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**The Empire Retracts: A case study analysis of official European state
apologies offered between 2002 and 2010 for transgressions committed
against former colonies**

Tom Bentley

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Statement:

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX
TOM BENTLEY
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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OFFERED BETWEEN 2002 AND 2010 FOR TRANSGRESSIONS COMMITTED AGAINST FORMER
COLONIES**

Summary

One of the more unusual and unexpected trends to emerge in 21st century international politics has been the proliferation of official apologies issued by European states for violations committed against their erstwhile colonies. Undertaking a detailed analysis of these apologies, this thesis reveals them to be rituals which powerfully capture the anxieties, ambivalences, continuities and ruptures by which contemporary liberal elites wrestle with the colonial past and its implications in the present. In particular, the thesis locates official apologies as crucial textual, symbolic and ritualistic sites where (post-)colonial relations are illuminated, rearticulated and reproduced. Focussing on four case studies, the thesis deploys the concept of collective memory to map out the ways in which government apologies and accompanying texts engage with and recollect the past so as to articulate new, though not always radically different, historical narratives. In sketching these processes, the project conveys the overlapping contours by which, through apology, states both simultaneously impart particular perceptions of the past and, in turn, employ such constructions in their political, economic, diplomatic, and ideational armoury. The central argument of the thesis is that, despite offering discourses that moderate and temper conventional colonial narratives, the performatives nevertheless reconfigure a relationship that resembles patterns and asymmetries forged in the colonial era. This proceeds in two key ways: 1) the apologies advance particular interests of states (or particular people within the states) that historically practiced colonialism and 2) the apologies and adjacent elite discourses are laden with sentiments (paternalism, normative complacency, colonial glorification/sanitisation) that are reminiscent of the core legitimising tenets of the colonial enterprise. The examination and dissection of these ambivalent, multifaceted and peculiarly liberal utterances provides a significant, yet neglected, research platform that adds value to a burgeoning IR and multidisciplinary literature that, influenced by postcolonial study, traces the endurance and ruptures of colonial dynamics in the present.

Abbreviations and acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
CFS	Congo Free State
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GPE	Global Political Economy
IR	International Relations
IRA	Irish Republican Army
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
Parliamentary committee	Parliamentary Committee of enquiry in charge of determining the exact circumstances of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba and the possible involvement of Belgian politicians
RMCA	Royal Museum for Central Africa
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
Saville Inquiry	The Bloody Sunday Inquiry, chaired by Lord Saville
Treaty of Friendship	The treaty on friendship, partnership and cooperation between Italy and Libya
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
US	United States of America
VLD	Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten - Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats
Widgery Tribunal	Inquiry into the events on 30 January 1972 which led to loss of life in connection with the procession in Londonderry on that day, by Lord Widgery

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INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, a bourgeois – and colonialist – commentator could find nothing better to defend the West than this: ‘We are not angels. But at least we feel remorse.’ What an admission! In the past, our continent had other devices to keep it afloat: the Parthenon, Chartres, the Rights of Man, the swastika. We now know what they are worth: and now the only thing they claim can save us from shipwreck is the very Christian sentiment of our guilt. This is the end, as you can see: Europe is taking in water everywhere.

Jean-Paul Sartre (2001: 84) *Preface to Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon

The locomotive of colonialism is, of course, violence. In this respect, the acquisition of other peoples’ territories has always entailed dispossession, enslavement and killing. However, as Joseph Conrad (1995: 20) recognised as long ago as the 19th century, this is redeemed somehow by an ‘idea at the back of it’. That is, adjacent, even integral, to the physical violence and patterns of domination are stories that absolve it, make it intelligible, perversely desirable. As Said (1994: xii-xiii) wrote in *Culture and Imperialism* ‘the main battle in imperialism is over land, [...] but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative’. The discourses of colonial domination have garnered much academic attention and are familiar. Colonial projects were replete with the grandiose, the heroic, the epic; they valorised masculinised notions of adventure, discovery and bravery. Equally, they situated the plunder in altruistic terms, emphasising the gifts of civilisation, Christianity, science and so forth.

Yet, while contemporary global patterns of domination and inequality resemble those of the colonial period, the mechanics that underlie it have changed. Today’s geopolitics of haves and have nots is not sustained in formal empires, but located in neo-liberal capitalism, market economies, immigration visas and the like. And just as the mechanics of domination have shifted and altered, so too have the scripts. Western elites may speak of ‘development’, ‘failed states’ and ‘humanitarian warfare’, but who today would speak of ‘savages’, ‘Christianising’ or ‘racial superiority’? This shifting etiquette of discourse seems to be causing some rather vexing dilemmas for elites in formerly colonial states. In particular, the heroic plotlines by which politicians reflexively cloak their ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983), especially in regards to the colonial past, seem to be rather misplaced, even vulgar, in the liberal world. This thesis addresses exactly this dilemma; it constitutes an interrogation of the

under conceptualised shifting ways in which European elites narrate the colonial past, and how this both sheds light on and reconfigures contemporary colonial/postcolonial relations.

Representing the past: a new ‘grammar’

As ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983), states have long expended a great deal of effort in constructing particular stories about the past. These narratives lend the state domestic and international legitimacy, reify prevailing political-economic and social structures and give credence to foreign policies. In this sense, states conventionally used the mechanisms available to them – statues, political rhetoric, school curriculums, museums, national remembrance days – in evoking episodes that are considered to be of national achievement. Pride of place in these *sites of memory* (Nora 1989) was reserved for the colonial; intrepid explorers, expansionist monarchs, noble battalions, upstanding administrators. Even where episodes of national defeat or disaster are evoked (consider, for instance, U.S. remembrance of 9/11 or British reverence of the evacuation of Dunkirk), this is invariably imbued with ‘epic narratives of the tragic hero’ (Assmann 2006: 217). In contrast, episodes of perceived national shame were conventionally left uncommemorated and conspicuously absent from the state’s mnemonic sites. It seems, however, that while, to differing degrees, these grandiose narratives remain in circulation, in recent years there has been a discernible trend towards – as Schwartz (2008) dubs it – ‘post-heroic’ forms of memory. This entails states grappling with some of the more ignoble episodes of their pasts in ways that show a heightened introspection and moral problematisation of the past.

This new ‘grammar’ (Assmann 2006: 219) of countenancing the past can be both contextualised within and be seen to have a causative impact upon important normative developments within international politics. Broadly speaking, realist notions that permeated the Cold War – threat, self-help, survival – were not conducive to expressions of empathy with others’ suffering or, indeed, interrogations as to Western states’ culpability in such anguish. In contrast, since the 1990s, there has been, at least in a superficial manner, a surfacing of an apparent ‘new international morality’ (Barkan 2000: ix). This new discourse is closely tied to the emergence over the last quarter of a century of an invigorated liberal internationalism. This has heralded a phenomenon that Fassin (2012: 1) calls ‘humanitarian government’, whereby ‘moral sentiments have become an essential force in contemporary politics’. At the heart of this, it is ‘the disadvantaged and the dominated’ that have become the focal points for such sentiments’ (Fassin 2012: 1). In this normative climate, rhetorical adherence to ethical

foreign policies, ‘human security’, norms of human rights and the dignity of others, even those far afield, have become central to processes of state legitimization (Levy and Sznajder 2010: 3). As Barkan (2000: xvii) writes, this ‘new international emphasis has been characterised not only by accusing other countries of human rights abuses but also by self examination’. Moreover, this critical self examination appears to be decidedly backward looking. That is, in the swagger of the liberal ‘end of history’ (Fukuyama 1989), states are now compelled to rummage through their pasts and excavate and distance themselves from moments of shame and atrocity. This feeds into what Levy and Sznajder (2010: 4) term a ‘memory imperative’; a normative obligation for states to renounce past atrocities that are incompatible with their contemporary liberal credentials.¹

These dual modes of representing the past – the heroic and introspective modalities – are nowhere so vividly captured in all their stark contradictions than in regards to European states’ colonial pasts. In other words, the colonial conquests and epic voyages of discovery that were once so prime for the posterity of statues and school syllabi can be seen in a rather different light in an age of apparent cosmopolitan liberal empathy. That is, the very narratives that once furnished the colonial state’s desired national imagery are now out of tune with the liberal pitch for legitimacy. In this way, it seems that former colonial states are torn, to almost schizophrenic proportions, between two apparently irreconcilable impulses; the conventional propensity for aggrandising plotlines and the reassessment and denouncement of atrocity. Albeit with considerable unease and clumsiness, European elites have found several modes to address this dilemma. On the one hand, formerly colonial states may persist in emphasising

¹ Liberalism is, of course, a difficult concept to pin down and without a ‘readily available’ definition (Jahn Forthcoming 2013). Attempting to offer a full overview of the concept and its intellectual heritage of Kant, Locke, Mill and so on is obviously beyond the scope of this thesis. Moreover, clearly there are different strands of contemporary liberalism, ranging from neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism through to more communal strands. Liberalism is commonly used to denote states’ supposed and broad commitment to such aspects as the right of equal treatment before the law and a fair trial, democratic elections, market economies, individual protection for private property accumulation and checks and balances against excessive and arbitrary governmental oversight of individuals’ lives. While all these aspects are important to liberalism, as this discussion suggests, this thesis is concerned with the ritualistic and symbolic projection of elites’ liberal credentials. In this respect, at least at first sight, apologies sit with elites’ self understanding of liberalism to the extent that they can be seen as highly public outward proclamations that disavow egregious human rights violations and give moral and normative traction to contemporary norms of human rights, aspirations of inter-state/community harmony, understanding and reconciliation and even notions of intergenerational justice.

the supposedly ‘progressive’ moments of the colonial *encounter*; the roads, the schools, the hospitals. On the other hand, they may deemphasise the colonial past and underscore contemporary humanitarian work and aid projects in the erstwhile colony. However, in some limited cases, Levy and Sznajder’s (2010) ‘memory imperative’ has manifested itself in states apologising for transgressions in their former colonies. The starting premise of this thesis is that the offering of colonial apologies constitute fascinating, yet under researched and ill understood, forums in which European elites simultaneously wrestle with the incongruities, contradictions, continuities and ruptures of the imperial past and the liberal present. In this sense, the novel phenomenon of colonial apology serves as a Petri-dish for powerfully capturing the anxieties, ambivalences, continuities and discontinuities by which contemporary liberal elites tussle with the colonial past and its implications in the present.

A novel phenomenon

While the current era is experiencing something akin to ‘contrition chic’ (Shapiro 1997) – an outpouring of official apologies from business leaders, religious groups and governments on almost a daily basis – it should be noted that while colonial apologies may be novel, state apologies themselves are not an entirely new phenomenon. Where apologies conventionally did occur, however, they were typically for rather mundane misdemeanours; violations of territorial waters, injuries to diplomats and so forth (Bilder 2008: 25). At the more serious end of the spectrum, they were ‘humiliation rituals’ (Kampf and Löwenheim 2012: 50); symbolic of militarily defeated and prostrate states. This category of apology, it seems, occurs under coercion from the victors and circumstances where governments have little practical option but to repent (Bilder 2008: 25). However, adjacent to the liberal normative turn in international political discourse, the 1990s, as Gibney (2002) observes, ushered in a qualitatively new type of state *mea culpa*. First, instead of just the banal, contemporary apologies relate to what one might term ‘big’ issues; they deal with slavery, wrongs to indigenous peoples, genocide, assassinations and colonialism. Moreover, in dealing with such issues, certain states have shown a willingness to apologise for injustices that occurred in comparatively distant history and often for events where the primary perpetrators and victims have long since died. Second, in dealing with these issues, they are not the last resort of defeated states that are coerced into admissions of guilt. In fact, quite the opposite appears to be true: there has been a spate of apologies from certain relatively affluent Western states to certain relatively dispossessed peoples in what has crudely come to be known as the ‘Global South’. Perhaps the most striking aspect of this qualitatively new trend is the spectacle of

certain Western States apologising to the peoples they once colonised (or continue to colonise). Canada and Australia, for instance, have both apologised to the indigenous peoples within their respective states (see Nobles 2008). Internationally, such examples include Belgium apologising for its role in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the first elected Prime Minister of current day Democratic Republic of the Congo; Germany apologising for the genocide of the Herero and Nama people in current day Namibia; Britain apologising for the 'Bloody Sunday' massacre of civilians in Derry, Northern Ireland² and Italy apologising for colonialism in Libya. It is these colonial apologies that form the empirical basis of this study.

In focussing on these latter four case studies (the apologies by Germany, Belgium, the UK and Italy) this thesis deploys the concept of collective memory so as to map out the ways in which government apologies and accompanying texts (proximate treaties, political speeches etc.) engage with and recollect the colonial past so as to articulate new, though not always radically different, constructions of historical narratives. In sketching these elongated, complex and sometimes contradictory processes, the thesis investigates the contrite recollections in relation to contemporary constructed political identities and expediencies. In other words, this project seeks to analyse the overlapping contours by which, through apology, political elites both simultaneously impart particular perceptions of the colonial past and, in turn, employ such constructions in processes of state legitimisation as well as narrower, frequently opportunistic, political, economic and diplomatic imperatives.

It is through this novel research agenda that the thesis reveals apologies to be crucial textual, symbolic and ritualistic sites where colonial/postcolonial relations are illuminated, rearticulated, renegotiated and reproduced. It is this analysis of the textual and seemingly micro-phenomenon of apology that gleans a vivid insight into more macro-concerns of enduring and altering colonial configurations in the present. In particular, the case study analysis reveals the processes of *mea culpa* as unique convergences of curiously contradictory, yet interconnected and embedded sentiments. They are sites in which elites wrestle with such notions as colonial guilt, colonial nostalgia, contemporary geopolitical inequality, human

² Given Westminster's continued sovereignty over Northern Ireland, in some respects, this may also be understood as a domestic state apology. Beyond the complex issue of inter-'national' relations at play here, this is framed here as an interstate apology because of the key role the Republic of Ireland played in prompting and facilitating the contrition (see page 139).

rights, racial prejudice, political correctness and, perhaps most importantly, their nation's projected story and perceived character.

The Argument

Undertaking this research agenda, the thesis recognises that apology inescapably marks a more tempered, moderated and meditative discourse than that which circulated at the zenith of Empire. Nevertheless, while acknowledging the important discontinuities represented by *mea culpa*, the overriding argument of this thesis is that rather than destabilising or radically exploding conventional patterns and discourses of domination, the state apologies of this thesis reconfigure a relationship that resembles patterns of domination forged in the colonial era. This, it is contended, proceeds in two key ways: 1.) The apologies advance particular interests of states (or particular people within the states) that historically practiced colonialism and 2.) The apologies and adjacent elite discourses are laden with tropes and narratives that are remarkably reminiscent of the core legitimising tenets of the colonial enterprise.

Before exploring these two points in turn, it should be recognised that the thesis paints a more complex picture than apology simply being a device that unproblematically and instantaneously serves the immediate imperatives of a monolithic ruling class. By drawing on debates within collective memory literature, the argument here attempts to temper notions of an excessively instrumental utility of perceptions of the past. In this regard, while state elites do opportunistically draw certain gratuity from their *mea culpa*, the very act of apologising necessitates humbled and penitent stances that are at odds with the aggrandising postures that are conventionally the default position of politicians in regards to both themselves and their state. It is, then, in observing the unease by which even the silkiest of politicians approach *mea culpa*, that one must recognise that apologies reflect an elite that have been forced to vie, negotiate and compromise with competing historical narratives so as to retain credible and plausible constructions of the past. In this way, the argument does assert that apologies are utilised in the expediency of metropolitan actors and that they retain colonial like sentiments. Yet, this illuminates apologies as *defensive* mechanisms, whereby the contrition operates as somewhat of a salvaging mission in preserving historical narratives that have, in recent years, been subject to severe duress. That is, as the empirical chapters demonstrate, apologies arise at moments where there is intense international and domestic societal contestation or rupture at particular 'officialised' narratives of the past. It is with this

in mind that the following passages proceed to consider the two key points of the argument in more detail.

The expediency of apology

To start with the expediency of apology: state leaders do, in varying ways, utilise *mea culpa* in the service of contemporary political expediency. In this respect, the different case studies posit that contrite recollections of the past can be used to buttress diplomatic and cordial relationships with geopolitically strategic partners; serve prevailing economic interests; reaffirm the state's liberal normative complexion and boost political leaders' and parties' cultivated self image. These varied imperatives are indicative of the multiple audiences of the apology. In some respects, they reflect and reproduce unequal contemporary relations directly *vis-à-vis* the formerly colonised. This is to say that the apologies are frequently implicitly and explicitly entwined with policies or treaties that recodify political and economic structural configurations that resemble colonial disparities. For instance, Chapter 3 explores how Germany's refusal to pay reparations is, even in apology, discursively justified through contemporary policies of aid and development assistance towards Namibia. It is argued that these policies contribute to the endurance of German descendants' ownership of land that was appropriated in colonial genocide. Likewise, chapter 5 locates the apology for Bloody Sunday within the dynamics of the Northern Ireland Peace Process, a process that continues to entrench Westminster's sovereignty over Northern Ireland. Chapter 6 explores the ways in which the Italian apology for colonialism in Libya is couched within the *Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya*, which, through setting the parameters of 'reparations', establishes a relationship which facilitates Italian access to Libyan oil and gas, in exchange for 'basic infrastructure' building (Camera del Deputati 2008). This is not to contend that these policies are identical or of moral equivalence to the violent endeavours of the colonial period. However, it is to recognise that they reproduce political and economic dynamics that approximate the geopolitical inequalities of the colonial period.

Beyond having direct policy making implications upon contemporary colonial relationships, the apologies and their expediencies frequently speak past or exclude subaltern audiences. For instance, the case studies on the Belgian and British apologies assert that, at moments of domestic public disquiet with the political classes, the expressions of contrition were examples of leaders drawing emotionalised and introspective stances so as to foster electorally popular images of trustworthiness and transparency. Likewise, the imperative of renouncing episodes that are incompatible with states' constructed contemporary liberal complexion is, in many

senses, addressing a primarily domestic and Western audience. In so far as the apologies are rituals of characterising European politicians and cleansing the conscience of the stained copy books of their liberal states, they are acts that are less concerned with the people to which they ostensibly address, than with their own constituencies. In this sense, there is an egotistical, even narcissistic, element to these rituals, whereby the colonised become, in part, supporting actors for scripts about and for the metropole. It is, in other words, to produce a situation whereby subaltern suffering becomes an inanimate vehicle for the interests of the metropole's elites.

Reconfiguring colonial tenets

Observing the apparent incongruity of political apology and conventional galvanising state-sanctioned historical narratives, the thesis tracks the modes by which – through apology – state elites contest and weave new constructions of the past. It is posited that, rather than renouncing the colonial past in its entirety, the apologies here frequently reformulate narratives that are analogous to core legitimising tenets of the colonial enterprise. To repeat, this is not to say that the contemporary discourse is an exact replica of the erstwhile colonial variety. Indeed, apology does inescapably endow negative traits upon a past action, and the apologies do reflect degrees of introspection that were largely absent from the zeal of the colonial endeavour.³ Nevertheless, one can point to certain familial semblances between the apology process and colonial discourse. It is this taxonomy of contemporary colonial discourse, as located within *mea culpa*, which is explored below.

1. The sanitisation/glorification of the colonial past

The core modality by which apologies discursively sanitise the colonial past is by addressing only certain aspects of the project. In the German, Belgian and British case studies, one may observe that the apologies are offered only in relation to particularly egregious acts of violence (genocide/assassination/massacre), rather than for the colonial enterprise in its entirety. Thus, rather than positioning these episodes as symptomatic of the more mundane mentalities and structures that sustained colonialism, these narrow apologies foster the impression that the atrocities were somehow detached or anomalous from the wider colonial process. By

³ One must recognise, however, that even at the zenith of colonialism, this discourse was not unassailable. As explored in more detail on pages 79-81, colonial discourse has always been subject to ambivalence, subversion and mockery from both the colonised and the colonisers.

extension, this suggests that while these acts are considered moral violations, the wider colonial endeavours are not to be disavowed (cf. Gibney 2002: 281).

