

This denial of recognition takes a particularly subtle and duplicitous form. The celebration of Indigenous history and heritage may appear to be a form of respect but is in fact deeply disrespectful. As Fanon argues, the "pseudo-respect" of setting up institutions that claim to honor a native culture but instead fix it to the past is "tantamount to the utmost contempt", as it does not involve preserving a living culture but rather reifies a lifeless, objectified version of that culture (Fanon, 1964, p. 34). Similarly, Strangleman describes the practice of middle-class people exploring industrial ruins for pleasure as an "unseemly" form of revelry in sites of working-class loss (Strangleman 2013, p. 30). Again, what may appear to some people, particularly to these voyeurs, as a form of respect, is seen as deeply disrespectful by some of those most affected.

This form of exile will likely have harmful effects on the excluded. Those consigned to history may experience a *lack of belonging* and a sense of *alienation*. Clarke describes how an image developed of former Moulinex workers as people who did not belong in contemporary France, "as the product of another age, a figure out of sync with history" (Clarke, 2015, p. 118). Similarly, Fanon (1964) describes how the consigning of their culture to history leads the colonized to feel alienated from their culture's way of life, practices, and outlook on the world.

These feelings of exclusion and alienation matter because a sense of belonging to one's community is an important component for living a flourishing life. Simone Weil describes the human need to be rooted in a community as "perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul" (Weil, 2002, p. 43). This sense of rootedness comes from "participation in the life of the community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future" (Weil, 2002, p. 43). Consigning people to history hinders people's ability to participate in the present-day national community. They may still exist as part of the treasures of the past but not as a present-day participant.

Consigning to history also harms people by marginalizing them. This is an important harm; Iris Young describes it as "perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression" (Young, 2011, p. 53). Those who are marginalized are shut out from participation in the community. This marginalization may take different forms. One form is economic marginalization. Clarke describes how former Moulinex workers "quickly discovered that they were viewed by employers, and to some extent by employment advisers, as ill-fitted for the twenty-first-century world of work" (Clarke, 2015, p. 117). Clarke cites an employment advisor who described the impact on the employment prospects for these workers as "disastrous", claiming that "it takes months to convince an employer that they're competent, autonomous and that they're not savages" (Clarke, 2015, pp. 117–118). The narrative that these workers exist in the country's past but not its future consigned these workers to the margins of the labor market. Similarly, King argues that the preference for the romanticized vision of the Dead Indian over present-day people serves to marginalize Indigenous people, leading them to be "forgotten, safely stored away on reservations and reserves or scattered in the rural backwaters and cityscapes of Canada and the United States. Out of sight, out of mind. Out of mind, out of sight" (King, 2013, p. 61).

Consigning people to history also *silences* people by sending the message that there is no need to listen to them about the present or the future. This is a form of *perlocutionary silencing*. Perlocutionary speech acts are the effects that utterances have on the hearer (Austin, 1975). In giving my testimony, I may convince you to believe what I am saying. Your being convinced here is the perlocutionary effect of the speech act. However, perlocutionary silencing occurs when a speaker is systematically blocked from achieving their perlocutionary aims (Langton, 1993, p. 19). For example, if someone is subject to a credibility deficit, meaning their testimony is not given the standing it deserves, then they may be systematically blocked from achieving their aim of convincing people of what they have to say (Fricker, 2007). Those consigned to history suffer perlocutionary silencing because their views, judgements, and emotional responses to these situations are not taken to be relevant for present-day national decision-making.

This form of silencing is, again, subtle and duplicitous. In the case of the Moulinex workers, the resurgence of cultural attention to industrial workers and the growth of industrial heritage appears to give center stage to those who lost their jobs. However, it does so whilst consigning those workers to the past. As Clarke explains, cultural representations of those workers as "relics of another age tended to silence and disqualify workers' voices" (Clarke, 2015, p. 117). The stigma involved in belonging to another time made it easier for the concerns of these workers to be dismissed. Prominent political leaders, including the former mayor of Alençon, called on these workers to get over their grief and nostalgia and to move on from the past.[14] This, conveniently, made it easy to dismiss complaints about the political decisions that led to the closure of Moulinex. Likewise, King argues that "North Americans certainly *see* contemporary Native people. They just don't *see* us as Indians" (King, 2013, p. 62). This invisibility makes it easier to marginalize Indigenous people's interests and to introduce policies that eliminate their special legal status. Consigning people to history, then, involves saying that there is no need to listen to them about the present or the future, no need to invest in their projects or provide them with other forms of support, and no need to stand in solidarity with them.

