INTRODUCTION

In February 2016, during the run-up to the British referendum on Europe, former Mayor of London Boris Johnson boasted, 'We used to run the biggest empire the world has ever seen', 'Are we really unable to do trade deals?'[1] A year later, in February 2017, French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron visited Algiers and declared his country's colonialism 'a crime against humanity, a real barbarity. It is a past that we must confront squarely and apologise to those we have harmed.'[2]

These two comments encapsulate a tension at the heart of thinking about empire. On the one hand it stands for prosperity and greatness on a vast geographical scale. It invites comparison with other empires, above all the Roman Empire. And it suggests that even if the British Empire is a thing of the past, its heirs claim entitlement still to act as a major force in international affairs. On the other, particularly when empire is called 'colonialism', a quite different narrative is conjured up. It is pilloried as a 'crime against humanity', a project that accumulated wealth and power by war, plunder, expropriation, torture and massacre. Empire was thus both a fantasy of glory and a chronicle of anguish. Taken together, however, the two comments suggest that the terms 'empire' and 'colonialism' have multiple resonances today. They refer to things that happened in the past but they also express ways in which the contemporary world has been constructed in terms of power, violence, money, inequality and exclusion.

Speaking before 6,000 uniformed Harvard graduates on 6 September 1943, on the occasion of his being awarded an honorary degree in laws, Winston Churchill spoke of a world council that

would bring together both the nations which were emerging victorious from the Second World War and those which had been subjected to oppression. 'The empires of the future', he declared, 'would be the empires of the mind'.³ What he meant by this was that future empires would not be armed titans at war with each other, but rather universal empires living in peace and harmony. The concept of 'empires of the mind' is nevertheless a fluid one and has been taken as the title of this book in order to explore how empire has been imagined, mythologised and contested.

Empire was never a single thing. It was protean, taking many forms. It was improvised before it was ever thought of as a whole. It drove forward but was resisted and driven back. When it failed in one form or in one domain it did not withdraw but was reinvented, reconstructed in a different way. Such was the anguish of loss and the drive for power and prosperity that the lessons of defeat were rarely learned. Instead, there was a tendency to repeat what had gone before, in terms of practices or institutions, and thus to run the risk that defeat would follow once again.

Though empires were protean, they generally took one of three forms: empires of trade, colonies of settlement and territorial empires. Myths of empire held that intrepid sailors and bold investors forged new trade routes, that pioneering colonists cleared virgin territories and made them fertile, and that enlightened administrators followed them to ensure the benign rule of the mother country. The purpose of these myths was to make colonisation palatable to peoples at home concerned about the costs and risks of war, but they concealed the realities of empire. The most profitable trade in the eighteenth century was the slave trade, providing slave labour for the plantations of the Caribbean and American colonies. Trade was generally imposed on reluctant non-European empires or their vassals by force, sending in the gunboats where necessary and imposing 'unequal treaties' which enshrined the privileges of the Europeans. Colonial settlement did not take place in virgin lands but entailed the displacement, often the massacre of indigenous populations, and subjection of the rest to segregation and exceptional laws. Imperial rule over large territories was authoritarian. While the colonies of white settlement – from Canada to South Africa and Australia, and the French and European settlers of Algeria – acquired substantial powers of self-government, and imperial rule was always happy to work with local princes and tribal rulers, the vast majority of

indigenous peoples were systematically excluded from the prospect of exercising power and, if they laid claim to it, were brutally suppressed.

The phase of empire that lasted until the end of the nineteenth century has often been called 'informal empire' or 'free trade imperialism' based on 'gentlemanly capitalism'. The 'race for empire' between the great powers in the later nineteenth century obliged them to strengthen their grip on their possessions as they moved from 'informal empire', based on alliances with local rulers, to the 'formal empire' of direct rule. Imperial rivalry was also a major factor in the outbreak of war in 1914, when European empires of Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Russia were arguably at their height. Imperial powers claimed to be fighting for freedom and civilisation and colonised peoples, who were drafted by the hundreds of thousands into their armies, soon claimed the same from their colonial masters. They also appealed to new forms of legitimacy endorsed by the United States and the League of Nations that all nations were equal and had claims to self-government. After 1918 territories taken from the former Ottoman Empire in the Middle East or from the German Empire in Africa were divided up between the victorious powers as mandates, theoretically on a path to self-government. Few lessons, however, were learned by the imperial powers. Concessions made to colonial peoples were minimal and often withdrawn, and when those peoples resisted, in the mandates of Syria and Iraq just as much as in the colonies, they were forcibly put down.