With the wider colonial projects not being subject to apology, they are, instead, frequently further imbued with sanitising or glorifying narratives. For instance, in his parliamentary apology, British Prime Minister David Cameron emphasised his 'strongest admiration for the way in which our security forces have responded over the years to terrorism in Northern Ireland. They set an example to the world of restraint combined with effectiveness given the dangerous circumstances in which they are called on to operate' (Cameron 2010). Outside the text of the apology, one can point to representations from members of the government (including the apologist) that revere the colonial past. Louis Michel, the Belgian Foreign Minister who offered the apology, elsewhere stated that King Leopold II was a 'visionary' and an 'ambitious hero'. Against the accusation of turning Congo into a labour camp, Michel rehearsed the conventional colonial script of progress and infrastructural development, saying that 'the Belgians built railways, schools and hospitals and stimulated economic growth in Congo. A labour camp? Not at all' (cited in Flandersnews.be 2010). In similar language, Umberto Bossi, formerly Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign affairs under Berlusconi, ventured that in Libya 'the Italians brought not only roads and employment, but also those values, that civilisation, and those laws that are a lighthouse for a whole culture' (cited in Mellino 2006: 470). Silvio Berlusconi, himself the apologist, infamously described Mussolini as a 'benign dictator' (cited in Farrell 2003), while elsewhere speaking of the 'superiority' of Western civilisation (cited in Testas 2003: 183). In highlighting similar representations throughout the empirical chapters, one can observe a curious and, in some respects, contradictory process, where there are certain contrite stances intermixed with apologia and conventional colonial assumptions.

2. Expounding contemporary paternalism

Just as apologies emphasise the supposedly benign aspects of the colonial past, they equally serve as platforms for the colonial states to expound their contemporary seemingly benevolent and altruistic policies. To this end, the empirical chapters detail how the German apology proclaims how the state is now 'multicultural', and 'a committed member of the United Nations, working for world-wide peace, human rights, development and poverty reduction' (Wieczorek-Zeul 2004). The Belgian apology established a Patrice Lumumba Fund, dedicated to 'seek democratic development in Congo by financing of projects for prevention of such conflicts, strengthening the rule of law and training of youth' (Michel 2002: 52). While

largely neglecting its own historical role in instigating violence in Northern Ireland, the Bloody Sunday apology venerates Britain's contemporary role in 'working towards a peaceful political settlement in Northern Ireland' (Cameron 2010). On its part, the Italian apology retreads the myths of the altruistic colonial project with the adjacent treaty providing for education visas, construction of health care facilities and the building of a highway (Camera del Deputati 2008). Such sentiments clearly advance a contemporary discourse which is loaded with patronising and infantilising sentiments that resemble the paternalistic narratives of the colonial epoch. Moreover, there are again self indulgent and congratulatory overtures in the use of apologies as forums for emphasising apparently positive traits of contemporary relations. By this measure, this is not European governments unequivocally humbling themselves before those they have wronged, but, in contrast, it is indicative of European governments again engaging in degrees of triumphalism and paternalism in relation to the periphery.

3. Ventriloquism: Speaking for the colonised

Marx observed in relation to revolutionary French peasantry that the dispossessed 'cannot represent themselves; they must be represented' (Marx 1963: 124).⁴ In her essay *Can the subaltern speak?* Spivak (1988) takes up this concern and argues provocatively that colonised peoples are denied a voice and are spoken *for* by Western intellectuals. This colonial discursive mode of ventriloquism, it is contended, is also reproduced and played out in the process of apologies. Indeed, a curious feature of apology is that, as explored in chapter 1, their complexion demands that they are articulated by the transgressor. In simple terms, this is to say that apologies are characterised by the offender speaking and the offended listening. This is not to say that the offended have no input into the apology; subaltern contestations of Western 'official' narratives play an important role in rupturing conventional colonial memories, demanding recognition and shaping the apology's text. In this respect, Western governments do discursively negotiate with alternative representations of the past and incorporate aspects of these counter-narratives into the new plotline of the apology. Nevertheless, in apology, it is the Western governmental elite who articulate a particular version of events. Just as the coloniser previously negated and re-authored colonised people's history, this process is reformulated in the contemporary format of apologies. While the apologies are undoubtedly more introspective and comparatively inclusive than the conventional colonial discourses, the format of Western politicians narrating a subaltern past

⁴ A quote that Said (1978) employs as an epigraph to *Orientalism*.

remains in place. Bolstered by the trappings of office, instant media access and ‘official’ historical inquiries⁵ – it is Western elites whose voice is disproportionately voluble in these new representations of the past.

The format of Western politicians rearticulating a subaltern past has several implications. Firstly, as already considered, it imitates the conventional format of Europeans denying and inscribing another people’s history. Secondly, the format allows for the apology to be largely articulated on the terms of the orator. By this measure, the apologist has increased capacity to set the tone of the apology, inculcate particular caveats and enlarge or sanitise certain aspects of the past on terms that may be deemed politically expedient to the orator. Thirdly, the apology becomes a story that is told by and, in many ways, becomes about Western actors. In particular, the apologies are pregnant with stories about the contemporary liberal character of Western states and their supposedly benign and ethical current foreign policies.

Situating the thesis

Before locating the thesis’ core contributions to postcolonial International Relations literature and the study of collective memory, it should be recognised that there is an emerging extant literature on state apologies both within IR and other adjacent social science disciplines (for example, Brooks 1999; Cunningham 1999, 2004a, 2004b; Barkan 2000; Gibney and Roxstrom 2001; Gibney 2002; Barkan and Karn 2006; Gibney, Howard-Hassmann et al. 2008; Lind 2008; Nobles 2008; Celermajer 2009; Kampf and Löwenheim 2012). Focussing on post World War II apologies by Japan and Germany, Lind (2008) analyses how apologies impact, sometimes negatively, upon interstate threat perception. Also centring on post-war contrition, Yamazaki (2004; 2006) focuses on Japanese apologies regarding their communication styles and shortcomings. Several authors evaluate apology’s potential as a diplomatic dispute resolving mechanism (Cohen 2004) or as part of a reconciliation process (Weyeneth 2001; Edwards 2005; Kampf and Löwenheim 2012). Likewise, other works discuss apology with questions of ethics (Mookherjee, Rapport et al. 2009), forgiveness and transgenerational (in)justice (Thompson 2002, 2008, 2009; Marrus 2007; Freeman 2008). Other authors look at the relationship between apology and international law (Gibney and Roxstrom 2001; Josephs 2004; Bilder 2008). In regards to colonial apologies, there is considerable literature on

⁵ Of the empirical case studies, the British and Belgian apologies both resulted from state led historical inquiries.

apologies to indigenous peoples in Australia (Gooder and Jacobs 2001; LeCouteur 2001; Morton 2003; Celermajor 2006, 2009; Smits 2008; Moses 2011) and Canada (James 2008). Nobles (2008) and Corn tassel and Holder (2008) conduct comparative analyses as to how different apologies to indigenous groups impact upon inter-group relations and group membership. There are also individual case studies of colonial apologies, including some of the cases studied in this thesis (Jamfa 2008; Kerstens 2008; Zimmerer 2008). This project is distinct from these works insofar as it is the first multi-case study analysis of colonial apology that focuses on the colonial/postcolonial implications of *mea culpa*. It is this novel postcolonial contribution and its place in the discipline of IR that is now considered.

The contribution to International Relations postcolonial literature

The key contribution of this thesis is to locate colonial apologies as complex and ambivalent rituals that are uniquely placed to capture and add value to the study of late 20th and early 21st Century European elite discourses in regards to the colonial past and its enduring significance. In recognising this, the thesis expounds a novel research agenda that captures these peculiarly liberal rituals and reveals them to be politicised and textual sites that both enact and illuminate shifting – yet often familiar – contemporary patterns of domination between the former coloniser and the formerly colonised. To this end, it is certainly clear that even after independence days and the formal period of decolonisation, Western states continue to hold disproportionate political, economic and military power over their erstwhile colonies. Capturing this exploitative relationship, there has been significant research in the IR sub discipline of Global Political Economy (GPE) by Marx influenced scholars into the enduring capitalist structures of disparity between the core and the periphery (Frank 1967; Wallerstein 1974). However, this valuable Dependency and World Systems analysis has not grappled meaningfully with ‘the cultural representations that sustain the unequal relations of power between the colonizer and the colonized’ (Chowdhry and Nair 2004: 7). Indeed, at least until the turn towards constructivism (Onuf 1989; Wendt 1992) and post-structuralism (Der Derian and Shapiro 1989; Campbell 1992; George 1994; Ashley 1996) in the early 1990s, issues of representation had traditionally been marginalised in the discipline of IR (see Darby and Paolini 1994; Doty 1996). In this respect, the orthodox suppositions of mainstream IR theory concealed the historical contingencies of the very reference points they studied. For instance, rather than recognising the particular geographical and historical conjuncture at which they emanated, neo-realism and liberalism characterise such issues as rationality, anarchy, balance of power, military capability, self-help and statehood as somehow immutable and ‘timeless’ (Buzan 1996) doctrines. As Chowdhry and Nair (2004: 2) postulate, ‘conventional IR obscures

the racialized, gendered, and class bases of power, and in fact [...] naturalizes these divisions'. Similarly, Krishna (2001: 401) laments the discipline's focus on theory building at the expense of 'descriptive or historical analysis', contending that 'IR discourse's valorization, indeed fetishization, of abstraction is premised on a desire to escape history, to efface the violence, genocide, and theft that marked the encounter between the rest and the West in the post-Colombian era'.

In particular, the conspicuous absence of focus on textual and cultural enactments of power within IR was all the more remarkable given the operational dynamics of the colonial past and its enduring legacies. That is, beyond the military and economic structures of domination, other humanities and social science disciplines had been far quicker to pick up on the postcolonial recognition, principally (although certainly not exclusively) laid down by Said (1978) and influenced by Foucault, that power operates 'at the very point of textual representation and the construction of language and discourse' (Darby and Paolini 1994: 385). As Said (1994: xiii) wrote in *Culture and Imperialism*, 'the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them'. In similar terms, in their seminal work, *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths et al. (2002: 7) depict how 'language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of 'truth', 'order' and 'reality' become established' (Ashcroft, Griffiths et al. 2002: 7). It is such an emphasis on the interplay between text and dynamics of power that, until recently, had been underdeveloped within IR.

Fortunately, the general disciplinary shift towards post-positivist methods of studying IR have gone some way to plugging this gap. Indeed, where once, with considerable justification, Darby and Paolini (1994: 384) could write that 'international relations and postcolonialism pass like ships in the night', there have since been important steps in rectifying this lacuna. For instance, there has been postcolonial influenced research in the discipline of IR into how discourses of gender (Darby 1997; Eisenstein 2007; Khalid 2011), race (Krishna 2001; Chowdhry and Nair 2002), security (Barkawi and Laffey 2006), development (Duffield 2007; Duffield and Hewitt 2009), peacekeeping (Darby 2009), liberalism and human rights (Bricmont 2006), North-South relations (Doty 1996; Slater 2004) and fictional literature (Darby 1998) feed into contemporary forms of dominance and inequality. This thesis sits at the intersection of this literature, holding that apology serves as a novel and crucial Petri-dish for glimpsing and grappling with the complex ways in which states negotiate and construct their identities in

relation to the colonial past and, in turn, how these identities are constituted in their asymmetrical relations with their former colonies. It is in dissection of these ambivalent sites that one can ascertain the continuities, discontinuities, contradictions and fluster by which former colonial states recount the past. It is also to highlight brittle points in Western elites' contemporary discourses that leave space for subversion, mockery and resistance.

Contribution to the study of collective memory

Beyond the postcolonial implications of apology, the thesis makes a contribution to the field of collective memory. In one respect, the purpose of drawing on collective memory is functional; the goal of the thesis is not to overhaul the concept, but utilise some of the key principles of the theory in the study of apology. In particular the concept of collective memory is valuable to this thesis in terms of its starting assertion that understandings of the past are mediated socially through discursive exchanges and intersubjective representations (such as apologies). Moreover, the premise as to the intersection between power and the uneven struggle over representing the past speaks to key debates in this thesis as to how the past is employed in political jostling and expediency. Nevertheless, beyond the functional, this thesis does attempt to locate, decipher and advance understanding of what, as previously mentioned, appears to be a new 'grammar' in the way that states narrate their pasts (Assmann 2006: 219). This is to say that the emergence of political leaders and states drawing introspectively and disparagingly on their own ignoble past is a novel and little understood phenomena. It is, then, in analysing the multifaceted ways in which these contrite recollections enmesh with identity and policy that the thesis contributes to a subtle understanding of the intersection between apology and collective memory. In developing this understanding of the grammar of contrition, the thesis demonstrates, at least within the confines of its case studies, a blurring between the orthodox 'heroic' postulations of the past and the supposedly more recent contrite representations. In this manner, the thesis shows that these contrite enunciations have not rendered the conventional galvanising sentiments in some way obsolete. Instead, the heroic and valiant expressions are loaded within the process of *mea culpa*. That is, the galvanising sentiments are not just parallel to the apology, but enmeshed in the very same texts and uttered by the same politicians.

Case study selection and research methods

Case study selection

The mushrooming of public apologies since the 1990s has been striking and has included contrition from religious organisations (not least the Catholic Church), corporations, universities and governments and governmental institutions for both grave and minor offenses (for a comprehensive overview of examples, see (Nobles 2008: 155-165). While any of these vast case studies could be sociologically interesting, this thesis chooses to study international colonial apologies for a number of reasons that have already been touched upon in this introduction. Firstly, colonial apologies are specifically interesting and - as shall be shown - illuminative, because there is something counter-intuitive about them. That is, where the colonial past has provided a reserve for states' most grandiose historical narratives, apologies, by contrast, inescapably offer somewhat of a climb-down from this once axiomatic aspect of state veneration. The thesis very much commenced as an attempt to apprehend this phenomenon and advance understanding of both the domestic and international political significance of this apparent shift in colonial representation. Secondly, the thesis opts for colonial apologies because of both the sheer severity of the transgressions⁶ and the unprecedented nature by which they have emerged in 21st century politics. As a novel and under researched phenomenon that speaks concretely to issues of international violence and prominent aspects of contemporary international redress, this is a pressing issue that demands research and further understanding. Finally, occurring between former metropole and periphery, such apologies interact with and straddle shifting power relations that are of keen interest to researchers of both IR and, in particular, postcolonialism. In this respect, postcolonialism's broad focus on the way in which shifting discourses are a key dimension of enacting power hierarchies between coloniser and colonised – both before and after formal independence – sits neatly with the study of these performatives.⁷

Having positively set out the grounds for selecting colonial apologies, it is also necessary to set out negative selection criteria by which the specific cases were chosen. Given that the breadth of colonial atrocity is wider than the scope of apologies that have thus far been offered, it seems that comparatively little about this subject can be gleaned by analysing one of the innumerable examples where the phenomenon has not occurred.⁸ As such, in terms of case study selection, the thesis opts for case studies whereby an apology has been realised. A

⁶ As already noted on page 4, state apologies were traditionally for relatively minor offenses.

⁷ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of postcolonial theory and the role of discourse in colonial authority.

⁸ There is a further discussion regarding refusals to apologise and avenues for further research on pages 186-189 in the conclusion.

consequence of undertaking a case study approach to positive cases of a finite phenomenon is that the population of possible cases from which to select is partially restricted. Consequently, case study selection, as with the vast majority of studies analysing emerging political or cultural phenomena, is somewhat delimited and empirically provided, rather than actively distinguished by the researcher (Ragin 2007: 68). Nevertheless, below a criteria and justification is outlined by which the case studies have been chosen.

1. A state apology has to have been issued

As explored in chapter 1, the task of defining what exactly constitutes a verifiable apology and what does not is a fraught task. Moreover, as intimated by the thesis' argument, each of the apologies studied here have certain deficiencies that render them less emphatic than what Smith (2005) calls a 'categorical' apology. Nevertheless, for the purpose of case selection, an 'admission of blame worthiness or regret'⁹ (Schlenker and Darby 1981) must have been issued by the head of the government/head of state or a significant government minister on behalf of the government/state.¹⁰

2. The apology must have been offered by a European government to a state or people it once colonised (or continues to colonise)

Of course, non-European governments have also undertaken the conquest and looting of other people's territory, before later offering *mea culpa*. Japan, for instance, has offered apologies to various Asian countries for activities related to its previous expansionist policies. Saddam Hussein apologised for the 1990 invasion of Kuwait (Hussein 2002). Nevertheless, exemplified most clearly by the work of Said (1978; 1994), the postcolonial literature that this thesis situates itself within has its genealogy in the analysis of Eurocentric (and later US centric) lexicons of domination. Along with the factors mentioned above, it is the postcolonial purchase of this thesis that makes colonial apologies the key sites of analysis in this study. To this end, while there is capacity for wider studies of non-European apologies, this work is located in the study of the peculiarly European discourses of Empire.¹¹

⁹ Of course, apology is quite a slippery concept and it is not always immediately clear what does and does not constitute an apology. Chapter 1 deals in detail with the features and linguistic characteristics of apology.

¹⁰ In 2011 the Dutch ambassador to Indonesia, Tjeerd de Zwaan, apologised for a massacre of up to 430 people in the village of Rawagede (see Associated Press 2011). However, this case has not been included on the grounds that it was not offered by a member of the government.

¹¹ See pages 186-189 for a wider discussion of avenues for further research.

It should equally be noted that in the study of European governmental apologies, this thesis has opted not to select cases of apologies to indigenous peoples outside of Europe from European settler states, such as Australia, the U.S. and Canada. The rationale for this is twofold: firstly, there is already considerable literature on indigenous apologies (see pages 11-12), thereby enabling analysis of overseas apologies to tackle a less clustered field. Secondly, the analysis of overseas apologies more succinctly locates the thesis in the discipline of IR. It is with these criteria in mind that the thesis' case studies have been narrowed down to:

1. The German apology for the Herero genocide in current day Namibia
2. The Belgium apology for involvement in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in current day Democratic Republic of Congo
3. The British apology for the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry, Northern Ireland.
4. The Italian apology for colonialism in Libya

Research techniques

The research engages in a qualitative case study analysis so as to unearth cross case comparisons and divergences as to the processes by which apologies and adjacent elite discourses imbue the colonial past with particular plotlines and, by extension, how these narratives are employed in processes of identity formation, state legitimisation and political expediencies. Given the distinctively discursive, ritualistic and narrational dimensions of apology, the research undertakes a textual analysis and deconstruction of these speech acts. In recognising that apologies are neither 'standalone' texts (Yamazaki 2004: 156) nor isolated from larger societal processes and ideational landscapes, the thesis seeks to analyse other pertinent narrative forming sites. The purpose is to forge a detailed and multi-layered depiction of the narratives proffered by the apologies as well as the political, economic and societal contexts in which they both arose and beget. In undertaking such a textual analysis, the following sites are located for examination:

1. Analysis of the primary textual apologies

In analysing the primary speeches of the apologies, the case studies examine how these texts narrate particular stories about the past. In this regard, the texts are deciphered so that one can apprehend the plotline imparted and the ways in which they confer responsibility. Moreover, any moral and legal caveats are analysed and the ways in which the texts both

condemn and, indeed, revere the past are scrutinised. The texts are also scanned for direct or implicit links to ongoing political and economic policies.

2. Analysis of wider discourses as articulated by the apologising politicians and other governmental elites

Outside of the apology, politicians frequently enounce perceptions of the past that both reinforce the contrition or even contradict it. In this way, these articulations and the ways in which they foster perceptions of the past are analysed and interpreted.

3. Analysis of the states' wider efforts in narrative formation in respect to their transgression

Away from the rhetoric of politicians, the case studies analyse the wider processes by which the states narrate and manufacture their current and historical relationship with colonialism. This involves an analysis of such narrative forming devices as educational syllabuses, museums, state sponsored statues, memorials, public holidays and so forth. The ways by which these sites convey the states' colonial past and how these messages have fluctuated over time are studied. In this regard, the thesis also analyses these sites of memory and how they correlate with apology.

4. Analysis of directly conjoined political and economic agreements

As shown in the empirical chapters, apologies are often frequently directly attached with particular economic and political agreements. For example, the Belgian apology was attached to the *Patrice Lumumba Foundation*, while the Italian apology outlined 'reparations' in the adjacent *Treaty of Friendship and Reconciliation*. Analysis of these agreements are undertaken so as to further illuminate the ways in which apology interacts with policies that advance particular relationships vis-à-vis the former colony.