Finally, this exclusion can have important material consequences. Clark and Gibbs point out that Scottish monuments that consign industrial workers to history have a "practical economic purpose in facilitating regeneration focused on services and retail" (2020, p. 47). According to the dominant national narrative in Scotland, deindustrialization is an inevitable and desirable process that is leading to a fairer and more prosperous society. As Clark and Gibbs point out, this narrative is rejected by many former industrial workers (2020, p. 55). Silencing these workers by consigning them to history helps to buttress the dominant narrative of regeneration and undermines attempts to challenge the economic policies these narratives serve to justify.

Similarly, King (2013) argues that the image of the 'Dead Indian' functions to frustrate the interests of contemporary Indigenous Americans and has been repeatedly used to undermine their special legal status and land rights. The idea that Indigenous identities belong to the past is used to justify repeated attempts in the USA and Canada to get rid of Indigenous land rights. For example, in 1969, the Canadian Government, led by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, developed a white paper proposing the elimination of Indigenous land rights. The motivation was, in the words of the white paper, "[to] recognize the simple reality that the separate legal status of Indians and the policies which have flowed from it have kept the Indian people apart from and *behind* other Canadians" (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1969). By abandoning their special legal status and land rights, the white paper held that Indigenous people could properly integrate into Canadian society. A key part of the justification here is that Indigenous people in Canada needed to abandon their Indigenous identity to enter the modern world. While this proposal was defeated, Indigenous American land rights were significantly eroded during the 20th century. Consigning to history, then, can support wider societal narratives that are used to justify social and economic policies that bring significant material harm to those being excluded.

4. The Ethics of Consigning to History

National narratives that consign identities to history wrong people and groups by excluding them from the imagined national community, which may lead to harmful feelings of alienation and a lack of belonging, as well marginalizing the interests of those concerned. This exclusion and the associated harms support a *prima facie* duty not to develop or employ national narratives that consign some members of the nation to history. In general, we ought not to develop or employ narratives that consign to history, though this duty may be overridden and may not exist at all in some cases. We also have moral reason to

14. This demand may also be seen as a form of affective injustice as outlined by Amia Srinivasan (2018). This is an injustice where victims of oppression must let go of their justified emotional responses, in this case grief and nostalgia, in order to advance their interests. For further discussion of affective injustice, see (Whitney, 2018; Archer and Mills, 2019; Gallegos, 2021).

challenge and resist the use of such narratives by others. One clear form such resistance can take is through developing what Hilde Lindemann Nelson calls "counterstories", which are stories that resist dominant shared narratives that serve to legitimize oppression of particular groups (Lindemann Nelson, 2001). This is not a simple task; the ability of any individual to successfully develop such narratives and have them receive uptake is likely to be limited. In the case of Indigenous people in North America, a major barrier to such uptake is the prevalence of what Anna Cook calls "settler denial", defined as "the explicit and implicit denial of settler colonialism" (2017, p. 6), which contributes to ignorance about colonialism amongst non-Indigenous people.

Who is responsible for resisting these narratives? Iris Young's view of how to respond to structural injustice can provide helpful guidance here. Young argues that structural injustices are such that no individual is the sole cause of the injustice, and each individual has a very limited ability to address the injustice alone. These narratives exist as part of the social structure of society and dismantling them requires a collective effort. Given this, it is unclear who is liable for addressing such problems. Young argues that everyone who lives in a society in which structural injustice exists has a responsibility to try to remedy these injustices. This responsibility will be higher for those with power and privilege, for those with a special interest in ending the injustice, and for those who are able to draw on the resources of existing collectives (Young, 2011, p. 147). This means that everyone has a responsibility to resist national narratives that wrongly consign people to history, but some people have a special responsibility to do so. Here, these special responsibilities are going to lie largely with those responsible for narrating a country's past. Historians, museum curators, artists, politicians, and media members should all make a special effort to develop alternative narratives to those that consign people to history. Similarly, those who can command the resources of existing collectives such as political parties, trade unions, religious organizations, and professional organizations have special responsibilities to resist such narratives.