In the Second World War Germany tried to rebuild its lost colonial empire on the Continent, while imperial Japan all but destroyed the British and French Empires in the East. The United Nations set up in 1945 endorsed a programme of decolonisation by which self-government was finally accorded to the colonies. Financially crippled by the cost of war, and facing resistance and revolt in their colonies, Britain and France were obliged to let some of their possessions go. The trauma of losing some colonies, however, only increased the desire to hold on to those that remained, if necessary by the maximum use of force and fraud. The French fought a brutal war between 1956 and 1962 to hold on to French Algeria, while the British perpetrated atrocities in a bid to retain Kenya.

Even after the rush of decolonisation in the 1960s the strings of economic and military power often remained in the hands of the former empires. This became known as neo-colonialism. It was practised by the

French south of the Sahara in what became known as *Françafrique* and by the British in Southern Africa. The 1982 Falklands War and French military intervention in New Caledonia in 1988 were perfect examples of neo-colonialism. South Africa left the Commonwealth in 1960 but British financial investments remained secure, defended by the apartheid regime. This opened the way to a form of empire which might be called global financial imperialism. Military power was hidden while the world's richest countries used the financial levers of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to require indebted countries to concede what was effectively indirect rule and to open themselves up to exploitation by multinational companies.

After Iran became an Islamic republic in 1979 and the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1980 imperialism reinvented itself once again. Initially the West supported Afghan *mujahideen* fighting the Soviets, but this only served to attract, train and spread networks of Islamic fighters opposed to Western imperialism. In the face of new global threats from Islamic powers and Islamism, a new edition of neo-imperialism, led this time by the United States, justified colonialist intervention in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, which had formerly been parts of the British or French empires, and where the British and French had brutally intervened in the 1920s. The consequence, however, was the 'blowback' of Islamist jihad, forming an Islamic state on the rubble of Iraq and Syria and inspiring Islamist attacks on the continent of Europe.

Empires existed not only 'out there', in the Americas or Caribbean, Africa, Asia or the Antipodes, but also 'back here', in the metropolis. After the Second World War large numbers of Britons went to live in the former colonies of settlement, while subjects of the British or French Empires, many of whom had fought in the imperial armies during the war, were invited to live and work in Britain or France, in order to rebuild economies shattered by that war. Those who arrived on the *Empire Windrush* from the former slave colonies of the Caribbean, from an India violently partitioned or from French colonies where they were denied citizenship and subject to an arbitrary penal code came with dreams of a better life. Jamaican singer Louise Bennett described this wittily as a process of 'colonisation in reverse', by which the former colonisers were themselves colonised.

For most British or French people of the metropolis, however, this 'colonisation in reverse' was no joke. The loss of empire 'out there'

seemed to coincide with the arrival of former colonial peoples, threatening their jobs, their communities, their 'way of life'. The response in the metropolis was to reimpose colonial hierarchies, colonial segregation and colonial laws of exception. Black and Arab populations were confined to ghettos in inner-cities of suburbs, denied access to education and jobs, and subjected to the arbitrary powers of the police. Parties such as the National Front in France and the UK Independence Party set the political agenda by arguing that the country was being overrun by immigrants who could not be assimilated. The perceived threat of immigration from the colonies stimulated redefinitions of British or French national identity which explicitly or implicitly excluded immigrant populations. The possibility that Britain or France might become multicultural nations in which all ethnic communities were respected was flirted with, then rejected. Histories were written which posited the continuous existence of homogeneous white nations who dominated colonial peoples. 'British values' were asserted which immigrant populations were deemed not to understand or to share. In France citizenship was open to individuals who accepted the values of the Republic, above all its *laïcité* or secularism. Muslim veils were banned from public spaces such as schools and town halls. Attempts by minorities to hold on to their religious or ethnic identities were rejected as a 'communitarianism' which undermined the universal Republic which all citizens were required to embrace.