5. Analysis of implicitly connected political and economic agreements

While some political and economic agreements are overtly attached to apologies, often the apologies relate to policy developments in a more implicit way. For example, the relationship between the British apology for Bloody Sunday and the trajectory of the Northern Ireland Peace Process is one that is only partially alluded to by politicians. Similarly, there are intimations within the text of the Belgian apology as to a relationship between *mea culpa* and a more outward looking foreign policy. Such tacit relationships are put under the microscope so as to begin to apprehend and map how these developments intersect with apology.

6. Analysis of the wider political and social context of apology

The case studies also partake in a wider analysis of the political, economic and social circumstances in the metropole in which these apologies were realised. In densely contextualising these conditions, the empirical chapters attempt to locate and comparatively analyse the societal and political conditions in which apology is elicited and interacts.

Undertaking this research, the thesis extensively utilises primary texts of the actual apologies. Beyond this, the project primarily draws on secondary literature in the form of academic books and journals. Aside from academic literature, the research also draws on grey literature, such as governmental press releases and media coverage. Due to linguistic limitations, the thesis relies largely on English based material, although a limited number of translations have been undertaken.¹² These language limitations are partially mitigated by the wealth of original documents and academic research on pertinent areas that is available either originally in English or in English translation.

Before continuing, it is necessary to be clear about the focus of the thesis: This work is about how European elites draw upon, utilise and portray the colonial past. In this respect, the thesis does not seek to extensively analyse the ways in which (formerly) colonised people receive or employ the apology. The project does not attempt to systematically address whether the recipients¹³ of the apology are satisfied or unsatisfied with the contrition or how they respond. This is not to say that subaltern narratives of the past are ignored entirely – indeed, at different junctures the thesis traces the ways in which subaltern contestation at official European narratives ruptures and contributes to a reshaping of these official plotlines. However, the central focal point of the thesis is the orators of the apology and their surrounding elite. While there is a wider discussion on pages 188-189 regarding some of the consequences, dilemmas and limitations of this approach, it is, at this juncture, necessary to be explicit regarding the immediate scope of the thesis.

¹² There are some exceptions where translations have been undertaken. For example, the original Belgian parliamentary apology has been translated, as has the *Treaty of Friendship*. Press releases from the office of Belgian foreign minister Louis Michel have also been translated. Translations have been assisted using 'Google Translate' combined with consultation with speakers of the pertinent languages.

¹³ As discussed on pages 50-52, the recipient of the apology is often blurred or unclear in collective *mea culpa*.

The structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured into six chapters, the final four of which constitute the in-depth empirical case studies. The opening chapter explores and dissects the constitutive characteristics of the rather slippery term that is apology. In initially studying interpersonal apologies, the chapter considers the device's social function and discursive features. It is posited that apology is principally a face saving mechanism that functions by providing a story that acknowledges the negative connotations of a past action of one's responsibility. However, in direct relation to the argument of the thesis, it is demonstrated that apology does not necessarily provide an absolute disavowal of an action. Contrastingly, apologies are frequently (though not always) fused with justifications, excuses and denials of particular events. In this sense, apologies may range from acts of sincere self-flagellation and remorse, to qualified acceptance of responsibility (I'm sorry, it was a mistake), through to apportioning blame on the victim (I'm sorry, but you were asking for it). Observing the intricate ways by which apology narrates the past and may caveat, deny or even celebrate certain actions, sits with the wider argument of the thesis that points to certain modes by which, even in *mea culpa*, governments continue to revere the colonial past. The final section of this chapter contributes to the existing literature on political apologies by pointing to some of the departures and continuities between interpersonal and state apologies.

Chapter Two focuses on the dual theoretical aspects of the thesis, namely collective memory and postcolonial study. Drawing first on collective memory, the chapter builds on the premise – initially offered by Halbwachs (1980; 1992) – that social groups develop an understanding of their identity through shared and socially conditioned ideas of the past. In applying this to the thesis, the chapter locates the nation state as a site in which 'official' constructs of the past are mediated and disseminated through a number of different forums, such as political rhetoric, historical tribunals, official ceremonies and so on. In this sense, one can locate the officialised and ritualised utterance of *mea culpa* as a commemorative event that imparts a particular representation of the past. The second section of the chapter explores the (broad) postcolonial project of locating, deciphering and critically subverting the discourses of empire. In this way, postcolonial analysis offers a toolkit for analysing the persisting themes of colonial rhetoric and applies this analysis to the sentiments offered within apology texts. In undertaking these tasks, the chapter shows a conceptual thread between the notions of collective memory and postcolonialism, insofar as they both emphasise the endurance of the

past in contemporary configurations of power and the centrality of discourse and representation in the mechanics of domination and hierarchy.

Chapter Three consists of the empirical case study into the German apology for the Herero genocide. Internationally, it situates the apology within the context of parallel Herero demands for reparations. In this regard, the chapter contends that the apology amounts to a vigilantly scripted text that carefully proffers caveats and clauses that attempt to discursively evade legal accountability and neutralise Herero demands for reparations. It is suggested that this obstruction to reparations claims is linked to enduring German state interest in the welfare of those in Namibia who are descendants of German settlers (Jamfa 2008: 207). Beyond this *realpolitik* aspect, the apology emerges within a wider process of heightened societal introspection into the German colonial past. It is posited that German colonialism was conventionally recollected as marginal and largely insignificant (certainly compared to other European powers). However, in recent decades there has been a revision of this perspective, with growing academic and public introspection into the colonial past. It is this introspection that intersected with the centenary of the genocide, sparking a surge in media coverage and public awareness of the event that provided occasion for apology (Kössler 2006). The final section of the chapter locates the apology within slowly shifting public memories and perceptions of the Holocaust. It is suggested that in the 21st Century there has been a gradual shift away from the Holocaust as the sole all encompassing event of German history. Although the Holocaust still looms large in the public psyche, there is now a more conducive discursive and ideational space in which other acts of violence and genocide may be contemplated and publicly commemorated.

The fourth chapter focuses on Belgian foreign minister Louis Michel's parliamentary apology for participation in the assassination of the DRC President, Patrice Lumumba. The chapter contextualises the apology within a period of political and societal turmoil following a number of scandals and perceived corruption within Belgian society. In this sense, the apology and 'truth' commission served as devices by which the new government could advantageously forge a perception that, in distinction to the former government, it could be perceived as more humble, transparent and trustworthy (cf. Kerstens 2008: 190-191). Positioning the apology amidst longer term governmental representations of colonialism, the chapter points to areas by which state institutions and politicians, even in apology, continue to articulate sanitised and reverential representations of the Belgian colonial past.

The penultimate chapter comprises an analysis of the 2010 apology for the British army's 1972 massacre of civilians in Derry, Northern Ireland, an event commonly known as 'Bloody Sunday'. The chapter demonstrates an intimate correlation between the Saville Inquiry¹⁴ (which subsequently induced an apology) and the Northern Ireland Peace Process. It suggests that the process represented a symbolic overture to the 'nationalist community' so as to buttress their courting into the Westminster vision of a devolved form of Northern Ireland governance. The second section places the apology amidst a particular style of politics as cultivated by Prime Ministers Tony Blair and David Cameron. It contends that the remorseful rhetoric bespeaks politicians who are savvy in their emotionalised gestures of pseudo-sincerity and skilled at drawing on contrition in manufacturing images that emphasise trustworthiness and humility in contexts of increasing public misgivings for politicians. The final section scrutinises the apology alongside conventional British narratives of Northern Ireland. In pursuing this, the chapter argues that Cameron reproduces familiar colonial-like narratives that largely emphasise the essential righteousness of British policy in Northern Ireland and the necessity for British led security measures within the 'disorderly' province.

The final empirical chapter investigates Italy's 2008 apology for colonialism in Libya. In doing so, it situates the apology within Italy's pre-Arab Spring geopolitical objective of forging more cordial relations with Gaddafi's Libya and introducing the some-time 'pariah' state back into the international community. The second section puts the adjoined *Treaty of Friendship* under the microscope, deciphering the ways in which the apology intersects with perceived expediencies in the realms of economics and migration. This analysis underscores the modes by which the treaty serves Italian strategic interest in natural resource accumulation, while simultaneously embedding 'reparations' within a typical colonial discourse of 'basic infrastructure projects' (Camera del Deputati 2008). The final section of the chapter positions the apology and other concurrent governmental discourses amidst shifting societal narratives of the Italian colonial past. While the apology represents an establishment that has become comparatively more introspective over recent decades, the chapter demonstrates that governmental rhetoric remains permeated by notions of a benign Italian colonialism, the 'superiority' of Western civilisation and a disposition towards fascist rehabilitation.

¹⁴ The Saville Inquiry was established with the remit of establishing the events leading up to the massacre.

The conclusion reaffirms the core arguments of the chapters and elaborates on both the striking similarities and dissimilarities between the disparate empirical case studies. This chapter also points to related areas of this field that require further research. The thesis concludes by offering some final remarks on the contradictions and dilemmas the issue of colonial apologies posit to the hegemonic ascendancy of contemporary liberalism.

CHAPTER 1: ON APOLOGY

I do not think I was wrong, but if they think so, I apologise.

Carlos Tevez (quoted in Aitken 2012)¹⁵

Introduction

The principal task of this chapter is to apprehend a sharper understanding of state apologies, their functions and implications. Thus, it is also necessary to offer a wider understanding of apologies in general – including the interpersonal – thereby garnering a deeper comprehension of the ways in which state apologies operate and function as particular sites of representation. As established in the Introduction, this thesis contends that rather than disavowing colonialism in its entirety, the apologies examined here renarrate this episode of the past in ways that resemble some of its core legitimising tenets. At first glance, such an argument may appear counterintuitive because apologies, in a sense, endow a past event with negative connotations. As such, one of the core tasks of this chapter is to bolster this argument's credence through an examination of the rather nebulous phenomenon that is apology and considering modes by which apologies may function so as to reformulate transgressions into a more agreeable format. This is initiated through a survey of the limited, but expanding, extant interdisciplinary literature on apologies.

While hesitating to offer an exact definition of apology, the first goal is to explore its constitutive characteristics and functions. Subsequently, the chapter turns to explore how apology contrasts and overlaps with accounts and excuses. In departing from the seminal work of Tavuchis (1991) and Goffman (1971), this section contends that the process of apologising and offering accounts is far more intertwined than normally recognised. Indeed, in sitting with the wider argument of this thesis, an apology is not by necessity an absolute disavowal of an action, but frequently entails – to differing degrees – elements of justification, defence and denial.

¹⁵ Tevez offered the apology after the footballer seemingly refused his manager's instructions to come on as a substitute in a Champions League match. After being ostracised from the squad, the apology seems to be an act in attempting to be reincorporated into the fold.

Exploring this idea of the duality of apology and account further, the chapter next identifies and considers a number of discursive modes an agent may employ so as to attempt to moderate his or her perceived offence, even while apologising. Importantly, these modes can be pointed to in the empirical cases of this thesis. The overall aim of this is to demonstrate that apologies have the capacity to carry out a more complex function than simply disavowing a misdeed; among other functions, they can provide accounts, trivialise incidents, apportion blame and evade accountability.

Having focused largely on interpersonal apologies, the final section joins the dots between interpersonal and state apologies. In doing so, it contributes to the existing literature by reflecting on some of the distinctions between the two types of apology in terms of their manner of delivery, functions and mnemonic and legal connotations. In drawing together diverse research on apologies and building connections in regards to international apologies, the chapter advances an interdisciplinary research agenda on this subject matter.

Defining apology: A fraught task

Though one may have an intuitive idea as to what constitutes an apology, the concept is surprisingly difficult to pin down. This difficulty is, at least in European languages, because there is no one template by which to apologise. Instead, one may draw phrasing from an assemblage of contrite phrases, such as ‘saying sorry, expressing regret and asking for forgiveness’ (Celermajer 2009: 14).¹⁶ Fraser (1981: 261) goes as far as to claim that ‘when the speaker utters, “I apologize for...” there is no question that an apology has been made’ – a claim that is problematised by Smith (2008: 20-21) and Lazare (2004: 26).¹⁷ Most significantly, the uncertainty is due in no small part to the malleable and poly-functional use of the term ‘sorry’. Indeed, as Lakoff (2008: 202) recognises, ‘the phrase in English ‘I am sorry,’ can function variously as an apology, an expression of non-responsible sympathy, and as a denial that an apology is, in fact, in order at all’. One usage, for instance, can depict a pitiful situation,

¹⁶ As considered later in this chapter, some of these phrases become ambiguous when seemingly expressing empathy rather than apology.

¹⁷ Addressing Fraser’s claim, Smith (2008: 20-21) is more sceptical about this, offering the example of someone saying ‘I apologize for your stupidity’ as a counter example. Smith proclaims to be less concerned with the linguistic structures of apology than their particular significance to people. Lazare (2004: 26) takes issue with what he sees as an increased trend for public signs ‘apologizing for the inconvenience’ during renovation work, or a parking lot declaring ‘Our lot is filled. We apologise’. For him, such statements do not qualify as apologies as they have no intention to modify their behaviour in the future, should the circumstances arise again.

such as one's finances being in a 'sorry state of affairs'. Another use of sorry in a non-apologising manner is the expression 'I am sorry you are sick'. In this example, the speaker is, of course, not accepting responsibility for the unfortunate situation, but is merely expressing sympathy.¹⁸ This may, however, be reworked into an apology through the utterance 'I am sorry you are sick, my cooking gave you food poisoning'. Away from these simple examples, there are further grey areas as to what constitutes an apology. In Smith's (2005: 473) words 'some behaviours are obviously not apologies, some empty expressions are mistaken for apologies, [and] some statements serve a few of the functions of apologies'. It is in this hazy area that we witness such potentially ambiguous and empathic statements as 'I regret....', or 'I am sorry to hear that....'

Especially in legal and political circles, it seems that orators have become savvy at exploiting this ambiguity. One particularly illustrative example of this is offered by Kampf (2009: 2261), where, in response to international criticism following exchange of fire between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian security officers, Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Prime Minister, sent US Secretary of State Colin Powell a letter expressing 'sorrow [tsa'ar] for the regrettable incident' (quoted in Kampf 2009: 2261). Israeli media reports that Sharon had apologised for the shootings led to vociferous criticism from right-wing elements within Israel. Responding to this criticism, a spokesman maintained that

The prime minister did not apologize [hitnatzel] and does not intend to apologize [lehitnatzel]. He is simply expressing his sorrow [tsa'aro] that the incident occurred...The letter was written in a highly sophisticated manner. If one reads it carefully, he will notice that, in fact, the PM blames the Palestinians (for the incident) and is not apologizing for any Israeli act (quoted in Kampf 2009: 2261).

Here, then, one can observe a wily and seemingly intentionally ambiguous use of the polyfunctional word *sorry* so as to satisfy multiple audiences. In Kampf's (2009: 2261) words, 'while Sharon's statement was intended to suffice as an apology in the eyes of the U.S., he intended it to be a general expression of sorrow, or even a shifting of blame to the Palestinians in the Israeli context'.

¹⁸ Several works have a similar discussion along these lines, for example see Cunningham (1999: 287), Smith (2008: 34-35).

Having briefly recognised the surprisingly nebulous nature of apologies, one might think it appropriate to now rigorously define the core attributes of apology, identifying a mechanism for locating exactly what can and cannot be considered verifiable *mea culpa*. Instead, rather than undertake this arduous task, this thesis will take Smith's (2008: 12) lead and not enter into the binary and slightly facile endeavour of identifying exactly what is and is not an apology. There is, it would seem, an array of apologies ranging from the token routine apology for a very minor offense, through to very sombre and categorical apologies for severe offenses. Equally, there is clearly a whole range of apologies that take differing forms and range from the sincere to the insincere, and from the lengthy and eloquent to the short and muttered. Thus, rather than entering into the trap of such binaries, the following passages first broadly consider some of the general features of apology, before then considering some of the core functions.

The characteristics of apology

Leaning on the foundational linguistic work of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), apologies are widely understood in the academic literature to be speech acts. This is to say that the utterance 'I am sorry' or 'I apologise' is a deed that is manifested through the enunciation of the words.¹⁹ This rests on the idea that language is not merely passive or descriptive, but assists in constructing and shaping understandings of the social environment. The most illustrative example of the constituting function of words is the declaration 'I do' at a wedding ceremony; the vocalisation of this utterance being an intrinsic aspect of the *doing* of the action – namely getting married (Austin 1975: 5). Likewise, 'I apologise' is recognised by Austin (1975: 45-46) as a performative phrase; in other words, this utterance, more than merely describing a situation, actively undertakes an action. Of course, for an utterance to have any social meaning it must be contextualised within socially legible parameters and settings. As such, Fraser (1981: 261) identified four necessities for the realisation of apology, being that 1. the apologisee believes an act occurred previous to the utterance; 2. the person who delivers the apology considers that the event offended or harmed the recipient; 3. the speaker

¹⁹ While it is of particular value to conceptualise apologies as speech acts, it is not clear whether apology must, by necessity, be vocalised. Smith (2008: 20) raises the example of a hypothetical society that has the custom of baking a pie as a sign of contrition. It would seem that this would operate as a non-verbal apology. More concretely, Willie Brendt's famous *kneefelt* before the Warsaw Memorial to the Jewish ghetto fighters is a gesture that has widely been interpreted as an apology, yet contains none of the verbal attributes.

considers himself/herself to be responsible, at least to some degree, for said incident and 4. the apologise feels regret for the incident (see also Benoit 1995: 49).²⁰

Beyond being speech acts, according to Schlenker and Darby (1981: 271) apologies 'are admissions of blameworthiness and regret for an undesirable event'. 'They are appropriately offered when an individual has violated a social norm' (Scher and Darley 1997: 127). Their core function is 'remedial', in so far as that they are 'designed to smooth over or remedy any social disruption that was caused by the norm violation' (Scher and Darley 1997: 127). Ignoring, for the moment, ritualistic acknowledgement for very minor offences, there is a relatively high degree of convergence around the characteristics of an apology for a grave offence, if not the format by which one offers it. According to Tavuchis (1991: vii), in pleading *mea culpa*, 'we acknowledge the fact of wrongdoing, accept ultimate responsibility, express sincere sorrow and regret, and promise not to repeat the offense'.²¹ Likewise, Schlenker and Darby (1981: 272) identify five components of a 'full blown' apology. These include

- (1) A statement of apologetic intent such as "I'm sorry," (2) expressions of remorse, sorrow, embarrassment, etc., to indicate the actor knows he or she has transgressed and feels badly about it, (3) offers to help the injured party or make restitution in an attempt to redress the damage, (4) self castigation, in which the actor disparages the "bad" self that misbehaved, and (5) direct attempts to obtain forgiveness, such as saying, "Please forgive me".

Again, in a very similar fashion, Gill (2000: 12) initially suggests that 'in its fullest version' an apology contains

- (1) An acknowledgement that the incident in question did in fact occur; (2) an acknowledgement that the incident was inappropriate in some way; (3) an acknowledgement of responsibility for the act; (4) the expression of an attitude of regret and a feeling of remorse; and (5) the expression of an intention to refrain from similar acts in the future.²²

²⁰ One can take issue with Fraser's idea that the speaker must *feel* remorse. It seems to this author that there is no way to decisively determine whether the speaker feels remorse or is feigning it. It seems that even if feigned the utterance still constitutes an apology. Moreover, state apologies problematise the question of the speaker's actual responsibility for the action. See pages 46-50 for a wider discussion of this.

²¹ While offering this sketch, Tavuchis does recognise that there are other additional factors in *mea culpa*.

²² After briefly considering some potential obstacles to these points, two pages later Gill (2000:14) offers a slightly moderated version of this criteria.

Though not terming it 'apology', Burke considers the expression of 'mortification' as a mode of expunging guilt and restoring social equilibrium (hierarchy). The process of mortification entails 'a sacrifice of self, an acceptance of wrongdoing [...] an apparent heartfelt confession and request for forgiveness' (Benoit 1995: 18). Similarly, for Goffman (1971: 113)

In its fullest form the apology has several elements: expression of embarrassment and chagrin; clarification that one knows what conduct had been expected and sympathizes with the application of negative sanction; verbal rejection, repudiation and disavowal of the wrong way of behaving along with vilification of the self that so behaved; espousal of the right way and an avowal henceforth to pursue that course; performance of penance and the volunteering of restitution.