Can it be morally justifiable to employ a narrative that consigns people to history? Such narratives may be justifiable when everyone who had a certain identity is gone and so the narrative is not false. There seems no problem, for example, of consigning the identity of lamplighter to the past, given that no one performs this role today apart from in some heritage settings. There may also be cases where a country has good reason to want to consign existing identities to its national history and exclude them from the present. This may include identities that are bound up with inherently immoral activities such as colonizers, perpetrators of genocide, or slave traders. Here, the fact that a national narrative consigns people to history may count in favor of employing that narrative. Those identities should only be consigned to history, though, when a country has truly come to terms with this aspect of its past. We may also want to consign identities that are not inherently immoral, such as coalmining or oil-drilling, to history. Given these practices' damaging environmental effects, we have good reason to want to leave these identities in the past and doing so may be morally justifiable. Finally, it may sometimes be politically useful to employ narratives that consign people to history. Dressing as an undertaker and performing a mock funeral for a particular industry that is being destroyed by funding cuts may be an effective strategy for capturing media attention. This may on occasion justify employing these narratives.

While consigning to history may sometimes be justifiable, it is still important to acknowledge the harms that may arise from this. Where an identity itself is not morally abhorrent, these harms may be mitigated by adapting the identity into one with a role to play in the present. Providing meaningful work for those in former mining communities that employ similar skills, for example, may enable former miners to retain some of their old identity in their new job. Where an identity cannot be reformed, it may be possible to promote other sources of identity that would allow people to retain a sense of belonging to the national community. For example, when a mine is closed, the former workers may still be able to feel attached to the identity they feel as

members of their local community. This will be much more difficult if the town they live in falls into neglect or becomes a commuter town, as happens frequently in de-industrialized communities. When workers lose the identity they feel as local community members at the same time as they lose their working identity, this compounds the harms of consigning to history. Where consigning to history is unavoidable, there will often be good reason to seek to minimize and mitigate the harms associated with it.

Conclusion

I have argued that the historical narratives used in the construction of a national identity may wrong people by placing certain identities in a country's past but not its present or future. This is a wrongful form of exclusion from the national community which will also likely lead to harmful feelings of alienation and a lack of belonging and consign those affected to the margins of the national community. Given these harms, there is a *prima facie* duty not to develop or employ national narratives that consign people to history. People also have a responsibility to challenge and resist the use of such narratives, particularly those who are powerful and privileged, those with a special interest in resisting such narratives, and those able to draw on the resources of existing collectives. However, there will be cases where using such narratives is justifiable. Here, there will often be good reason to seek to minimize and mitigate the associated harms.

This has important implications for those involved in the development and deployment of historical narratives that aim to develop national identity. Those who construct and use such narratives should be aware of the possibility that the stories they use may exclude people from the present-day national community. This is particularly relevant for the practice of heritage. While the field of heritage studies has become aware of various other forms of exclusion, temporal exclusion is a subtle and easily overlooked problem to which heritage practitioners should pay attention.

This discussion also has implications for how we think about the connections between time, nations, and injustice. Cohen (2018) has argued that nations have temporal as well as spatial borders, as various forms of deadline are relevant for determining who possesses the rights of citizenship. In addition, the devaluation of the time of certain groups of people constitutes an important form of injustice. Consigning to history can inform both issues. First, the temporal borders of the national community may be influenced not just by deadlines but also by the historical narratives used to construct the community. Second, in providing another way, people may be wronged in relation to both time and the nation. The stories we tell to draw people together into a national community may consign people to history, and so exclude them from the nation's present and future.[15]

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