Ambitions and fantasies about empire in the global and metropolitan spheres had an important impact on a third sphere too: Europe. After two world wars, which have sometimes been seen as European civil wars, moves were made to construct a European Common Market and a European Union. Not all European countries were equally enamoured of the idea. The driving forces of the European project were West Germany and France, which were variously recovering from defeat, foreign occupation and division. Britain, which had not been defeated, occupied or divided, took a very different view of Europe. It imagined that it had 'stood alone' against Hitler after the fall of France in 1940, relying on the solidarity of its Empire and Commonwealth before being rescued by the United States (little or nothing was said about Soviet Russia). It was reluctant to join a Europe that endangered both its ties with the Commonwealth and its 'special relationship' with the United States. Britain was therefore absent from the first phase of European construction. In the 1960s, when it changed its mind, it was told twice

by France that it could not join because it was too caught up with its Commonwealth and the United States. France, by contrast, saw the European project as a way of building Europe as an acceptable version of the Napoleonic Empire, the core of which had been the Low Countries, western Germany and northern Italy. It kept Britain out as it had under Napoleon's Continental System, while having no compunction about holding onto its own *Françafrique*.

When Britain finally did join the European Community in 1973, the success felt like a defeat. It had swapped a world empire for membership of a European empire that was controlled by France and then, after reunification in 1990, by Germany. One felt like a bad rerun of the Napoleonic Wars, the other like a repeat of the Second World War that this time ended in defeat. France too was concerned about the hegemony of Germany but decided that the best way to manage her was to tie her in to an ever more federal Europe. Used to telling colonial subordinates what to do, and sending in the gunboats if they did not comply, Britain had little experience of negotiating with equals. Neither did she like the idea of an ever more federal Europe and set her sights on retaining or recovering as much sovereignty as possible. In the new century, as wars in Iraq, Libya and Syria drove new waves of refugees towards Europe, the European Union's single market and doctrine of the free movement of people stirred up in Britain a toxic brew of hostility to European federalism and panic about new waves of foreign immigration.

Increasingly, it became clear that British and French imperial power was more illusion than reality. These old countries no longer wielded serious influence over the rest of the globe. For a long time the United States had been the hegemonic power, Russia returned to the international fray after imploding in the 1990s and formerly colonised or semi-colonised powers such as India or China now became global players. Besides, neither Britain nor France had the means to sustain adequate armed forces. This did not prevent them from reinventing empire one more time. Indeed, the more empire appeared to have declined and fallen, and the more national identity was threatened, the more a fantasy of empire was conjured up as the answer to all ills. It provided the model for projecting power onto the world stage and for imposing control on immigrant populations, whether they were seeking entry into the metropolis or were already there. In Britain's case it offered an alternative to European partnership, now dubbed vassalage, in a global dimension which was variously called 'global

Britain', 'Empire 2.0' or 'the Anglosphere', a version of the Commonwealth that included the Dominions and the United States but silently excluded the Caribbean '*Windrush* generation' and African members of the Commonwealth. France, meanwhile, while denouncing colonialism as a 'crime against humanity', retained *Françafrique* and mobilised French-speaking countries of Francophonie as a response to the Commonwealth.

Intractable questions of empire were for a long time squeezed out of public consciousness. This was partly because of the anguish of the loss of empire for the imperialists and the pain it involved for the colonised. Myths were spun about the orderly 'transfer of power' from the imperial capital to national elites. Documents relating to the brutality of decolonisation were hidden or destroyed. Whereas empire at its height had been celebrated by pageantry and stories of the civilising mission, neo-colonialist operations against freedom fighters were often carried on under the radar, and murder covered up. During the Falklands War reporting restrictions were in place and the public message was that this was a miniature rerun of the Second World War.

As empire passed away, moreover, it was reimagined nostalgically as a world in which everything and everyone was in his or her place, according to their class or rank or gender, and of course according to their race. In Britain, the Indian Raj was the main subject of this fantasy. In 1974, BBC Radio 4 broadcast *Plain Tales from the Raj*, written by Charles Allen, who was born to officials of the Raj in 1940, moved back to England with his family in 1947 but rediscovered India doing Voluntary Service Overseas in 1966–7. *Autobiography of a Princess* in 1975 and *Heat and Dust* in 1983 were among the elegiac films recovering the lost world of the Raj by Bombay-born producer Ismail Merchant and American director James Ivory from screenplays or novels by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. In France the cult of empire affected the general population less but 'nostalgérie' was powerfully nurtured by French settlers who had been forced to leave Algeria in 1962. Alexandre Arcady's 1979 *Le Coup de Sirocco* dealt with their plight, while a group of former settlers rebuilt their ideal Algerian community in the provençal village of Carnoux, near Marseille. Their narrative was that French Algeria was a great deal better than the 'gâchis' or mess into which that country had fallen after their departure.[4]