Of importance here is the emphasis on recognising and disavowing inappropriate modes of behaviour. Smith (2005) concurs with this in his 'categorical apology' where he emphasises the centrality of a corroborated factual record and the identification of each moral wrong. In this sense the apologisee should move beyond expressing remorse for an unspecified offence *à la* "I'm sorry for what I did". Moreover, in identifying each moral wrong, Smith (2005: 479) demands that the categorical apology should refrain from 'conflating several wrongs into one apology'. Instead, the offender must 'isolate precisely what she is responsible for so that the parties can disentangle the causal chain and match each transgression with the moral principle transgressed' (Smith 2005: 480).

With only very limited divergence, from the preceding passages one can infer a certain synergy in terms of the constitutive features of a 'full' or 'categorical' apology. This is to say that there is a broad concurrence that apologies express remorse for a previous event; they castigate oneself; indicate that the transgression will not be repeated and offer restitution. Moreover, the apology should detail and itemise the offences one has committed. Following this discussion on the constitutive aspects of apology, the proceeding section considers in more detail the societal functions of apology.

The functions of apology: What does an apology do?

Of course, the core function of an apology is, when successful, to mend and heal relationships. However, as Tavuchis (1991: 5) considers, there is a sense in which, no matter how sombre, an apology cannot undo the offence. As 'a discursive gesture' (Tavuchis 1991: 5), even the most sincere apology cannot revive the men that were shot by British paratroopers in 1973 or restore the first post independence elected Prime Minister of the DRC. Given that the transgression itself cannot be undone, the apparently 'mysterious' (Tavuchis 1991: 6) capacity

for social affect must be located in alternative functions that apologies do.²³ In other words, one can posit that the apparent healing or remedial qualities of the apology descend from the discursive enmeshing in, and altering of, the mutually conceived social environment. The following section endeavours to unravel some of these functions so as to attempt to itemise what it is an apology does. This is not to claim that this is an exhaustive list of all the functions of apology. One could legitimately add other functions or rest on different categorisation. Moreover, clearly the following items are overlapping. However, it is to outlay an array of functions that are prominent themes in the empirical chapters of this thesis. In this sense, such an itinerary serves the utility of providing a base through which one can refer back to in the course of the empirical analysis.

It proffers a narrative of a past event

That an apology is a narrative forming device is captured in its etymology; the Greek root *apologos* denoting ‘story’ (Tavuchis 1991: 15). In this sense an apology recollects a previous event and endows it with both a plotline and normative significance. Even the ritualistic and mumbled ‘sorry’ for bumping into someone on the street recalls a past event and implicitly narrates to the victim that it was not the intention of the transgressor and was an accident. As already recognised, a graver transgression usually demands a more detailed narrative, with the offender outlining what he or she actually did. Indeed, it seems that the transgressor replotting the event in a manner that echoes the victim’s version of events is a central component of the cathartic aspect of apologies. In this way, the apology and accompanying texts disseminate a particular story of a past event to a listening audience. In the apologies of this thesis, then, the contrite politicians articulate and recount the transgressions in particular ways. As seen in the Belgian and British apologies, this entails ‘truth commissions’ that in painstaking detail provide supposedly scientific step-by step accounts of the events in question.²⁴ On the other hand, the Italian apology provides little detail beyond the ‘deep wounds’ (Berlusconi quoted in Gazzini 2009) inflicted during colonialism. Nevertheless, whether detailed or euphemistic and whatever its actual historical veracity, the state apologies provide a public and officialised chronicle of a past deed.

²³ To return to Austin’s (1962) concept of speech acts, it is clear that one can ‘do things with words’.

²⁴ See pages 129-131 for a critique of the mechanical and supposedly comprehensive accounts offered by the Belgian commission into Lumumba’s death.

One of the recurring themes of this thesis is that an apology is not a standalone text, but is forged through multiple interactions and subtexts over a period of time (c.f. Yamazaki 2004). In this respect, the story is not only narrated in the actual apology, but is constructed and given meaning through a series of supporting texts and representations. On the one hand, some of these texts can be seemingly congruent with the apology; examples of this are texts offered by leading politicians in the British and Italian case studies that, while not apologising, took progressively contrite stances on the given episode. On the other hand, the thesis also highlights some accompanying narrative forming representations that appear discordant. Indeed, as explored in detail in the following chapter, it is such plotlines as proffered by state actors that are incorporated into society's collective memory of the past, where they can be, to varying extents, both internalised and open to contestation.

It identifies a moral wrong and endows the event with a negative significance

In narrating the past, there is a sense in which apologies imbue the speaker's act with a negative significance.²⁵ To return to bumping into someone in the street, the ritualistic apology recognises the (mild) harm caused by the mistake. At the other end of the spectrum, the apologies of this thesis unquestionably endow the events – the genocide of the Herero people, the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the shooting of civilians in Derry, colonialism in Libya - with negative characteristics. Though sometimes euphemistic, one can point to a series of phrases that accompany the apology to demonstrate this, such as 'indefensible' (Cameron 2010), 'deep wounds' (Berlusconi, quoted in Gazzini 2009) and 'atrocities' (Wieczorek-Zeul 2004). It seems that recognition of the wrong and culpability is a component of the cathartic nature of apologies, wherein it affirms that the injuries inflicted on the victims were unjust and not of the victims' making.

To recall, the argument of this thesis is that the apologies do not represent an absolute disavowal of colonialism, but engage in techniques that caveat their responsibility and even engage in glorification. Nevertheless, despite the caveats, moral disclaimers and wider glorification, one must start with the recognition that, for certain deeds at least, the apologies, almost by necessity, reflect on the injurious nature of the state's actions and engage in a certain self-castigation. In this sense, while there may be a wider discourse that engages in

²⁵ One may, for instance, say 'I am sorry you feel that way, but I'm glad I did it'. However, disregarding such gestures, it is clear that - as a rule - apologies endow an event with a negative significance.

exalting, excusing or trivialising empire in a way that *resembles* the colonial period, one cannot talk of a linear *continuation* of this narrative. The self castigating element of the apology, however limited, reflects an important disjuncture from past representations of the events in question.

It reaffirms adherence to a moral/legal principle

One of the central facets of apologies is their ability to illuminate the ‘normative principles’ of social life (Tavuchis 1991: 4). Given that apologies are offered when a social norm is transgressed, they provide an interesting insight into society’s overt and tacit moral code (Tavuchis 1991: 12-13). Thus, in apologising, the agent can be said to be reproaching their self for offending the rule, while avowing allegiance to the given edict. Goffman (1971: 113) eloquently illustrates this process, writing that ‘an apology is a gesture through which an individual splits himself into two parts, the part that is guilty of an offense and the part that disassociates itself from the delict and affirms a belief in the offended rule’.

To use Goffman’s idea of splitting, we can see that apologies enable the apologisee to position their ‘true’ self on the correct side of the moral or legal code. In this sense, the apology speaks to one’s identity in relation to the offence; ‘it calls attention to what we may *be* as well as what we have done’ (Tavuchis 1991: 9). For instance, Tiger Woods apologising for extra marital affairs is implicitly affirming the normative social convention of marital monogamy. Moreover, in doing so he is calling attention to a rehabilitated contemporary character that henceforth attempts to obey such a societal code. In the apologies of this thesis, it seems that those apologising on behalf of the state are thus affirming their belief in the given rule and asserting their identity as such. This is most clearly evident in the German case, where, in apologising for the genocide of the Herero people, the government affirms its adversity to genocide and reaffirms the German republic as a state whose identity, to some extent, rests on its composition in opposition to the genocidal Third Reich (see chapter 3 for a wider discussion of this point). Similarly, it seems that in the contemporary liberal order, all the case studies of this thesis reflect states that are affirming the normative liberal principles of the contemporary discourse of human rights.

This observation of an altering identity in relation to normative principles reflects a certain temporal flux in regards to both identity and morality. To clarify: An apology seems to reflect

that the transgressor once disregarded a principle, but has since shifted their position towards this standard. Alternatively, it may be that the normative principle *itself* has altered.²⁶ In other words, it may be that, for instance, the assassination of an African leader with apparent anti-Western and pro-Communist leanings is considered by a different normative barometer in 2002 than it was in 1960. Likewise the killing of an estimated 60,000 Herero people was considered in a different light in 1904 than in 2004. This is not to engage in crude justifications of extreme racist violence on the grounds that ‘things were different back then’. Clearly there were contemporaries who spoke out against these acts, and it is not surprising that the atrocities studied in this thesis were largely concealed or obscured by the state. However, it is to establish that the apologies of this thesis arose in the context of the end of the Cold War and the ensuing revived optimism of liberal and cosmopolitan notions of human rights. This temporal disjuncture between transgression and atrocity means that, as explored in more detail in the following chapter, the apologising agent is simultaneously speaking *about* a past event in order to construct their contemporary and even future identity. In the post-Cold war world, states place a great deal of energy constructing an identity that conforms to a liberal normative agenda. Such a liberal identity demands a distancing or splitting from some of the gross violations of the past.

It speaks to group membership

Adjoined with affirming normative principles, the apology speaks to group membership. By this measure, in authorising a normative framework, the apologisee equates themselves with the moral norms of a particular group or a community and attempts to implant him/herself into the given group. Moreover, if the transgression in question led to the marginalisation of the agent, then an apology, if accepted, is a useful tool by which one can be embraced back into the fold. The classic example of this is post-war West German contrition facilitating the state’s normalisation into the ‘international community’. In this way, much of the literature focuses on the rehabilitation of the *offender* back into the group. However, especially in situations involving asymmetric power relations and the ‘dominant’ agent apologising, it may be that the inverse holds and the apology enables the ostracised *victim* to re-enter the *offending* agent’s group. In an overly simplified interpersonal format, this may entail the bullied child rejoining the bully’s clique. In domestic state based apologies, Melissa Nobles

²⁶ It may also be the case that the transgressor continues to view the normative principle with contempt, but apologises so as to evade severe sanction.

(2008) observes a parallel phenomenon in contending that apology can function as a means by which states can ratify a politically ostracised group's interpretation of history, thereby incorporating marginalised groups into the broader history of the state. Indeed, one can point to such a process in this thesis, whereby the Italian apology to Libya assists in Libya (not Italy's) reincorporation into the international community (see chapter 6). Likewise, Tony Blair's establishment of the Saville Enquiry into Bloody Sunday (and Cameron's subsequent apology) facilitated the re-engagement of the 'Nationalist Community'²⁷ into mainstream governance. The pertinent point here is that, while apologies can rehabilitate the offender's membership of a group, they may equally reintegrate the offended.

It affirms the dignity of the victims

A categorical apology, according to Smith (2008: 65), has the capacity to radically transform the relationship between transgressor and victim. This is primarily because, seemingly unlike when the transgressions occurred, with an apology the victim is afforded the status as a moral interlocutor (Smith 2008: 65). In other words, when an agent exploits or wrongs another, there is the implicit indication that the offender has little regard for the other's dignity. An apology (in certain circumstances) has the capacity to reinstate this dignity in that it recognises the hurt caused and accepts that the treatment of that person/group was wrong. This has particular resonance for apologies for colonialism, whereby the colonial project necessitates that the subaltern is portrayed in some way – morally, culturally, spiritually, biologically – as inferior to the coloniser. In this sense, an apology could function so as to overcome such misplaced colonial complacencies and recognise the equal moral worth of the peoples. Indeed, in some respects, it is this equal moral worth that sits with the revived post Cold-War tenets of liberal and cosmopolitan discourse.

Certainly there does seem to be an element to the apologies where the relationship between coloniser and colonised is discursively transformed. Indeed, in recognising responsibility and the suffering caused, there is undoubtedly a break from the discourse by which colonialism was sustained. However, as discussed further in the proceeding chapter, there is a sense in which the apologies and surrounding representations and policies actually reproduce a discourse that reframes the hierarchical position of metropole over periphery. This, for

²⁷ The concepts of distinct 'Nationalist' and 'Loyalist' communities are problematised on pages 135 and 141-142.

instance, is evident in the paternalistic undertones of some of the apologies and accompanying discourses that continue to revere, or at least trivialise, colonialism. Moreover, beyond apologies, such sustained paternal and hierarchical structures are forged in neo-colonial modes of governance and enduring configurations of inequality in the post independence world. In this way, one can be critical to any idea that apologies reflect a West that now considers an entirely equal relationship with the formerly colonised.

It simultaneously 'saves face' and castigates oneself

One of the paradoxes of apology is that it is simultaneously self castigating and face saving. The self-castigating aspect of apology has already been discussed, whereby one admits culpability for an undesirable deed and expresses remorse and chagrin. It is this process of public self-rebuke and prostration that undoubtedly causes such reluctance to apologise. However, it is the very process of self-flagellation that allows one to engage in remedial work as to the redemption of one's perception amongst others. It is this aspect of public presentation that is pivotal to the argument of this thesis regarding one's discursively narrated identity. In other words, the apology is a story that, in some ways, is more about the transgressor than the victim; there is a capacity for a certain indulgence – even narcissism – where the apologisee attempts to reformulate and modulate both the event in question and their projected self image and social standing. This reformulation of self image is termed by Goffman (1971) as 'remedial work'. Given the central importance of the narration of self image to this thesis, the discursive modes of undertaking this process are explored in the next section.

Apology or apologia?²⁸ Accounts and apologies

In his influential work, *Relations in public: microstudies of the public order*, sociologist Erving Goffman examined 'social order' through the face-to-face interactions of persons in daily public life. He was concerned with the modes by which, in their interactions, people partake in and conform to routine and patterned social practices and their divulgence and violation of such practices (Goffman 1971: xii). Though relatively brief, Goffman dedicated a highly

²⁸ Using this subtitle, there is an interesting work entitled *The Fourth Estate and the Case for War in Iraq: Apology or Apologia* (Marks 2008). Marks analyses the print media's acknowledgements of its failures to hold the Bush administration to account for their claims in the build up to the 2003 war in Iraq. It contends that these partial expressions of *mea culpa* have frequently engaged in offering defence and justifications for their actions.

influential section to processes by which an offender can seek to rehabilitate their social standing following a violation of a social norm. He contends that following such an infraction (or alleged infraction) there are three core techniques by which the offender can undertake 'remedial work' and thereby attest that they did indeed have a virtuous relationship to societal rules (Goffman 1971: 108). These three techniques consist of offering accounts, apologies and requests (Goffman 1971 109).²⁹ Having already discussed apologies, the following passages explore in more detail the role of accounts in remedial work; this is done with explicit reference to the work of Goffman (1971), Scott and Lyman (1968) and Ware and Linkugel (1973).

Accounts

An account closely resembles the classical meaning of *apologia*, where one offers a defence of a position. At least until the last decade or so, accounts had conventionally been explored in a richer array of literature than that of apologies. Despite this richness, there is a fair degree of convergence in the literature as to the modes by which the alleged transgressor may rhetorically seek to recover standing.³⁰ In their seminal work, Scott and Lyman (1968: 46) define accounts as 'a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behaviour'. Their societal role, then, is to bridge 'the gap between action and expectation', thereby repairing relationships and restoring social harmony. Scott and Lyman identify two forms of accounts, namely excuses and justifications. A justification is where 'one accepts responsibility for the act in question, but denies the pejorative quality associated with it' (Scott and Lyman 1968: 47). Such an example may be admitting killing someone, but claiming that it was in self-defence. Excuses, on the other hand, 'are socially approved vocabularies for mitigating or relieving responsibility when conduct is questioned'. For instance, one claims that the offending incident was owing to accident, defeasibility, biological drives or scapegoating (Scott and Lyman 1968: 47).

In very similar terms, Goffman identifies five modes of offering an account. Firstly, the offender may claim that the act did not occur, or that the act did occur but he/she was in no way responsible for it. Secondly, an account may admit to carrying out the deed, but claims

²⁹ 'A request consists of 'asking license of a potentially offended person to engage in what could be considered a violation of his rights' (Goffman 1971: 114). An example of this might be asking 'would you mind if I ask how old you are?' Although interesting, requests are not central to this thesis and for this reason are not further explored here.

³⁰ For an excellent overview on the existing literature on accounts, see Benoit (1995: esp Ch 2).

that mitigating circumstances ‘were such as to make the act radically different from what it appears to have been, and that, in fact, he is not really at fault at all’ (Goffman 1971: 109-10). Thirdly, ‘the putative offender can agree that the act occurred and that he did it but present the mitigation that he was ignorant and unforeseeing, excusably so, and could not reasonably be asked to have acted so as to forestall it’ (Goffman 1971: 110). One late for a meeting, for instance, may claim that there was an unforeseeable railway accident which meant that her train was delayed. A fourth form of account is claiming ‘reduced responsibility by virtue of reduced competence’ (Goffman 1971: 111). This essentially entails accepting culpability for the action, but explaining this as a result of incompetence rather than intent. Mitigation may ‘be based on sleepiness, drunkenness, youthfulness, senility, druggedness, passion, lack of training, but maintain that she was subordination to the will of superiors, mental deficiency, and so forth’.³¹ The final and, according to Goffman (1971: 112), weakest form of account is to admit culpability and competence, but avow that one was ‘indefensibly unmindful or ignorant of what was to happen’ and would not have behaved in such a way had one seen the consequences.

In their exploration of apologia, Ware and Linkugel (1973) draw on the work of Abelson (1959) to classify modes of defending oneself against allegations. Interestingly, these do not depart significantly from the literature explored above. These techniques are termed denial, bolstering, differentiation and transcendence. Denial is self explanatory and equates to Goffman’s stance on saying the event did not happen. Bolstering, does not necessarily attempt to deny the event, but entails a ‘rhetorical strategy which reinforces the existence of a fact, sentiment, object or relationship’. In this way, the ‘speaker attempts to identify himself with something viewed favourably by the audience’. In his infamous public apology, Tiger Woods highlighted – despite the tenuous link to adultery - his foundation that helps ‘young people achieve their dreams through education (Woods 2010). Indeed, the apologies of this thesis are replete with such bolstering: To underline just two examples: Chapter 5 points to Cameron (2010) emphasising the role of Britain in bringing peace to Northern Ireland and Chapter 3 highlights Wieczorek-Zeul’s (2004) emphasis on Germany being a member of the European Union. These seem to point favourably to the transgressor’s ‘good’ character, perhaps suggesting that any offences were not in their ‘true’ nature.

³¹ Needless to say, Goffman recognises that such explanations are not equally adequate in all circumstances. Clearly, claiming drunkenness is not an adequate account for crashing a car.

Differentiation, Ware and Linkugel (1973: 278) explain, 'subsumes those strategies which serve the purpose of separating some fact, sentiment, object, or relationship from some larger context within which the audience presently views that attribute'. This may entail elaborating on 'extenuating circumstances' that accompanied the given event. Alternatively, the authors claim, differentiation frequently entails the apologist requesting 'a suspension of judgement until his actions can be viewed from a different temporal perspective' (Ware and Linkugel 1973: 278). An example of this is Tony Blair's insistence that he can 'let the day-to-day judgments come and go' regarding war in Iraq, as he will 'be judged by history' (quoted in Ashley and MacAskill 2003). Indeed, as discussed in further detail on pages 32-33, it seems that the temporal inverse is applied in the apologies of this thesis; that is, the apologise asks for the offence to be considered in the context of the past, rather than the future. In this way, the Belgian inquiry into the assassination of Lumumba contextualises the President's murder within the Cold War, while Cameron contextualises Bloody Sunday within the 1970's 'Troubles'.

The final factor, transcendence, entails 'any strategy which cognitively joins some fact, sentiment, object or relationship with some larger context within which the audience does not presently view the attribute' (Ware and Linkugel 1973: 280). In other words, the apologist attempts to redefine the way in which the audience understands the act by 'shifting from the specific to the abstract'. This frequently entails appealing to 'a higher-order value' (Towner 2010: 300). A terrorist, by way of example, may admit responsibility for an attack, but claim that the group's struggle was of a higher order than the resulting death toll. Likewise, Karl Rove, a senior adviser to George W. Bush, called on higher values when questioned about the use of waterboarding in gathering intelligence, saying that 'it allowed us to foil [terrorist] plots' and that he was 'proud that we kept the world safer than it was, by the use of these techniques' (quoted in BBC 2010a).

Reconsidering apology and accounts as polar opposites

While Ware and Linkugel and Scott and Lyman do not analyse *mea culpa* as a form of remedial redress, Goffman does. For Goffman (1971: 113), apology is distinct from accounts insofar as it operates by castigating the offending deed and thus separates oneself from the aspect of one's character that committed the misdeed. It is thus clear that Goffman draws a distinction between the remedial devices of accounts and apologies. There is, unfortunately, no discussion in his work as to how accounts and apologies may overlap, thereby indicating that

perhaps he had not considered the possibility of the enmeshing of the two techniques (although the fact that he considered both under the banner of ‘remedial interchanges’ does indicate that he saw them as having the familial resemblance of seeking to alter the perception of an offensive act into a more acceptable format (Goffman 1971: 109)). In another seminal sociological work on apologies, Tavuchis is far more explicit as to what he considers a key distinction between accounts and apologies. For him, ‘to apologize is to declare voluntarily that one has *no* excuse, defense, justification or explanation for an action (or inaction) that has “insulted, failed, injured, or wronged another.”’. This, he maintains, is ‘in sharp contrast’ to an account, where one ‘asks the offended party, in effect, to be reasonable by giving explanations that are intended to (partially or fully) release him or her’ (Tavuchis 1991: 17). However, as the following passages attempt to demonstrate, there is, even in official and very solemn apologies – such as those analysed in this thesis – far more of a tendency for the boundaries between these types of remedial work to overlap. It is this challenge to the binary notion of apologies and accounts that is now considered.

In pointing to the frequent overlap between account and apology, it is pertinent to note that the very etymology of the term *apology* highlights an intersection between defence of one’s position and the modern use as an acknowledgement of moral culpability. In fact, as Lazare (2004: 31) highlights, the word ‘apology’, ‘has no root that acknowledges guilt or blame’. As Tavuchis (1991: 15) himself shows, the Greek root *apologos* refers to ‘a story, from which *apologia*, an oral or written defense, becomes apology’. In this way, the term was initially understood, according to 16th Century versions of the Oxford English Dictionary, as ‘a defence of a person or vindication of an institution, etc., from accusation or aspersion’ (quoted in Tavuchis 1991). The epitome of this is Plato’s *Apology of Socrates*, where Plato recounts Socrates’ defence against allegations of corrupting the city’s youth and not believing in the gods. Likewise, apology entailed ‘defending and reinforcing religious belief’, as exemplified by Montaigne’s *Apology for Raymond Sebond* (Smith 2008: 8). It is only in later usage that the term develops its connotations with regret, sorrow and culpability. Despite the undoubted prevalence of the contrite variety, apology retains its potential to indicate defence. This is especially evident in the term ‘apologist’ unequivocally referring to one that defends a position.

This ambiguity between apology and apologia is also frequently observable in empirical examples of both perfunctory and sombre apologies. Starting with the perfunctory: Someone bumping into another on the street might reasonably offer the phrase ‘I am sorry, I was miles

away'. In this example, admitting to daydreaming is not categorising the offense - for the offense is bumping into someone – instead, the offender is offering both an apology and an account – the account being daydreaming. If an employee arrives late, it is reasonable for the employee to say 'I'm sorry I am late, the train was delayed'. This, again, categorises the offence and offers an account. Indeed, it seems *polite* to offer the account, as merely saying 'I'm sorry I'm late' without any explanation may seem quite flippant and disregarding of the normative code.³²

Beyond the perfunctory, even more elongated apologies frequently entail accounts. In an episode of *Winnie the Pooh* (Disney 1988), Tigger apologises to a cloud that he had earlier insulted and thrown rocks at, saying

I have a couple of things to say about earlier today. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, but I was trying to jump over this tree, you see and you got in the way. And hey, I am sorry for calling you names and throwing rocks and I promise never to insult any cloud ever again – cross my stripes. Does this mean you forgive me?

Despite not offering reparations, in many respects this apology fulfils the components of sincere apology; it implicitly expresses remorse - 'I am sorry'; it accepts causal responsibility (that is, it was he who threw the rocks); it identifies *each* moral wrong – calling names and throwing rocks; it promises not to repeat the offence and requests forgiveness. Moreover, the apology is offered and directed to the cloud in an appropriate tone and body language that indicates contrition. Despite these many aspects that are appropriate to more sombre apologies, it is nevertheless evident that Tigger also uses accounts. Despite attacking the cloud with rocks, Tigger offers the rather implausible account that it was not his intention to hurt the cloud, saying that he 'didn't mean to' hurt his feelings. Likewise, Tigger imparts a degree of blame on to the victim, suggesting that he did this because the cloud was an obstacle to his fun.

Similarly, in John Lennon's (1971) *Jealous Guy*, one can witness an offering that straddles both an apology and an account:

I was dreaming of the past,
And my heart was beating fast,

³² The issue of lateness and apology is also discussed by Smith (2008: esp 133-136).

I began to lose control,
I began to lose control,

I didn't mean to hurt you,
I'm sorry that I made you cry,
I didn't want to hurt you,
I'm just a jealous guy,

I was feeling insecure,
You might not love me anymore.

This 'apology' is somewhat less emphatic than Tigger's. Despite its melancholic tune, it remains unclear as to whether the 'sorry' is an apology or an expression of empathy. There is also no detail offered as to his exact offence (probably so as to make the record more widely applicable to the audience). Nevertheless, there is admission of culpability – 'I made you cry' – and there is self castigation – 'I'm just a jealous guy'. However, one can equally point to the use of accounts: There are pointers towards Goffman's (1971: 111) 'reduced responsibility by virtue of reduced competence', whereby the artist suggests that he was losing 'control' and with intensified heart rate. That he was 'feeling insecure' is not a detail of the transgression, but, seemingly, an account as to why he might have behaved badly. Also, similarly to Tigger, the vocalist suggests that it was not his intention to cause such pain, saying he 'didn't mean to' and 'didn't want to'.

Clearly, these are just limited examples that, in a world awash with apology, are not sufficient to prove a rule. Indeed, the attempt here is not to *prove* a rule and suggest that all apologies contain accounts. Evidently, there are apologies that accept unconditional blame and renounce the deed entirely. However, the claim here is that apologies can, indeed frequently do, contain accounts. Making this observation is to pave the way for highlighting the accounts that are replete within the apologies of this thesis. It is to complicate the concept of an apology and affirm that it is not *by necessity* a comprehensive retreat of one's character and deeds. Moreover, it is a recognition that discourse that engages in defence of oneself does not have to be immediately disqualified as an apology. This recognition enables the pointing to accounts within the empirical chapters of this thesis and provides an understanding of apology that is congruent with the overall argument of this thesis. Having recognised the capacity of apologies to engage in such processes, the next section proceeds to pursue this line of enquiry further by analysing common techniques that apologising agents may utilise so as to delimit their personal, moral and legal accountability.

Modes of delimiting responsibility

Lazare (2004: 85-106; see also Eisinger 2011) points to eight techniques by which an apologising agent may offer what he calls a 'pseudo apology'. These may be listed as 1) offering a vague and incomplete acknowledgement 2) using the passive voice 3) making the offense conditional 4) questioning whether the victim is damaged 5) minimising the offence 6) using the empathic "I'm sorry" or "I regret" 7) apologising to the wrong party 8) apologising for the wrong offense. While Lazare's analysis is detailed and eloquent, not every one of these points is applicable to this thesis. For this reason, it is only the modes that are pertinent to this thesis' argument that are explored below. In addition to Lazare's points, the following passages point to other such modes that are prominent in the empirical case studies.

The theme of offering a vague and incomplete acknowledgement of an offence is one that threads throughout this thesis. Such a discursive mode involves offering contrition without detailing exactly what it is for, such as offering the platitude of 'I am sorry for what happened' (Lazare 2004: 86). This relates closely to Smith's (2005: 476) demand that a categorical apology should corroborate the factual record and identify each moral wrong. An incomplete acknowledgement of the offence leaves an ambiguity as to the historical episodes for which the agent is apologising – an ambiguity that evades accountability and can be exploited by a wider discourse of denial, justification or glorification. This discursive mode is observed in the Italian case study, whereby Berlusconi apologises for 'the deep wounds that we caused you' (quoted in Gazzini 2009). Such a euphemistic employment of the term 'deep wounds' eludes accepting accountability for any detailed historical episode, such as the use of poison gas or concentration camps in Libya. Moreover, apologising for the 'wounds' caused is to engage in an apologetic mode that Kampf (2009: 2266) identifies as substituting 'the act with the outcome'. In effect, this serves to deplore the undesirable outcome of the process – the wounds - rather than the process itself. In terms of colonialism, such emphasis on outcome over process is to fail to condemn the process of colonialism *per se*.

In addition to the euphemistic emphasis on outcome over process, an incomplete acknowledgement of the offence may offer contrition for only one component of an offence that sits within the framework of a wider wrongdoing (Kampf 2009: 2263). By this token, the Belgian apology for the assassination of Patrice Lumumba speaks to just one egregious issue that can be situated within a broader context of Belgian colonialism (Gibney 2002: 281). Thus, isolating this one offence and showing no contrition for the wider practice of colonialism is to

implicitly condone the latter. Moreover, isolating only one offence is to show a disregard for the structures and processes that led to the transgression. In other words, marginalising the colonial context of the assassination is to omit the far wider violent and racist ideologies that are intrinsic to colonialism and are surely entangled with the processes from which Lumumba's assassination arose. In remarkably similar ways, the apologies for Bloody Sunday and the Herero genocide isolate particular atrocities while ignoring the wider colonial landscape. This ambivalence, silence and absence of introspection regarding the actual colonial project further intimates these states' gauche position towards their colonial pasts.

As Lazare (2004: 88-90) emphasises, the use of the passive voice in apology evades identifying oneself as the transgressor; it is to detach the pronoun from the offending verb. This is to say that the admission 'I am sorry I stole your wallet' is qualitatively different from the passive utterance 'I am sorry your wallet was stolen', whereby in the latter example the identity as to whom committed the crime is unclear. This technique can most prominently be observed in the German apology, where Wiczorek-Zeul (2004) narrated that 'the survivors were forced into the Omaheke desert' and that 'they were denied any access to water resources and were left to die of thirst and starvation'. In chapter 3 it is contended that such a use of the passive voice represents a savvy technique so as to evade legal accountability for the genocide.

The use of the empathic 'I'm sorry' or 'I regret' has already been discussed in relation to Ariel Sharon's 'apology' for the exchange of fire between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian security officers. In fact, in this thesis the Belgian, British and Italian utterances clearly use the noun 'apology' and verb 'apologise' in a non-ambiguous manner, at least for the transgressions that they identify, if not the wider colonial project. Interestingly, in terms of British relations with Ireland outside of Bloody Sunday, one can point to the euphemistic and empathic use of terms such as 'regret'. For instance, regarding the Irish potato famine, Tony Blair spoke regretfully of 'deep scars', saying that the fact 'that one million people died in what was then part of the richest and most powerful nation in the world is something that still causes pain as we reflect on it today' (quoted in Lyall 1997). Similarly, in the Queen's recent visit to Ireland she extended her 'sincere thoughts and deep sympathy' to 'all those who have suffered as a consequence of our troubled past' (quoted in Crimmins 2011). As well as compromising the apology and the issues of accountability, such expressions may be condescending statements that indicate unequal relationships (Lazare 2004: 99). In terms of the other apologies of this project, this discursive mode is most evident in the German apology for the Herero genocide, where Wiczorek-Zeul (2004) asked the audience to "forgive us our trespasses", before stating

that “without a conscious process of remembering, without sorrow, there can be no reconciliation”. Here the use of the noun ‘sorrow’, without a clear issue of apology is to obfuscate the utterance and render the text unclear as to whether it is an expression of empathy or apology. Indeed, Wieczorek-Zeul later had to clarify this utterance, confirming that everything she said ‘was an apology from the German government’ (quoted in Meldrum 2004). A wider analysis of this in relation to legal responsibility and reparations is undertaken in chapter 3.

A technique that Lazare seemingly overlooks is that of apologising on one hand, while later (or simultaneously) contradicting/retracting the apology or showing an alternative attitude to the misdeed. This may be observed whereby a schoolboy apologises to the teacher so as to evade detention, but later regales his friends with the story of his glorious rebellion. In interstate relations, Lind (2008) points to a ‘backlash’ phenomenon, particularly in Japan, whereby apologies induce counter narratives among conservatives who, in response to the apology, either glorify or deny the incident. The empirical case studies of this project show a moderated argument from this, wherein one can point to an accompanying elite discourse both within and without the actual text of the apology that continues to emphasise the benign and progressive aspects of colonialism. This does emerge from conservative politicians as Lind (2008) postulates, but it is equally in the text of the apology and in the accompanying discourse of those who uttered it as well as members of that government (who are, of course, often conservatives). To take just two examples of this, one can point to Italian cabinet minister Gianfranco Fini celebrating how in Libya ‘the Italians brought not only roads and employment, but also those values, that civilisation, and those laws that are a lighthouse for a whole culture’ (quoted in Mellino 2006: 470). Likewise, the Belgian Foreign Minister (and apologist), Louis Michel, wrote of a ‘set of positive contributions that our Congolese partners do not fail to recognise’ (Persdienst Buitenlandse Zaken 2004). One can also point to contemporary accompanying representations in ‘official’ narrative constructing formats – museums, school syllabuses, university courses – that continue to disregard, trivialise or exalt the colonial project. Given that historical narratives are multilayered and require continual recoding, these wider utterances on colonialism may submerge or contradict the contrite stances in the apologies. The theme of an accompanying discourse that continues to portray a benevolent colonial project is flagged throughout this thesis and points to the contradictory positions of glorification and mortification that these states are wrestling with in regards to their colonial past.

A further theme that emerges from this is the rhetorical turn that seeks to cut-short the inter-group dialogue and historical introspection. By this token, both the British apology (Cameron 2010) and Italian Treaty of Friendship (Camera del Deputati 2008) employ the metaphor of closing a chapter, while the Belgian investigation into Lumumba's assassination speaks of coming to 'terms with the past' (Chambre des Représentants 2001a). The insinuation here is not on opening a debate by which official narrative is exposed to further intensive scrutiny or, as postcolonial thought suggests, history is encountered with all its pluralistic dimensions. Rather, these expressions suggest that the apology represents an attempt at a closing of the dialogue, historical introspection and a desire, to use Cameron's (2010) phrase, to 'move on'. This sense is compounded by the context in which the apologies arise, whereby in all four case studies, especially the Belgian, British and German ones, the apologies take place in circumstances where there has been a sustained attack on the conventional colonial narratives as offered by the 'official' arms of the state. In this sense, the apologies are offered in a context where the state and its official or implicit constructs of history are on the back foot and seeking to engage in restorative work.

Given that such apologies seem to represent a defensive posture, it appears that, along with the expressions of 'closing chapters' and 'moving on', the apologies are devices that seek to halt further introspection. Of course, the conventional picture of the prostrate apologisee and emboldened addressee suggests that the victim must then retort (either forgiving or not forgiving). However, where the relationship is between coloniser and colonised, it seems that the subaltern has less capacity to retort (an issue in cohort with Spivak's (1988) question 'Can the Subaltern speak?'). This is not to suggest that the formerly colonised are passive and cannot respond to the apology. Indeed, it was the formerly colonised that played an influential role in forcing governments of the metropolis into these defensive and remedial discursive positions. However, it is to point to the unequal access to media outlets and other agenda setting formats. In this sense, while the apologies garner instant media attention and public discussion, it may be that, rather than opening a space for subaltern voices and historical introspection, in the short term the apologies serve to restore a lost equilibrium and impede further introspection. Nevertheless, as explored in more detail in the following chapter, even with the metaphors of 'closing chapters', there is a sense in which the offering of apologies induces more demands for *mea culpa* from other groups and, in the longer term, opens up further cracks in states' conventional colonial narratives, thereby begetting further contestation.

In deciphering the above modes of delimiting one's perceived responsibility, this chapter has further underscored the idea that apologies have a capacity to play an almost dual function; while they inescapably endow events with a negative connotation, apologies, in employing certain techniques, can provide a space where the orator may obfuscate or delimit their responsibility. In the biopsy of the empirical chapters, it is such modes that are highlighted in sustaining the thesis' overall argument that, in significant ways, the apologies of this thesis reformulate enduring colonial sentiments.

Contrasting individual and public apologies

Thus far, this chapter has explored apology largely as an interpersonal phenomenon. However, it is important to recognise that the apologies analysed in this thesis are interstate apologies. With the exception of some notable works (Tavuchis 1991; Pettigrove 2003; Smith 2008), there remains a relative paucity in literature that compares and contrasts the interpersonal apology with the group or state based variety. As such, beyond the central argument of the thesis, one of the minor contributions of this work is to seek to ascertain some of these key distinguishing factors. In distinguishing between the interpersonal and the state variety, it is hoped that one can garner a greater understanding of the meaning and implications of the growing phenomenon of interstate *mea culpa*. It is these distinctions that are explored below.

The shifting ontology of state apology

Perhaps the key distinguishing factor between group apology and interpersonal apology is regarding the issue of the speaker's personal responsibility for the transgression. As already established, in an interpersonal apology it is customary (though to varying degrees) for the apologisee to accept personal responsibility for the offence. In terms of group apology, the apologisee's actual responsibility is frequently far more ambiguous or even non-existent. Thus, 'a speaker who issues an apology on behalf of an institution or collective is speaking for that institution or collective, not for himself or herself as an individual' (Govier and Verwoerd 2002: 75). Indeed, in terms of this thesis, the apologies can be termed *intergenerational* in so far as the politicians that offered contrition were either not born at the time of the offence or were children; they played no personal role in the actual transgression, either directly or as part of

the state apparatus.³³ That the individuals were apologising for an offense that they themselves did not commit represents a curious ontological break from conventional ideas of secular liberal justice.³⁴ This is to say that the liberal concept of justice typically emphasises the moral and legal responsibility for one's own individual actions, rather than those of one's forefathers or community (cf. Freeman 2008; Celermajer 2009: 1). It is such 'ahistorical liberalism', as Thompson (2009: 196) terms it, that feeds into former Australian Prime Minister, John Howard's, refusal to apologise to the indigenous 'stolen generation',³⁵ on the grounds that he does 'not believe as a matter of principle that one generation can assume responsibility for the acts and deeds of an earlier generation' (Howard 2008).

While this philosophical debate is not considered here in full,³⁶ there are two interesting, though far from watertight, critiques of the liberal concept that historical obligation rests only with those that committed the misdeeds. Firstly, in a series of publications, Thompson (2002; 2006; 2008; 2009) makes the case that citizens have enduring obligations to the past actions of the state. Thompson (2008: 38) contends that states are 'transgenerational polities in which members pass on responsibilities and entitlements from one generation to another'. She explains that clearly present citizens make policies, treaties and contractual agreements that bestow binding commitments upon future actions. In making these agreements, the present generation anticipates and, moreover, requires that future members of the polity adhere to these commitments. This entails a moral relationship in which members are bound to accept the stipulations laid down by a previous generation. As Thompson (2008: 39) writes, 'to the extent that individuals value their membership in states and other organizations, they are bound to value a practice which entails respect for transgenerational associations and for the interests of individuals, past, present and future, that are bound up with their continued existence'. In this way, while the current generation of the polity may not feel remorse or

³³ David Cameron (2010) even points this out in his apology for Bloody Sunday, saying that 'for someone of my generation, Bloody Sunday and the early 1970s are something we feel we have learnt about rather than lived through'.

³⁴ See page 3 for a discussion of liberalism in the context of this thesis.

³⁵ The 'stolen generation' refers to native Australian children who were removed from their parents by government agencies, supposedly for their protection. In some areas this process was still taking place in the 1970s.

³⁶ The argument as to whether the current generation has a responsibility or obligation for the transgressions of an earlier generation has generated considerable philosophical debate within the academic literature. See Abdel-Noir (2003), Weiner (2005) and Miller (2007) for examples of scholars who champion the idea of intergenerational obligation. For counter views, see Boxill (2003), Corlett (2003).

sentiment, they are still tied by the moral imperative of fulfilling the obligations of previous incarnations of the polity, thereby leading to the import of offering apology and compensation for the past injustices committed by the state (Thompson 2008: 39).