Lack of interest in empire was also explained by the fact that until the 1970s histories of empire were written by academics who were

outside the mainstream of national history-writing, yet national histories dealt rarely with empire. In France, the history of Algeria was the monopoly of two men, Charles-André Julien, whose family had emigrated to Algeria in 1906, and his pupil Charles-Robert Ageron, who taught there between 1947 and 1957. The two volumes of their history of Algeria, divided chronologically at 1870, were published in 1964 and 1979.[5] Neither Algeria nor any other French colonies had a place in the first part of Pierre Nora's compendium on French collective memory, *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, published in 1984–92, apart from one essay by Ageron on the colonial exhibition of 1931.[6]

In 1944 Caribbean historian Eric Williams, who experienced racism in 1930s Oxford, demonstrated that the British industrial revolution and consequent world power had been founded on the slave plantations. By contrast leading British economic historian Peter Mathias, while stressing the importance of a 'commercial revolution' kick-starting the industrial revolution, had only two references to the slave trade and none to plantations in his 1969 *First Industrial Nation*.[7] Cambridge historians Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, who had both served in the Empire during the war, published *Africa and the Victorians* in 1967, as a contribution not to the history of Africa so much as to 'the general theory of imperialism'. Moreover their study bought into a myth that explained empire-building by virtue of the fact that 'the Victorians regarded themselves as the leaders of civilisation, as pioneers of industry and progress'.[8]

The most dismissive judgement on the irrelevance of African history was nevertheless made by Hugh Trevor-Roper, Regius Professor of History at Oxford. Lecturing on the BBC in 1963 he declared:

> Perhaps, in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness, like the history of pre-European, pre-Columbian America. And darkness is not a subject for history […] History, I believe, is essentially a form of movement, and purposive movement too. It is not a mere phantasmagoria of changing shapes and costumes, of battles and conquests […] the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe.[9]

In recent years, however, things have changed dramatically. The story of empire has much more grip on public consciousness and

is indeed a subject of passionate public debate. A number of reasons may be suggested. First, since 9/11, the War on Terror launched by the United States and Great Britain against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Iraq was seen by many as a New Imperialism. It provoked a spate of books and articles about empire, whether that empire was British or American, and how positive an influence it was in the world.[10] Second, the threat of global Islamism manifest in terrorist attacks in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Europe and the waves of largely Muslim refugees driven out by the war sharpened debates about national identity. Multicultural options were cast aside in favour of monocultural ones, talking up the importance of 'British values' and French republican secularism. This in turn triggered debate about who was British or French, and the ambivalent place of people from the former colonies in metropolitan society.[11] Third, the debate on the European Union questioned the ability of countries within the EU to defend their borders against immigration and their sovereignty against growing federalism. This stimulated new thinking about empire and what versions of it might offer salvation in a crisis-ridden world.

Writing about empire has also changed dramatically over the last thirty years. The emergence of global history has decentred British and European historians and made historians of empire mainstream. Chris Bayly demonstrated that global history was not simply 'world' or 'extra-European' history but interconnected history. He made connections, for example, between the Taiping rebellion in China, the Indian revolt of 1857, the European revolutions of 1848 and the American Civil War.[12] Global history created the challenge of studying colonial and metropolitan history through the same lens. This methodological agenda was reset in 1997 by American historians Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler in their seminal article, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda'.[13] This has subsequently been taken up by historians such Catherine Hall, who urged 'challenging the binary' between metropole and empire, Bill Schwarz, who explored 'connections between the imperial past and metropolitan present', and Todd Shepard, who advised researchers to 'treat metropole and colony as part of the same analytic field'.[14]