A second argument regarding the responsibility of one generation for the next is termed 'guilt by virtue of privilege' (Bartky 2002: 139). As Bartky (2002: 142) explains, she is 'guilty by virtue of simply being who and what I am: a white woman born into an aspiring middle class family in a racist and class-ridden society'. By this argument's logic, one can acquire guilt through reaping the unearned benefits of crimes and appropriations carried out by a previous generation. There can, in one sense, be no doubt that the West's contemporary comparative affluence is based in no small measure on the enslavement, looting and exploitation that took place under colonialism. Yet, from another perspective, clearly the 'rewards' of colonialism and neo-colonialism are not felt evenly across society, with many in the West suffering as a result of this.³⁷ Moreover, the process of attributing guilt and gauging privilege in this way are deeply problematic and does not provide adequate conceptualisation of the different degrees of responsibility between perpetrators, bystanders and descendants. Equally, in multicultural societies where citizens frequently have heritage that derives from both the metropole and the colony, such notions of guilt surely create identity dilemmas of schizophrenic proportions. Nevertheless, in the eyes of some, it is such notions of unearned privilege that endow a moral obligation to another generation, even beyond the ahistorical assumptions of liberal justice.

The question as to the apologise's actual guilt speaks to the 'standing' of the speaker – that is the question as to whether the apologise is the appropriate vessel for contrition. Certainly, in the interpersonal context, one can witness complex issues of standing, for example with parents apologising for their children or pets' actions (Smith 2008: 52-53). As Pettigrove (2003: 321) writes, in such circumstances 'we are so closely connected with the wrongdoer that we are identified with one another'. Indeed, there seems to be particular expectation of apology where the offender was deemed to be under one's supervision or duty of care. Thus, just as parents or managers appear (problematically) as appropriate representatives of their children or employees, it may be that state leaders and politicians conceive themselves

³⁷ One may venture that in Europe many people may also be deemed as 'victims' of colonial and neo-colonial projects. Examples of this include those who have lost their lives or family members in colonial and neo-colonial wars. Also, many of those settling in colonial territories were fleeing poverty or religious persecution in Europe.

(problematically) as appropriate representatives of the people. In this sense, Gill (2000: 13) demands that 'there is some relationship between the responsible actor and the apologizer that justifies her taking responsibility for offering an apology'. Given that the apologisee is a representative of the state that committed such violations, it appears that it is this relationship that lends the speaker, in their view, the appropriate standing. Moreover, as elected representatives of a populace (a population that is also largely not directly responsible for the transgression) perhaps the apology speaks on behalf of the population. This has its own problematics, whereby clearly not the whole populace support the apology, and, moreover, in a multicultural society many may identify more closely with the colonised than the colonialists.

Pointing to this disjuncture between expressing apology and the agent's actual guilt, it is interesting to note, as Lakoff (2008: 203) observes, that 'the willingness of many public officials to make such statements is striking compared with their reluctance to make apologies for their own, personal past misbehaviours'. The archetypal example of this is Blair's proclivity for contrite stances on a range of historical episodes, in contrast to his own apologia for contemporary warfare of his own making. The significance of this is perhaps to remove such intergenerational apology from Goffman's concept of splitting oneself into the parts that committed the offence and the part that renounces it. The contemporary politician, by this token, is not splitting him/herself in two, because it is patently clear that it is not they that committed the offence. Thus, rather than presenting an unsightly aspect of *themselves*, they are presenting an unsightly aspect of their *predecessors*. This, one can suggest, is both a more painless process than contrition for one's own shortcomings and, as can be seen in this thesis, can be politically advantageous. In this respect, the apologies of Cameron/Blair, Michel, and Wierzbicki-Zeul all represent a discursive turn where they not only publicly distance themselves from the perpetrators of the offence, but, perhaps more importantly, distance themselves from the previous administrations that were often handicapped by their perceived inflexibility towards thorny historical episodes.

Just as there are complex issues of standing in regards to the speaker, there are equally complex issues as to the standing of the recipient of the apology. This dilemma may succinctly be summarised with the question 'to whom should we apologise?' (Pettigrove 2003: 327). For instance, the contemporary Herero and Nama communities in Namibia in 2004 are not the *direct* victims of genocide in the sense that they were not alive in 1904. Moreover, among those that were alive, clearly there are those that themselves collaborated with the colonialists and materially benefited from the colonial project. Nevertheless, there are undoubtedly

intergenerational echoes as to these atrocities: the genocide and dispossession of the Herero has significant consequences in terms of twenty first century landownership and contemporary inequality.³⁸ Equally, the assassination of the first democratically elected President, followed later by decades of the Mobutu regime (that received large Western support) must have consequences for contemporary citizens of the DRC. It is, to some degree, an exercise in teleology to ascertain exactly the intergenerational effects of such atrocity. Nevertheless, it seems that it is membership of the (imagined) community that appears to lend such populations appropriate standing as recipients of apology.

The ambiguous recipient of apology

Extending from the issue of standing: In interpersonal apologies there is usually a clearly defined recipient of the apology (i.e. a partner/parent/friend etc). In contrast, the recipient is not always clearly defined in state apologies and may be left vague. For example, in apologising for Bloody Sunday, it is not exactly clear who the recipient is; the families of the bereaved, the people of Derry, the nationalist community, the people of Northern Ireland, the people of the island of Ireland? Similarly, the German apology requests 'you to forgive us our trespasses' (Wieczorek-Zeul 2004). Here, again, it is not clear exactly who this is directed at – whether it be descendants of the Herero and Nama, the people of Namibia or just the audience who were present at the speech. This imprecision over the exact recipient of the apology has curious resonances in terms of responding to it. That is, where, in interpersonal apologies, the recipient is clear, he or she can easily respond; either rejecting the apology or offering forgiveness. In contrast, the indistinct recipient in terms of state apologies makes the issue of response more complex. For instance, it is unclear who exactly can and should respond to the apology and whether even the closest relatives of the victims can legitimately offer forgiveness. Indeed, it is likely that there may be diverse reactions among the 'recipients' of the apology, with some rejecting it and others welcoming it.

This observation as to the unclear recipient of apology pertains to two issues that are prominent throughout the thesis: Firstly, the indistinct nature of the 'recipient' makes the idea that apology closes the chapter of the events a virtual impossibility. This is unlike interpersonal apologies where the victim may offer forgiveness and both actors may agree to 'draw a line under the event' and 'move on'. Instead, where there are indistinct recipients of

³⁸ See page 91 for details on 21st Century land ownership in Namibia.

the apology, it seems that some will not forgive and, as already discussed, many are not in a position to offer forgiveness. In this sense, despite metropolitan politicians' pleas to 'move on' and 'close the chapter', it seems that this is far harder than with interpersonal apologies. Secondly, the indistinct recipient of the state apology is in stark juxtaposition to the very identifiable orator. In other words, the politician offering the apology is given a platform, given considerable media coverage and is widely known by name. This is in contrast to the recipients of the apology of whom it is unclear exactly who they are, and, in turn, have a fraction of the media coverage that is experienced by the apologetic politician. This observation feeds into one of the larger arguments of the thesis, whereby it is contended that the apologies are less about subaltern experiences, than narcissistic and self indulgent stories about the magnanimity of the apologising state/politician.

The wider audience of state apologies

One of the key distinguishing factors of a state apology is that they invariably speak to a far wider audience than that of the interpersonal variety. Interpersonal apologies are typically delivered in the solitary presence of just the offended and offender. There are, however, occasions when it may be appropriate to have a wider audience. For instance, it would be appropriate for a boss who needlessly embarrassed a worker in front of their colleagues to also make the apology in front of the same audience so as to restore the worker's lost face. In extreme cases, such as Tiger Woods' (2010) apology, the apologisee speaks to both the directly afflicted (the family), but also a wider audience of fans and sponsors etc. However, beyond such rare cases, it is reasonable to establish that the nature of state apologies requires that the apology speak to a larger audience. Indeed, governments' immediate and extensive access to the media, coupled with the press's coveting for *mea culpa*, entails a considerable audience. Illustrating this point, David Cameron's apology for Bloody Sunday was transmitted live on a huge screen in Guildhall Square in Derry in front of a crowd of thousands (McClements 2010).

Related to the issue of the wider audience, it is clear that in state apologies there is a distinction between the audience and the recipient. Notwithstanding the examples above, in most cases of interpersonal apology, the recipient is the only member of the audience. In contrast, the audience of state apologies is far more diverse than the direct victims and those assumed to be adversely affected by the transgression. In this respect, the audience of state apologies entails the diverse domestic population of the apologising state and the wider international community. Indeed, as continually emphasised in the empirical chapters, the political expediencies of *mea culpa* can extend to the messages conveyed to domestic

audiences in a more prominent way than the sentiments conveyed to those in the former colony. As such, in some respects, it appears that the contrite politicians consider the concerns of the subaltern as of lower import than of other audience members who do not constitute recipients of the apology. As is explored in the next paragraph, this entails a rhetorical tightrope walk by the apologising politician and his/her scriptwriters.

The pre-prepared nature of state apologies

Whereas interpersonal apologies are usually unscripted and comparatively reflexive, state apologies are typically pre-prepared (Lazare 2004: 40). Such meticulous scripting serves at least four related points. Firstly it enables a considered attempt to negotiate the perceived vested interest of the aforementioned multiple audiences. In this way, the scriptwriters can pre-conceive a text that can attempt to mollify the various, sometimes competing, audiences. This careful scripting can, as seen in the chapters on the Belgian and British apologies, enable the speaker to attempt such disparate ends as pacifying and flattering the domestic military veterans that served in the colonial episodes, while simultaneously apologising to their victims. Moreover, in providing an agreeable text for the parties involved, there is a capacity for 'co-writing'.³⁹ This is not to say that the text is literally co-authored by the competing parties in a joint writing session. Nor is it to suggest that the competing parties hold equal sway in their input; clearly some groups wield larger governmental influence. However, given that apologies are not 'standalone' texts (Yamazaki 2004: 156) and arrive after an elongated period of interactions, there is a sense in which the various inputs can be contemplated.

Overlapping with the mindful consideration of the vested audiences, the scripted apology equally allows for a text to enounce a narrative of the past that has been carefully authored, presumably entailing multiple drafts and revisions. In this sense, at least in terms of the actual apology, the projected historical narrative is not one that is improvised, but is pre-considered. Such a scripted narrative allows for carefully conceived caveats that enable the state to limit their responsibility and provide thought through accounts for their actions. Akin to the potential for caveats as to the state's moral responsibility, the scripted apology similarly enables the capacity for intricate legal caveats that appear to fend the state from prosecution or reparations. This is most clearly illustrated in the German apology for the Herero genocide, where it seems that the script employs a range of grammatical and phrasing techniques to

³⁹ Yamazaki (2004: 156) discusses apologies as forged in a process of 'co-construction'.

eschew the legal demand for reparations. Given that interpersonal apologies are less likely to be documented or recorded, combined with their more spontaneous nature, it is unlikely that such examples would have the capacity to entail such meticulous qualifications.

The formal tone and staging of state apology

Complimenting such scripting, state apologies are typically staged and delivered in a more formal tone and setting than their interpersonal cousins. The interpersonal between friends, even at its most sombre, is not likely to be staged with the same pomp as the state apology. This formal staging is most clearly encapsulated by Clinton delivering his apology for the Tuskegee syphilis experiment⁴⁰ in the White House Rose Garden because, according to a spokesperson, 'it was proper and dignified to use the seat of our government and the White House itself as a place to render the apology....[the] White House itself is the people's house' (quoted in Harter, Stephens et al. 2000: 26-27). Similarly, the British and Belgian apologies were delivered in their parliaments, while the Italian and German apologies are delivered at symbolic locations in Libya and Namibia respectively. In the same vein, the state apology has a penchant for symbolism that is not likely to be matched by the interpersonal apology. Illustrative of this is Silvio Berlusconi's bow before the son of a famous Libyan rebel leader. Building on the scripted apology, it seems that the carefully staged apology is one that is self-consciously aware of its symbolic and societal import. Moreover it further reflects the managed narrative and memory forming capacity of the ceremony.

The deeper narrative forming capacity of state apologies

As already discussed, all apologies - however trivial – engage in storytelling; one of their functions is to recount (explicitly or implicitly) a misdeed and imbue it with a socially legible significance. However, a state apology has far more tools at its disposal as a narrative forming device than that of the interpersonal apology. As Govier and Verwoerd (2002: 74) write, 'states are in powerful positions to acknowledge wrongdoing, because of their power in terms of issuing official statements, documents, in establishing memorials and so forth'. Such narrative forming means are explored in more detail in the next chapter. However, suffice to say, states have a multitude of mechanisms at their disposal for effectively enmeshing themselves into the multitude of competing voices that constitute historical narrative. Beyond

⁴⁰ Continuing until the 1970s, the Tuskegee syphilis experiment entailed the US Public Health Service intentionally leaving syphilis untreated so as to carry out clinical studies. Not aware they had syphilis, the study was carried out on enrolled African Americans in Tuskegee, Alabama.

the apology text itself, this can be accompanied by a host of other state activities such as school curriculums, museums and so forth. The archetypal example of this is the German state's contrition for the Holocaust being accompanied by whole-scale changes as to the representation of the genocide throughout society.

The frequent cross cultural/ linguistic nature of state apologies

A further, and politically significant, differentiation between interpersonal and interstate apologies is the increased likelihood of cross cultural and linguistic modes of communication. As Trouillot (2000: 175) writes, 'what obtains as a satisfactory expression of remorse between two parties involved in an automobile accident in New York may not work between two Caribbean peasants involved in a land feud'. Of course, interpersonal apologies have the potential to be between persons of differing cultures and languages, but the likelihood of this is far higher in apologies between peoples of different states and distant geographies. On the one hand, such diversities can lead to misunderstandings: In their attempt to cultivate a more personal and genial form of apology to Korea, Japanese Emperor Akihito's advisers drafted a statement using the terms '*kokoro*' (heart) and '*owabi*' (apology). As Yamazaki (2004: 161) shows, 'unfortunately, the phrase 'my heart aches' of the first draft was translated into a Korean phrase commonly used in karaoke (popular singalong genre) to express one's feelings when one has lost one's lover'. Rather than being taken as a token of sincerity, the statement was mocked in the Korean press and obviously did not achieve its desired goals (Yamazaki 2004: 161).

On the other hand, such ambiguities of translation can enhance the political expediencies of the politicians who are both delivering and receiving the *mea culpa*. Following the 2001 spy plane crisis between the US and China,⁴¹ Debrix (2002: 215) demonstrates how 'linguistic tricks are used to establish a speech act acceptable on both sides'. In this way, the letter offered by the US government was translated by Chinese media in a manner that depicted a far graver tone of contrition than was suggested to the American audience. This process thereby enables 'a semantic field in which both agents can claim victory' (Debrix 2002: 215). In the same vein, chapter 6 of this thesis demonstrates how Berlusconi presented the apology to the Italian

⁴¹ Known as the Hainan Island incident, the event entailed a collision between a US surveillance plane and a Chinese fighter jet over the South China Sea. Following an emergency landing, Chinese authorities detained 24 US crew members until the US government offered a satisfactory statement regarding the event.

audience in terms of the practical implications; emphasising its implications in terms of natural resources and immigration. Conversely, Gaddaffi presented the same text in terms of its 'historic' significance and as Italy's renunciation of its colonial 'killing, destruction and repression' (quoted in Sarrar 2008). In this respect, it seems that the ambiguities of cross cultural and cross linguistic apologies that are frequently present in state apologies, enables a certain leeway in their interpretation. As shown with these examples, such ambiguities can be used in advantageous ways by actors for whom the apology may be politically expedient, thereby either bolstering or hindering the supposed earnestness of the apology.

Of course, in some respects, the above contrasts with interpersonal apologies are trades in generalisations. It may be, for instance, that some interpersonal apologies are scripted, read aloud and delivered in a symbolic setting. However, such a summary is designed to engage with the still rather under-explored nature of the state apology.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to grapple with the rather elusive, yet socially ubiquitous, phenomenon that is *mea culpa*. In doing so, it first explored the characteristics and functions of apology: While recognising that apology, almost by necessity, infuses a past event with regretful and negative connotations, the primary goal of this chapter has been to illustrate the capacity apologies have for delimiting responsibility and engaging in such activities as providing - to different degrees - denials, justifications and accounts. The argument here is that apologies do not invariably disavow an episode, but, in contrast, may provide complex justifications or caveat laden endorsements of an event. Indeed, in first analysing the etymological and practical proximity of accounts and apology, the chapter further pointed to rhetorical modes an apologist may employ in their attempts to offer such 'limited' apologies. This analysis is to provide a conceptual starting point for enabling the wider argument of this thesis, which points to a contemporary narrative of colonial apologia that is intimately connected to the texts and surrounding discourses of the empirical case studies undertaken in this project. In providing this analysis, this chapter provides a foundational point that the empirical chapters turn to in sustaining this argument.

CHAPTER 2: COLLECTIVE MEMORY, POSTCOLONIALISM AND THE (IN)GLORIOUS PAST

Appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps. This problem animates all sorts of discussions – about influence, about blame and judgement, about present actualities and future priorities.

Edward Said (1994: 3) *Culture and Imperialism*

Introduction

‘The legacy of colonialism’ writes Young (1990: 126), ‘is as much a problem for the West as it is for the scared lands in the world beyond’. Perhaps the key problem for European elites in this regard is that the violence, dispossession and plunder that were intrinsic to colonialism do not tally, indeed, contradict, their contemporary projected images as liberal, progressive, bastions of human rights. While this dilemma may be rooted in past events, it is also a problem that traverses the present. If the ‘West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion [...] but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence’ (Huntington 1996: 51), then such a notion is to destabilise the discourses that sustain, legitimise, reify and naturalise the contemporary geographic disparities of power and wealth between the colonial centre and periphery. To make this point clear: this is simultaneously a matter of how European states articulate and negotiate the past - including through apologies - and how these discourses sustain and legitimise current geopolitical formations.

Navigating these issues, the purpose of this chapter is to conceptualise and elaborate on the overlapping theoretical underpinnings of the thesis, namely collective memory and postcolonial analysis. In drawing first on the concept of collective memory, the chapter takes heed of the theory’s underlying assertion that societal understandings of the past are intersubjectively woven through multiple representations and discursive interjections. Moreover, it is these representations of the past, its proponents convincingly hold, that shape group identity and inform particular hierarchies and complexions of power. It is this starting point that can be powerfully utilised to address core issues of this thesis by tracing the narratives of the past as proffered through apologies and other parallel representations.

Moreover, the concept of collective memory serves as a device for locating the ways in which representations of the past are employed in contemporary elite political expedencies.

The second part of the chapter turns to the contribution of postcolonial analysis in locating frameworks by which colonial discourse operates and textually affirms its authority. In this manner, this section highlights recurring tropes and themes in colonial discourse and gears this analysis to sentiments offered in apologies and their accompanying texts. Beyond offering analysis as to the intersection between conventional and contemporary (apologetic) colonial discourses, the section builds on the postcolonial assertion that colonial discourses are themselves replete with ambivalence, contradiction and brittleness. By the same token, this section pinpoints some of the chinks, inconstancies and anxieties extant within contemporary elite contrite utterances.

Thus, in drawing on theoretical postulations within both collective memory and postcolonialism, the chapter maintains that these fields are mutually complimentary to each other. Indeed, one can observe an overlooked meeting point between the notions of collective memory and postcolonial analysis, in the sense that both domains recognise that the authority to narrate and mobilise the past speaks to contemporary asymmetries of power. In this vein, as Said's epigraph to this chapter shows, a conceptualisation of how the past is narrated informs the ways in which colonial/postcolonial relations are formed. In particular, the medium of apology serves as an important ritual in providing such plotlines.

Delineating 'collective memory'

Before proceeding to explore postcolonial analysis, the first part of the chapter unpacks the term 'collective memory'. This section is structured by initially exploring the academic foundations of the term as developed by Maurice Halbwachs. The chapter subsequently highlights the state as a central forum in which powerful and officialised representations of the past are projected. The final part of this section undertakes an exploration of the discursive constraints that state elites operate under in their mnemonic articulations. In analysing these constraints, it is suggested that apologies operate at particular moments where elite narratives of the past experience contestation and rupture. In this sense, apologies can be conceived as utterances that attempt to modulate, revamp and give renewed credence to dominant narratives of the past that have come under recent scrutiny. Thus, in undertaking the first task of unpacking the intellectual foundations of 'collective memory' and delineating its conceptual

boundaries, the chapter commences by acknowledging and sparing with criticisms the concept has encountered. The two central criticisms entail the ontological challenge as to whether remembrance may transcend the individual and, secondly, thorny questions as to the relationship between memory and history. It is the former that is considered first.