In a related development, colonial history has been subverted by postcolonial history. Instead of writing the history of empire and the colonies outwards from the imperial metropolis, privileging the perspectives of the imperialists, postcolonial history is written from

non-European, non-Western perspectives and privileges the experiences of those who have been at the receiving end of colonialism, down to the present day. A breakthrough in this field was the 1988 article, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' by Columbia Professor Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. This dismissed the colonialist conceit that the abolition of *sati* was 'white men saving brown women from brown men' and demonstrated that *sati*-suicide was espoused by women fighting for Indian independence.[15] A seminal collection *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) challenged the way the English canon had marginalised non-Western literatures in English, which must be explored and made part of the canon.[16] Postcolonial approaches were championed by historians such as Joya Chatterji, who wrote about the partition of India and the migrations and diaspora it provoked from the perspective of the Indian populations themselves.[17] David Anderson and Caroline Elkins exposed the atrocities committed by the British in their colonies, notably Kenya.[18] Elkins' book was attacked by Andrew Roberts as a 'blood libel against the British people', but as Richard Drayton, Rhodes Professor of Imperial History at King's College London, pointed out, 'An imperial history that does not think and speak for those on the underside of global processes will be inaccurate, if not delusional, about the reality of empire, and complicit with future forms of tyranny, inequality and structural violence.'[19]

In France, where colonial history in the academy remained fairly traditional, postcolonial history was developed outside the academy by historians who set up a research group called ACHAC (Colonisation, Immigration, Postcolonialism). Founded in 1989 and headed by Pascal Blanchard, it explored ways in which colonised Africans were represented in colonialist iconography.[20] In 2005 it popularised the concept of the 'colonial fracture' whereby contemporary attitudes and memories are seen to be divided by the experience of colonialism. While the so-called *Français de souche* identify with the colonisers, having one set of attitudes and memories, the children of the colonised now living in France have quite another.[21] One of the contributors, Achille Mbembe, born in Cameroon in 1957 when the French were brutally imposing their neo-colonial rule, and the author of *Postcolony*, pointed out that the French were still a long way off adopting postcolonial approaches:

> Why does France persist in not thinking in a critical way about the postcolonial, about its presence in the world and the presence of the world in its bosom, before, during and after the colonial Empire? [...] As in the colonial period the model of integration is that of assimilation, agreeing to a rule of indifferentiation which refuses to allow a special status to groups on the basis that they belong to different communities. Postcolonial studies come up against a political, cultural and intellectual narcissism of which one could say that what is unthought derives from a racialising ethnonationalism.[22]

In the last thirty years, equally, there has also been a great deal of writing about the legacies and memories of empire. Writing in the aftermath of the Iraq War, Derek Gregory argued that 'many of us (I include myself) continue to think and act in ways that are dyed in the colours of colonial power'.[23] Paul Gilroy pointed out at the same time that Britain seemed less confident and more troubled by its colonial past, while immigrants served as 'the unwilling bearers of the imperial and colonial past'.[24] John Darwin highlighted a viewpoint according to which 'Britain was constituted by empire', its brutalities and inequalities traceable back to its imperial past.[25] Historians have examined how the legacies of empire are found in the former imperial or colonising country and include institutions, social structures, imaginations and mindsets.[26] On the French side, Benjamin Stora has devoted a lifetime to exploring ways in which the memory of the Algerian War was first suppressed and then burst into public consciousness around 2000, and how it structures the attitudes of both former settlers and the former colonists.[27] Non-French historians have contributed significantly to an ongoing debate about France's complicated relationship with its colonial past.[28]

The return of empire to public consciousness has not been easy. Indeed, as historians have demonstrated, the memory of empire is divided by the conflicts of empire themselves. Memory wars around empire have raged in France and in Britain. They do not, however, remain simply as memory. They structure public debate and politics in its widest sense.

In France, a law of 2005 required the nation to honour those who had died fighting to preserve the French Empire in North Africa and schools to teach the benefits of that colonial mission. The law, however, provoked sharp criticism and the formation of a group called

Les Indigènes de la République (the Natives of the Republic) who denounced the reproduction of colonial hierarchies and injustices in contemporary French society.[29] In Britain there was much public commemoration in 2007 of the bicentenary of the abolition of slave trade act as an act of national humanitarianism. Researchers led by Catherine Hall have nevertheless pointed out that much of the wealth of the British ruling class in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was drawn from profits of the West Indian slave plantations and that those compensated when slavery was abolished in British colonies after 1833 were not the slaves but the slave owners.[30] Debates were generated about Britain's slave-owning past, especially in cities like Bristol and Oxford, much of whose wealth derived from the slave trade and plantations.

In 2015 a campaign was mounted in South Africa for the statue of Cecil Rhodes at the University of Cape Town to be removed. Although he had been a builder of empire and a philanthropist of education, he was increasingly seen as a colonial adventurer and racist defender of white supremacy. The statue in Cape Town was taken down and a similar campaign was mounted in Oxford in 2016 to remove a statue erected above the High Street by Oriel College, where Rhodes had studied.[31] While students marched and held meetings, arguments were made by the college, university and press that 'history can't be rewritten'.[32] Rhodes was a man of his time and that was that. The counter-argument was that Rhodes was criticised even by his contemporaries and that the framework of analysis was now postcolonial. Just as statues of Napoleon, Stalin and Saddam Hussein came down when regimes changed, so the statue of Rhodes might be removed when those who had suffered the depredations of empire and their heirs gained a voice to demand the symbolic righting of wrongs.

This study began with the 2013 Wiles Lectures at Queen's University Belfast on 'Remembering and Repetition in France: Defeat, Colonialism and Resistance since 1940'.[33] These addressed two questions. First, how it was that those who liberated France from her colonial base in Algeria in 1944 were back ten years later, torturing suspected rebels who were trying to drive out the French in the Algerian War of 1954–62. How could so little have been learned from thinking about liberation and so many mistakes made? And second, how far were France's current troubles with its immigrant population, many of whom were of North African and Muslim origin, in some ways a replaying of the Algerian War? The lectures were given after the riots in France's

banlieues in 2005 but before the *Charlie Hebdo* and Bataclan attacks in 2015, which confirmed the urgency of tracing links between France's behaviour as a neo-colonial power in Syria and the jihadist attacks in Paris.

It soon became clear that the study could not be limited to French colonialism. In order to establish the exceptionalism or otherwise of the French case, it was decided to undertake a comparative study of the experiences of another colonial power, Great Britain. The approach is both comparative and entangled, because at multiple points, from the Seven Years War and Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 and from Fashoda in 1898 to Syria in 2015, French and British foreign and colonial involvements clashed with each other. A comparative approach permits a reconsideration of the influential interpretation that while French decolonisation was violent and painful, because of the Algerian War, Britain's was a peaceful and relatively painless 'transfer of power' to national elites. It also permits an analysis of the countries' divergent attitudes to Europe. While France sought to dominate it under Napoleon, Britain preferred to maintain a balance of power between European rivals. These divergences have had an impact on their contemporary thinking.

The most important challenge of the study is to investigate what 'empires of the mind' meant to the French and British: how they fantasised about empire, came to terms with its loss and thought through the consequences of their colonial history. 'The history of the UK, France and the USA since 1945', asserted historian David Andress, 'is marked indelibly by a sense of entitlement to greatness'. He explained this by a 'cultural dementia' of societies which 'strips them of their anchorage in the past' and induces them to abandon 'the wisdom of maturity for senescent daydreams of recovered youth'.[34] This is a powerful analysis, although it is not clear that dementia is the best way of explaining dreams of empire. More persuasive might be an argument that the pain of the loss of empire has resulted in attempts to conjure up new fantasies of empire which in turn reinforce colonial divisions in contemporary society.

Helpful in this respect is Freud's 1914 essay on 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through'.[35] He argued that if a memory of a traumatic experience is denied or repressed, a repetition or acting out of the same experiences might follow. This might operate at the level of the individual and group as well as that of the nation. Marcel Bigeard

had fought with the Resistance in France but was taken prisoner in Vietnam after the defeat of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. After the defeat in Vietnam the French military was damned if it was going to be defeated in Algeria, where rebellion broke out that same year. This was felt especially keenly at the level of military comrades. In Algeria, Bigeard recalled, 'Every evening we sat around under the light of a few paraffin lamps, talking about Dien Bien Phu and our dead comrades, how we felt at the time. We also spoke of the present war and how we needed to win it very quickly.'[36] In the event the war took six years. The French military used 'Nazi methods' of torture in order to defeat the rebels. The war was lost in Algeria but conflicts continued on French soil, between those who identified with the French Empire and Algerian immigrants who had fought for liberation. The social exclusion of youth of Algerian origin and their espousal of Islam led to a reopening of the Algerian War in the terrorist attacks of 2005. This may be seen as an example of the unthinking repetition of gestures of which Freud spoke. The alternative would be a working through of the memory of painful experiences of empire in an attempt to lay some of its demons to rest.