Memory: The individual and the group

Memory, both at a vernacular and psychoanalytic level, is generally considered to be a faculty purely within the domain of the individual. Beyond the pivotal work of Freud, such individualised notions were held in the philosophical work of Bergson and in Proust's autobiographical writings (Connerton 1989: 1). Memory, in this broad sense, constitutes a capacity by which an individual recollects and retrieves figments of the past (Bell 2006: 2). It is this atomised and individualised ontology of memory that informs the principal critique of collective memory. For Fentress and Wickmann, the term is 'curiously disconnected from actual thought processes of any person' (cited in Olick 1999: 334). This critique is also captured in Sontag's (2003: 85) assertion that 'all memory is individual, unreproducible – it dies with each person'. For Sontag (2003: 85-86), 'what is called memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, that this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds'. It is this common objection that sees collective memory as something mystical or spiritual, evoking Abraham Lincoln's oratory of the 'mystic chords of memory' (Klein 2000: 130). This is to represent the notion as akin, somehow, to the fallacy of a group mind or neurological system. By such a light, the notion of a collective memory would function as 'a modernist synonym for the bad old Romantic notions of the "spirit" or the "inner character" of a race or nation' (Klein 2000: 135).

In defence against this critique: in formulating the term 'collective memory', Maurice Halbwachs (1980; 1992) and subsequent scholars of collective memory are not radically overhauling the ontological ascendancy of the individual. For Halbwachs and his successors, the act of remembering does indeed take place within the individual mind. However, while this psychological faculty may take place within a particular nook or cranny⁴² of one's cranium, for him remembering was nevertheless a socially forged process. It is the idea that memory

⁴² In Halbwachs' (1992: 38) words, 'there is no point in seeking where they [memories] are preserved in my brain or in some nook of my mind to which I alone have access: for they are recalled to me externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them'.

has a social dimension that adds depth to the individualised notion of memory; it is the idea, as Schudson (1992: 3) puts it, that 'group, institutional and cultural recollections of the past shape people's actions in the present'. This is to demonstrate that individuals' understandings of the past are framed by their social environment and by 'interaction with other individuals and interaction with external signs and symbols' (Assmann 2008: 50). As Assmann (2008: 50) writes, 'once they are verbalised in the form of a narrative or represented by a visual image, the individual's memories become part of an intersubjective symbolic system and are, strictly speaking, no longer a purely exclusive and unalienable property'.

Thus, in locating the recollection of the past as a socially framed phenomenon, it is pertinent to note that there is an overlap between memories of events directly experienced by the individual and those experienced second hand or by proxy. For Halbwachs (1980), one of the peculiarities of memory is that aspects of one's past that are experienced privately and not shared are typically those memories that are hardest to recollect. Contrastingly, those that are experienced socially and continually evoked and communally referenced are those that are easiest to recapture. In this way, Halbwachs convincingly contends that events experienced and relived in groups endure in a far more vivid manner than either private memories or where these groups have dispersed or are no longer existent. Intriguingly, many of the past events that are recollected are not directly experienced in person by all group members. As Assmann (2006: 222) notes, 'in many cases we have no definite way of knowing whether something that we remember is an experiential memory or an episode that has been told us by others and has been incorporated into our fund of memories'. Indeed, it is very possible, nay frequent, that one acquires memories of events that took place when the group members were not even alive. These memories can be transported across time through a multiple of vessels, including media formats, museums, public representations and oral traditions. In the same way, none of the living Herero community actually experienced the German genocide first-hand. Similarly, large parts of the communities in Derry, Libya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo did not witness the crimes for which apologies have been offered.⁴³ Nevertheless, it appears that, even where not experienced firsthand or autobiographically, these past events are seared into consciousness in important ways. Of course, as Halbwachs (1980: 48) recognises, not every member of the community perceives the past in exactly the same way, and that 'each memory is a viewpoint on the collective memory', varying in both

⁴³ This does not mean that these people have not suffered from the ramifications of this violence.

intensity and position. However, while not everyone draws 'on the same part of this common instrument' (Halbwachs 1980: 48), these past events have undoubtedly become common reservoirs of remembrance and touchstones for group identity.

In this way, Halbwachs theorised, it is as members of groups – 'delimited in time and space' – that memories are both elicited and constituted (Halbwachs 1980: 84). Such groups may be multiple and overlapping, ranging from families, friendship cliques, religious groups, generations, political parties, and so forth (see Coser 1992: 22). Clearly there are different vessels for different types of memory; that is, the mnemonic codifiers by which friendship groups recollect the past is radically different from the modes by which corporations do so. This, perhaps, feeds into the criticism of the vagueness of the term – that collective memory serves as an 'umbrella term for different formats of memory that need to be further distinguished, such as family memory, interactive group memory, and social political, national and cultural memory' (Assmann 2008: 55). Moreover, there are clearly different types of memory that neuroscientists, sociologists and anthropologists (and International Relations scholars) need to distinguish; while still socially framed, the ways in which one recalls how to ride a bike, speak a native language and carry out familiar daily functions is different to the way in which one recalls historical battles (Connerton 1989: 22). In recognising the varied processes and typologies of memory, it should clearly be stated that this thesis focuses on the procedures by which states attempt, with varying degrees of success, to foster binding notions of historical memories upon its (and sometimes other state's) citizens.

History and memory

While the ontological question of who remembers may be the primary critique of collective memory, a second area of contention regards the interrelationship between such concepts as 'history', 'historicity' 'the past' and 'memory'. The complex relationship between memory and history is one that has engaged numerous writers (for example, Nora 1989; Young 1997; Klein 2000; Cubitt 2007; Assmann 2008) and would be impossible to capture in all its depth here. As Young recognises, the relationship does not necessarily stand up to the easy 'forced distinction historians have maintained between memory and history: history as that which happened, memory as that which is remembered of what happened' (Young 2003: 277). Clearly there is a certain slippage between these concepts, and the boundaries between them may seem permeable. Moreover, these porous notions are further complicated by the shifting use of the terms, with Assmann (2008) identifying three broad stages by which these notions have altered. Before the rise of professionalised critical historicity in the 18th century, 'history

and memory were not clearly distinguished' (Assmann 2008: 57). At this juncture, Assmann (2008: 57) asserts that the 'central function of writing history was to preserve the memory of a dynasty'. In this sense, history was overtly complicit in underscoring the historical legitimacy of the orthodox power basis of the church and state.

The post renaissance rise of professionalised historians gave rise to an apparently more clear cut distinction between memory and history; one which, in many respects, still holds sway today. This forged an environment in which the emerging group of professional historians in the 19th century considered 'memories as a dubious source for the verification of historical facts' (Klein 2000: 130). It was here that a history discipline was cultivated of supposed scientific objectivity, dispassionate empiricism and 'specific rules for verification and intersubjective argumentation' (Assmann 2008: 59). Despite its pretences to neutrality and rigorous methodologies, this has, to greater and lesser degrees, been severely compromised in processes of creating the conditions whereby Aimé Césaire contends that 'the only history is white' (cited in Young 1990 119). Though clearly not every historian has been a 'court' or 'Whig' historian, there has undoubtedly been collusion by some members of the discipline in terms of inscribing histories that ratify and naturalise processes of both state consolidation and their colonial endeavours. In this sense, both anthropologists and historians were officially and tacitly enlisted in the discursive and intellectual process of juxtaposing a "people without history" (Wolf 1982) with an enlightened and linear-directional West. As Fanon writes:

The settler makes history and is conscious of making it. And because he constantly refers to the history of his mother country, he clearly indicates that he himself is the extension of that mother country. Thus the history which he writes is not the history of the country which he plunders but the history of his own nation in regard to all that she skims off, all that she violates and starves (cited in Young 1990 120).

Notwithstanding such valid criticism, in principle, if not practice, the historian, with varying degrees of success, endeavours to create a body of work that is overtly free from ideology and, above all, seeks to comprehend past events and actions. It is the historian's job to grapple with the complexities and nuances of the past and expound it in a legible format. At least in an explicit sense, it is not the job of the serious historian to engage in practices of condemning particular behaviours, offering apologies, or seeking to ascertain or convey civic lessons for

contemporary society.⁴⁴ This is not to say that professional historians are absent from the process of mnemonic construction. Indeed, as Weber (1946) shows, the projects that academics undertake are influenced by areas of interest within civil society. Moreover, the relationship between historical work and memory is fluid and has the capacity to mutually impinge on each other; public perceptions and the findings that historians arrive at, to differing degrees, shape public understandings and estimations, just as history (as an academic discipline) increasingly incorporates individual recollections.⁴⁵ Indeed, this relationship is shown very clearly in this thesis, where particular academic works (albeit, not necessarily by those who define themselves as ‘historians’) – *King Leopold’s Ghosts* (Hochschild 1998), *The Assassination of Lumumba* (Witte 2001), *Eyewitness Bloody Sunday* (Mullan and Scally 1997) – have played catalytic roles in creating the kind of societal introspections that help induce apologies. As such, it is important to consider that all historians’ and academics’ works, including this one, are inescapably tinted by their own values and ideologies. Equally, their work does not exist in a vacuum preserved for the ivory tower; historians’ work does spill over (unevenly) into public consciousness. Nevertheless, the field of history and historicity is broadened by the study of memory. Where historiography is concerned with how scholarship represents the past overtime, memory incorporates ‘how various versions of the past are communicated in society through a multiplicity of institutions and media, including school, government ceremonies, popular amusements, art and literature, stories told by families and friends, and landscape features designated as historical either by government or popular practice’ (Glassberg 1996: 9).

While the academic study of history, however deficient and fallible, is the supposed faithful reconstruction of the past, ‘collective memory’, on the other hand, pertains to a far more emotive and utilitarian narrative of the past. As Shudson (1992: 206) writes, ‘historians take up the Sisyphean struggle against their prejudices; many others who have control over the way the past is reconstructed have no such scruples’. In this sense, historians are restrained by the methodological demands and peer oversight of their discipline in ways that are more elastic for others. According to Nora’s (1989: 9) classic analysis, where history ‘calls for analysis and criticism’ and is comparatively ‘prosaic’, memory gives the past a kind of sanctity and shrouds

⁴⁴ For a notable exception to this, see Ferguson’s (2003) *Empire: The rise and demise of the British World Order and the lessons for global power*.

⁴⁵ In recent years there has been an increasing methodological acceptance of public testimonies and ‘memories’.

the past with an aura of the evangelical. Rather than being comparatively sterile, memory evokes the past more flagrantly in the service of contemporary action. Unlike historians, politicians, for instance, have a propensity to recall events and construct particular narratives in a far more overt and ideologically laden manner. When George W. Bush refers to Pearl Harbour in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, this is not to offer a nuanced and multi-layered understanding of a past event, but to evoke an emotive memory that binds a community and imparts simplistic civic lessons for contemporary society. Equally, the frequent parallels in elite Israeli discourse between the Holocaust and the Middle Eastern political climate in the build up to the 1967 Six Day war was an exercise in drawing on powerful images of the past in fostering an expediently militaristic and under-siege mentality (Zertal 2000). As Assmann (2006: 216) writes, 'history turns into memory when it is transformed into forms of shared knowledge and collective identification and participation. In such cases, "history in general" is reconfigured into a particular and emotionally charged version of "our history," absorbing it as part of a collective identity'. Here, then, as Nora (1989: 9) proactively contends, memory binds groups together, taking 'root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects'.

It is this idea of collective memory – that it is emotively articulated in a series of discourses and symbols - that is of value to this project. It is to point to apologies as particular utterances that transmit ideologically laden narratives of the past that resonate in the present. This is to say that the premises of collective memory can be effectively used to both illuminate and engage in critical analyses as to the narratives of the past that are offered through both the mechanisms of apologies and other parallel representations. It is these fluctuating narratives and their enmeshing in processes of identity, state legitimisation and disparate political expediencies that are of interest here. It is this central role of the state in mnemonic construction that is now explored.

The state as articulator of memory

Thus, while memory functions in a diversity of groups, it is the nation state and its mnemonic efforts that are of interest to this thesis. As Said (2000: 176) writes, 'memory and its representations touch very significantly upon questions of identity, of nationalism, of power and authority'. Indeed, where Anderson (1983) contemplated the nation-state as an 'imagined community', one may equally employ the term 'mnemonic community' (Zerubavel 1996). It is, in this way, clear that states do extensively use mechanisms that are available to them – school curriculums, political rhetoric, national holidays, coins, public museums, statues – in forging particular perceptions of the past. Moreover, the state is a forum where memories are

officially mediated in courts and historical tribunals, as well as in elite discourse (including apologies). Such narratives serve a multitude of purposes: They speak to group membership, reinforce collective identity and uphold social cohesion. They also lend legitimacy to prevailing institutions and political-economic and social structures and help provide a moral code for the society. Internationally, they also provide civic lessons, guidance and historical analogy (Khong 1992) in foreign policy decisions.

Given the state's conventional ascendancy as the key forum where understandings of the past are articulated, one can point to the preponderance of particular narrative themes that are propounded. Like people and commercial organisations, 'nations strive to make the past their own and remake it in a flattering light' (Schudson 1992: 206). Concurring, Edward Said (1994: 21) writes, 'we are all taught to venerate our nations and admire our traditions'. By this format, politicians – both democratic and authoritarian – have long recognised the political utility of emphasising past glories and airbrushing (sometimes literally) perceived ignoble and belittling events: statues are built of heroic conquests and commemorative national holidays mark each anniversary. In contrast, episodes of national shame are omitted from school text books and left uncommemorated and largely forgotten. In this way, as exhibited by conventional colonial narratives, the state has venerated expedient and galvanising narratives of intrepid conquest, victory and heroism.

This intimate relationship between elite representations of the past and political expediency is expressed most clearly by the 'presentist' approach to collective memory. This presentist notion of collective memory emphasises an essentially top-down model of memory, whereby it is political elites that monopolise and purvey the selection and representation of the past in ways that serve their contemporary objectives. Halbwachs, himself, is associated with this model, with Coser (1992: 25) writing that, for him, 'the past is a social construction mainly, if not wholly, shaped by the concerns of the present'. This is most clearly articulated in *The Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land*, where Halbwachs (1992: 192-236) traces the ways in which successive rulers of Jerusalem had discarded the claims of previous occupiers and drawn from the Holy scriptures the 'truths' and tenets that were most apt to their prevailing group interests (see Coser 1992: 27-28). Although not referencing him, Edward Said builds on Halbwachs' study through his focus on the way in which Jerusalem and its past is projected by the Israeli state. He contends that the Israeli violent annexation of Jerusalem has been emplotted as 'a cheerful symbol of pioneering, humane enterprise' (Said 1995: 6). By this measure, 'Israel was thus able to project an idea of Jerusalem that contradicted not only

its history but its very lived actuality, turning it from a multicultural and multireligious city into an "eternally" unified, principally Jewish city under exclusive Israeli sovereignty' (Said 1995: 6-7).

The key academic treatise highlighting this proximate intersection between the state, dominant interests and memory – indeed a work that Said (1994: 15-16; 2000: 178) approvingly draws upon – is the book *Invention of Tradition*, edited by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). In his introduction, Hobsbawm (1983) argues that traditions and customs that are perceived to have long standing roots are frequently invented or constructed. These inventions, he argues, 'seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition. Though the actual bond to the past may be largely 'fatuous', these traditions are 'responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations' (Hobsbawm 1983: 1-2). Thus, elite manufacturing of traditions, according to this work, function to offer particular master narratives that 'are used as a means of exercising power, to establish or legitimize institutions, to symbolize social cohesion and to socialize individuals to the existing order' (Misztal 2003: 57). While this thesis, in the main, sympathises with the idea that perceptions of the past are largely shaped by the interests of powerful actors, there is an added complexity at play here. In this respect, apologies represent a certain climb down from the strident mnemonic master manipulators that the 'presentist' view would anticipate. It is in considering this that the chapter now turns to examine the discursive and mnemonic constraints applied to political elites in their representations of the past.

Dominant memory and constraints on elites

To momentarily take stock: thus far, the state has been located as a crucial location where dominant representations of the past are articulated and employed in the service of political expediency. To this end, elites have a propensity for espousing aggrandising notions of the past that underscore galvanising triumphs, while eschewing and negating moments of perceived national shame. The animating dilemma herein is that political apologies do not easily fit into this formula and, conversely, emphasise the very ignoble events that one might expect to be readied for amnesia. Observing this dilemma, the goal here is to provide an analysis that conceptualises the limitations that elites experience in the proffering of memory. It is to follow Schudson's (1992: 209) analysis as to highlighting 'the incompleteness of the hegemonic process' of state elites imbuing their desired past. In emphasising the following constraints that state elites face, it is contended that apology operates at the intersection of this dilemma; that it both recognises a vulnerability within dominant narratives of the past,

and a project at reclaiming elite credibility. Thus, the following passages offer an analysis of the processes through which, in *mea culpa*, elites are constrained in their articulation of dominant narratives. Concurring with Schudson (1992: 208), this is not to claim dominant memories do not exist. Clearly 'dominant groups (like other groups) do try, intentionally or intuitively, to make their own ideas common property and common sense' (Schudson 1992: 209). Rather, it is to show that they must compete and vie with alternative articulations of the past. As the following points explore, political elites are constrained by contestation to their narratives by competing groups, an incomplete command over the past episodes selected for commemoration and an inability to will amnesia on ignoble events.

1. Contesting and rupturing dominant narratives

As Foucault (1979: 95) famously observed, 'where there is power, there is resistance'. In this way, the constructs articulated by powerful groups inescapably meet resistance and cannot be 'monolithically installed or everywhere believed in' (Popular Memory Group 2011: 255). Indeed, while different groups and people have unequal access to the levers that shape memory, such narratives are contested and struggled over: 'dominant memory is produced in the course of these struggles and is always open to contestation' (Popular Memory Group 2011: 255). To this end, Zerubavel (1995: 10) speaks of 'counter memory', which, like the postcolonial project, seeks to overturn and discredit hegemonic narratives and instil alternative notions of the past. To apply this analysis to the colonial past, the narratives propelled by dominant state institutions and largely perpetuated by conservative historians, media images and so forth - claims of progress, civilisation, rationality, science and 'white man's burden' – must inevitably be contested in the public sphere.

Of course, colonialism and its associated discourses have always provoked resistance, ambivalence and mimicry (Bhabha 1984) (as well as collusion), be it from those who are themselves colonised, critical movements within the metropole or from within the military apparatus itself. However, while resistance may be continuous, clearly there are particular geographies and temporalities where counter-narratives experience differing degrees of latency, prevalence and potency. One can, for instance, point to particular periods and polities where there have been profound ruptures and crises to elite narratives of the day – late 18th century France, 1917 Russia, 1968 France, 2011 North Africa. These, are particularly extreme examples and this is not to suggest that apologies arise in circumstances of such severe ruptures. Nevertheless, the empirical chapters of this thesis all point to societal conditions and circumstances that have provoked increased discord with meta-narratives in general (progress,

modernity, the state, capitalism/socialism) and colonial narratives in particular. In some respects, such resistance has originated exogenously to the colonising state – from demands by the victims (and their relatives/descendants) for reparations or renewed inquiries. Perhaps more importantly,⁴⁶ however, there have also been demonstrable ruptures in the narratives from within the colonising state itself; not only have the ‘victims’ received increased coverage in the metropolitan media, but so too have there been increased voices of domestic dissent, ranging from domestic historians, questions in parliament, civil society movements and so on. As Zerubavel (1995: 10) writes, at certain junctures ‘a fragile coexistence between divergent interpretations breaks down, and the myth can no longer contain those tensions. At such points the past becomes openly contested, as rival parties engage in a conflict over its interpretation’. To adopt Zerubavel’s (1996: 283) phrase, it seems that apologies arise in circumstances of such ‘mnemonic battles’.

In other words, it seems that apologies (most obviously in the British, Belgian and German cases, but also in the Italian case) arise in circumstances where conventional dominant narratives of particular episodes are no longer credible to vast swathes of the metropole’s civil society: The apologies occur where there is renewed and critical examination at such episodes as the Herero genocide, the Lumumba assassination and the Bloody Sunday massacre; contrition occurs when the orthodox official narratives of these are widely considered implausible. In remarkably similar ways, the four empirical chapters of this thesis point to the break down or rupture of particular narratives of the past that have now become discredited.⁴⁷ It appears, then, that apologies and the prior and subsequent texts, are exercises in elite discursive pragmatism and dexterity; they are examples of elites enmeshing in mnemonic contestation and, to differing degrees, appropriating, accommodating, modulating and ceding to competing memories in ways that *begin* to reconcile official and counter memories.

In this apparent ceding to competing memories, it is important to recognise that patterns of domination and inequality remain central. As pointed to throughout the thesis, in articulating their revised narratives, clearly political elites are not making a wholesale renunciation of the mentalities, ideologies and hierarchies that enabled both colonialism and contemporary patterns of capitalist domination. Equally, these new perceptions of the past do not point to a

⁴⁶ Importantly, that is, from the perspective of this thesis.

⁴⁷ Although still perceivable, in some respects, this rupture is not so abrupt in the Italian case study. See pages 166-168 for a wider discussion on this.

genuine egalitarianism in access to the facilities of mnemonic creation. In this respect, it appears that the dominant meta-narratives of the colonising state (and the West) continue to be transmitted – narratives of a benign past, paternalism, rule of law, liberal conceptions of human-rights and so forth. Indeed, in engaging in *mea culpa* for events that can no longer be credibly incorporated into these meta-narratives, it may be that these larger narratives might in fact be temporarily bolstered, albeit problematically. In metaphorical terms, it may be amputating a limb to save the patient.

2. Selecting the past

It is not only the plotline over past episodes that are open to competition and mnemonic battles. What is at stake is more than whether a particular event is portrayed as ‘noble’, ‘progressive’, ‘evil’ or ‘shameful’. At stake is also whether the event in question, for instance Lumumba’s assassination, the Herero genocide or Bloody Sunday, are even *selected* for official commemoration. To develop this point: In the context of World War I, Van Wyck Brooks (1918) wrote an article entitled “On Creating a Usable Past”. In this paper, Brooks elaborated on the necessity for the American literary scene to emphasise particular past episodes so as to be expedient to the necessities of the day (see also Blake 1999; Olick 2007). In a critical rather than normative context, Eric Hobsbawm (1983: 1) strikes a similar chord, writing of the invention of ‘a suitable historic past’.⁴⁸ Problematising this, it is clear that the events for which politicians apologise are not self-evidently ‘usable’. As Zertal (2005: 2) writes, ‘victories and great achievements require neither explication nor sophisticated interpretative structures; self explanatory, they speak for themselves’. In this way, states, especially hegemonic ones (Assmann 2006: 217), reflexively turn to episodes of conquest and perceived achievement in their choices for commemoration. Conversely, it is perceptible that states also actively incorporate losses and defeats into their collective memory, ‘provided they are emplotted in the martyriological narrative of the tragic hero’ (Assmann 2006: 217). In this vein, the British evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940 is recalled not as a military failure, but is evoked, as Churchill framed it, as a ‘miracle of deliverance, achieved by valour, by perseverance, by perfect discipline, by faultless service, by resource, by skill, by unconquerable fidelity’ (quoted in Levine 2010: 3). Likewise, in Israeli memory, the Warsaw Ghetto resistance fighters are commemorated not as a scattering of a defeated, under-resourced, under trained and

⁴⁸ By way of example, Hobsbawm (1983: 1-2) points to ‘the deliberate choice of a Gothic style for the nineteenth century rebuilding of the British parliament, and the equally deliberate decision after World War II to rebuild the parliamentary chamber on exactly the same basic plan as before’.

famished individuals, but as emblematic of a transcendent, heroic and embattled new Zionist spirit (see, for example, Gutman 1994; Zertal 2005). Thus, while conquests, victories and even gallant defeats can be incorporated into a state's positive self image, moral violations and guilt do not lend themselves so easily to such constructions. By way of this observation, then, one may venture that state elites do not commemorate atrocities (and hence apologies) so much because they are 'usable' in the sense that, out of unlimited past events, it is these episodes that are most conducive to glorifying the state. Rather, they seemingly turn to these events out of pragmatic necessity; they are contentious and 'hot topics' within society that the government is impelled to address.

To clarify this point: In his analysis of Watergate in U.S memory, Schudson (1992: 70) pointed to Jimmy Carter and, more interestingly, William Safire's (Nixon's chief speechwriter, later *New York Times* columnist) frequent evocations of the scandal in their subsequent careers. He contends that Safire 'did not randomly choose Watergate as a theme to embroider'. Instead, his proximity to the President meant that he 'surely realized that he could not escape identification with Nixon – and confrontation with Watergate – even if he wanted to'. In this sense, Watergate became a usable mnemonic touchstone for Safire, not out of its glorifying capacity, but more out of unavoidable circumstance. Applying a similar argument to colonial apologies, it appears that these events are not chosen by elites out of a grand plan of an engineered ideal past. Conversely, they are responses to contemporary topics and contestations within civil society. As demonstrated in the empirical chapters, the apologies arise in contexts where there is particular societal focus on these events. In this respect, the usable past, at least to some extent, is not simply chosen *by* politicians, but also chosen *for* politicians. Thus, while elites are still inclined to sugar coat and appropriate undesirable events as best they can, at certain junctures they are impelled to address thorny issues that they would probably rather avoid. It is at these moments, at least in this thesis' case studies, that *mea culpa* arises.

3. The hopelessness of forgetting

According to Milan Kundera's (1980: 4) character Mirek, 'the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting'. In the opening chapter of his novel, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Kundera evokes the familiar picture of Czechoslovakian Communist leader Klement Gottwald standing on a balcony of a palace with his comrade Clementis.

Following Clemintis' hanging for treason, 'the Propaganda section immediately made him vanish from history and, of course, from all photographs' (Kundera 1980: 3-4).⁴⁹ Certainly democratic states have also attempted to will amnesia around certain events; they have blocked access to historical records, banned particular art and media representations⁵⁰ and vilified critical historians. Perhaps politicians are also under the illusion that apologies are a mechanism of forgetting, using platitudes of 'closing chapters', 'coming to terms with the past' and 'moving on'. However, just as Nietzsche's (1983) imploration as to the human necessity of forgetting is, to some extent, a reminder to forget (Zehfuss 2006: 218), so too are apologetic politicians engaging in equally paradoxical behaviour. In other words, the nature of apologies (as explored in chapter 1) demands that the agent narrate the transgression. Therefore, rather than obliterating the transgression, the political apology publicly recounts and draws attention to the events, garnering heightened media reports and societal introspection. This, in turn, has the capacity to lead to increased contestation with potentially acrimonious responses from conservative groups (Lind 2008) as well as new demands for redress from other groups that have suffered historical violations. Indeed, as seen since the early 1990s, the process of apologising has become a self-perpetuating norm whereby the more it is exercised the more it becomes an accustomed and expected practice in diplomatic relations. The salient point to this is in regards to the particular limitations that elites in democratic societies operate in: politicians cannot wield monopolistic control over what is remembered and denying the past can only hold water for so long, sometimes exacerbating the contestation. Thus, though apology may temporarily sedate the past, it cannot will societal forgetting.

In recognising some of the constraints that European elites face in articulating the past, one can accrue a more nuanced picture as to both the privileged and yet precarious hold that elites have in this domain. This contested authority to narrate the past is intricately tied up in power dynamics in the present and is illuminated vividly in the commemorative ritual of apology. Indeed, this concern with the nexus of power, discourse and the past is one that is shared with within postcolonial studies. Not least, the projection and struggle over the past is an issue that Said (1995; 2000) returns to repeatedly in several works and essentially provides the point of departure in the classic text *Culture and Imperialism* (1994: see especially 3-18). In this way,

⁴⁹ Ambivalently, Kundera intimates that not all traces of Clemintis were purged, pointing to the remaining hat on Gottwald's head that Clemintis had given him just prior to the photo.

⁵⁰ As explored in the Belgian and Italian case studies, both these governments have placed obstacles to TV and cinematic representations that are unflattering of their colonial pasts.

the concept of collective memory intersects and compliments postcolonial studies' focus on the intimacy between struggles over the past and enduring asymmetric contemporary relations. It is bearing this in mind that the chapter now turns to explore the theoretical underpinnings of postcolonial studies and its analytical examination and normative critique of the lexicons of imperial domination.

Postcolonialism and the narratives of the past

The field of postcolonial theory is 'far from being a unified field' and is extraordinarily heterogonous (Chrisman and Williams 1993: 5). Such heterogeneity can extend to the point that it seems as if, in Jacoby's words, even 'its enthusiasts themselves don't know what is' (quoted in Loomba 1998: xi). While this disorientation may be a welcome aspect of a theory that often seeks to subvert the very premise of theory,⁵¹ it is compounded by the contrasting uses across multiple academic disciplines and media formats. This resistance to a clear set of parameters is also indicated and perpetuated in the mushrooming of numerous, often conflicting, 'introductory' books on postcolonialism and postcolonial theory (for example, Childs and Williams 1997; Gandhi 1998; Ray and Schwarz 1999; Ashcroft, Griffiths et al. 2000; Young 2001; Forsdick and Murphy 2003; Young 2003; Innes 2007; McLeod 2007; McLeod 2010). Most conspicuously, a particular confusion seems to have centred upon the prefix 'post'. This has raised esoteric and sometimes convoluted debates about the appropriate use of the prefix, and even the question of the use of the hyphen (McClintock 1992; Ashcroft 1996; Medovarski 2002).⁵² Notwithstanding these debates, it seems that it is widely accepted that 'post' connotes more than merely a temporal term, to be *after* colonialism. This has elicited largely unanswered questions such as those posed by Childs and Williams (1997), asking 'when is the post-colonial?', 'who is the post-colonial?', 'what is the post-colonial?' and 'where is the post-colonial'.

The oft quoted and frequently criticised definition offered in the classic text *The Empire writes back* is that the term covers 'all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day' (Ashcroft, Griffiths et al. 2002: 2). However, alongside this

⁵¹ On this point, Young (2001: 64) writes, 'there would be a particular irony in assuming that it possesses a uniform theoretical framework given that it is in part characterized by a refusal of totalizing forms'.

⁵² This has led to works entitled *What is Post (-) Colonialism* (Mishra and Hodge 1991), *On the Hyphen in post-colonial* (Ashcroft 1996) and *Unstable post(-)colonialities: Speculations through punctuation* (Medovarski 2002).

definition, Ashcroft, Griffiths *et al.* (2002: 2) appear to recognise that there is a subverting and dissenting element to this whereby it is literary texts which emphasise 'their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre [...] which makes them distinctively post-colonial'. More closely following the normative rather than geo-temporal nexus, Slemon (1991: 3) writes that, for him, the concept of postcolonialism is

most useful not when it is used synonymously with a post-independence historical period in once-colonized nations, but rather when it locates a specifically anti-or post-colonial discursive purchase in culture, one which begins in the moment that colonial power inscribes itself onto the body and space of its Others and which continues as an often occulted tradition into the modern theatre of neo-colonialist international relations.

Young (2001: 58) also emphasises the normative disposition of critically engaging with colonialism, stating that postcolonialism 'seeks to combat the continuing, often overt, operation of an imperialist system of economic, political and cultural domination'. While this thesis is not about to offer its own definitive definition of postcolonialism or postcolonial theory, it should be noted that, for the purpose of the research parameters of this project, it plugs primarily into postcolonialism as both an analysis and critique of the discourses and representations of imperial authority. In this sense, given that Said's analysis of the representational and cultural aspects of imperialism remains '*de rigueur*' (Ashcroft, Griffiths *et al.* 2002: 193) and, in many respects, *the* foundational work of postcolonial theory, it is this emphasis on the discursive and textual aspects of the field that also concern this thesis. Most pressingly, though this project obviously has far narrower parameters than the work of Said, it shares with this thread of postcolonial study a desire to locate, decipher and critically challenge the discourses of imperial domination. It is, as such, that the following passages first look at the persistent themes of colonial discourse in a broad sense, before then pointing to the continuities and discontinuities of these sentiments within colonial apologies. The section culminates by exploring postcolonial studies' unearthing of ambivalence, contradiction and frailty within the language of empire. These contradictions are again applied to the vocalisation of *mea culpa*.

On colonial discourse

'Imperial relations', as Tiffin and Lawson (1994: 3) observe 'may have been established initially by guns, guile and disease, but they were maintained in their interpellative phase largely by textuality'. Moreover, just as inequality and Western authority did not melt away in the course of formal decolonization in the 1950s and 60s, neither did the lexicons of domination.

It is this project of comprehending these fluctuating discourses that inform both postcolonial analysis and, indeed, this thesis. In terms of 'official' narratives of colonialism, it is pertinent to recognise that official discourses were not and have not been identical through space and time. Clearly, legitimising tenets altered in accordance to the peculiarities of each nation's projected self image, their disparate circumstances, geographies and administrative systems (Young 2001: 17). In one sense, as Young (2001: 17) recognises, such heterogeneity 'troubles the possibility of any general theory' of colonial discourse. This speaks to the question raised by Slemon (1994: 20) as to whether 'discursive colonialism always look structurally the same, or [if] the specifics of its textual or semiotic or representational manoeuvres shift registers at different historical times and in different kinds of colonial encounters?' Indeed, at diverse junctures, Native Americans, for instance, have been portrayed alternately as good and mystical characters or as party to 'sacrifice and cannibalism' (Tiffin and Lawson 1994: 5). In this sense, like memory, colonial representations are kinetic and shift at different junctures in according to different circumstances.

Despite such apparent representational diversity, one of the core contributions of postcolonial thought has been to explore and dissect the idea that 'at a discursive, ideological level, colonialism also constituted a system of sorts that can be discussed, assessed and criticised – or could be resisted – according to general theoretical and discursive principles' (Young 2001: 17-18). In this sense, as Spurr (1993: 1-2) writes, 'colonial discourse is neither a monolithic system nor a finite set of texts; it may more accurately be described as the name for a series of colonizing discourses, each adapted to a specific historical situation, yet having in common certain elements with the others.' There is, in this way, a sense that European empires, even in rivalry, 'imitated each other' (Said 1994 : 8).⁵³ To put it in Sartre's (2001) terms, 'colonialism is a system'. In particular, the writings of Sartre, Fanon, Spivak, Bhabha, Spurr and Said, among others, have been pivotal in establishing an intellectual body of work that locates systemic and general themes in the ideologies and vocabularies that underpin the Western led subjugation (Young 2001: 18).

In building on this recognition, the objective here is not to outline in minute detail with fine nuance every aspect of colonial discourse. Rather, the goal is to gear such an analysis towards the issue of apologies and their adjoined discourses. Sitting with the wider argument of the

⁵³ Said draws on V. G. Kiernan for this point.

thesis, this task is to point to particularly pertinent aspects of colonial discourses that are reflected and reproduced in both apologies and their parallel discursive formations. It is to this end that the following taxonomy locates and critically assesses key intersections between these conventional and contemporary narratives.

A people without history

In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow relates a series of observations in regards to what he sees as the apartness or otherworldliness of Africa. Encountering the River Congo is 'like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world' (Conrad 1995: 59). Geographically, Marlow depicts an alien and 'prehistoric earth', just as anthropologically he describes how 'the prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us' (Conrad 1995: 62).⁵⁴ The juxtaposition of a prehistoric 'people without history' (Wolf 1982) and a progressive, enlightened and historic West is a familiar trope that has straddled both Western academia and colonising narratives. In Hegel's dialectic unfolding of history, for instance, it is clear that it is in Europe that history is advanced, in opposition to Africa, which 'has no history' (cited in Young 1990: 2; see also Klein 1995). Even Hegelian Marxism, the purported adversary of domination and enslavement, is, to some degree, complicit in this narrative, contending that Western imperialism accelerates the incorporation of territories into the class struggle that ultimately oversees its own demise (Young 1990: 2-7). Deeply problematic claims are also apparent in Huntington's (1993: 25) seemingly ambiguous opinion as to whether Africa exists as a civilisation on equal footing with the rest of the world⁵⁵ and British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper's position that 'there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness' (cited in Mazrui 1977 1). In contrast to the supposed absence of African history, the West is imbued with a sweeping, linear and progressive genealogy, 'according to which ancient Greece begat Rome, Rome begat Christian Europe, Christian Europe begat the Renaissance, the Renaissance the Enlightenment, the Enlightenment political democracy and the industrial revolution' (Wolf 1982: 5). As Wolf (1982: 5) writes, such a narrative 'turns history into a moral success story' which validates the European self and underpins the monocentric narratives of imperialism. It bestows the idea that 'Europe has "agency" while the rest of the world is passive. Europe makes history; the rest of the world has none until it is brought into

⁵⁴ For contrasting interpretations of this, see Achebe (1978) and Hampson (1995).

⁵⁵ Huntington (1993: 25) discusses how the world is increasingly shaped by 'seven or eight major civilizations. These include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilization'.

contact with Europe' (Marks 2007: 8). It is this binary and narcissistic conception of European historical exceptionalism that, along with parallel discourses, discursively legitimised colonial and neo-colonial projects.

In one respect, there is an important disjuncture between this narrative and that proffered by the apologies of this thesis. For one, as explored in the previous chapter, there is a sense in which apology (potentially) begins to recognise the transgressed as moral interlocutor (Smith 2008: 65), worthy of recognition as both human beings and for their suffering. In this respect, the apologies reflect a memory of a past that is *comparatively* more inclusive of subaltern perceptions – a past that begins to recognise, articulate and renounce particular experiences that the colonised underwent at the hands of European colonialism. However, in important respects there are modes by which the Eurocentric and monocentric narratives are reproduced. Firstly, though a certain narrative of the subaltern's past is articulated, it remains exclusively in direct relation to the West. In other words, the apologies, perhaps inadvertently, reproduce a narrative of the colonised history that both commences and is principally defined by its encounter with the European. There remains, at least in this narrative, no space in which a past is articulated that precedes or even supersedes the encounter with Europe. In line with this, the apologies replicate the monocentric plotline in rearticulating the active-passive configuration of the colonial narrative. This is to say that the apologies depict dynamic Western agents that impose their violence on to largely passive victims. In the German apology text, for instance, 'General Trotha commanded that every Herero be shot – with no mercy shown even to women and children' (Wieczorek-Zeul 2004).⁵⁶ Likewise in the Bloody Sunday apology, 'one person who was shot while crawling away from the soldiers. Another was shot in all probability when he was lying mortally wounded on the ground' (Cameron 2010). There is, of course, a crucial difference between this discourse and the conventional narrative; there is now a humble, contrite and introspective stance towards these particular episodes, where previously they were either denied or glorified. However, a conspicuously orientalist juxtaposition remains in place: The subaltern, according to these officialised narratives, now have a history, but it is one of victimhood and passivism. The subaltern's past remains defined only in relation to a powerful, active and monolithic West.

⁵⁶ Despite this, the apology text does recognise in one passage that the Herero 'resisted' (Wieczorek-Zeul 2004).

Ventriloquism: The European elite speak

This passive/active conjecture is reinforced by the format of apologies. One of the peculiarities of apologies is, in important respects, they require the transgressor speaking, narrating and accounting for the past (see chapter 1) while the recipient listens. In this regard, just as subaltern history was conventionally narrated and negated by the coloniser, so too in the case of apologies is the narration undertaken by Western political elites. As already recognised above, this does not mean that the elites have a freehand in constructing any memories of the past that they so wish. Indeed, colonial apologies both arise within and are constrained by counter-narratives. As such, contrite politicians must tread carefully so as to be seen to incorporate aspects of subaltern sentiments. However, even in taking into account the import of subaltern contestation, the apologies remain a platform by which European politicians articulate particular stories about colonised people's past. In so far as subaltern memories are articulated, this remains a form of ventriloquism whereby they are filtered, modulated and sanitised through the prism of elite discourse. This pertains to Spivak's (1988) eminent question: *Can the Subaltern speak?* Of course, in a literal sense, the subaltern can speak and can respond to the apology - accepting it, refusing it or advancing further contesting memories. However, political apologies are proffered by politicians in formal and solemn settings, bolstered by the trappings of officialdom and with wide-ranging media access (see pages 51-54). In this sense, though the subaltern can speak, even in apologising it is the Western political elite whose voice, narrative and constructed memories are disproportionately voluble.

The burdened, benevolent and paternal foreign policy

In his poem, *The White Man's Burden*, Kipling (1899) sheds light on one of the central self-validating narratives of colonialism; that the conquest and administration of other people's land is not born out of narcissistic self grandeur or resource appropriation, but constitutes a selfless project of bestowing European gifts of progress on 'wild' and 'sullen peoples'.⁵⁷ This supposed benevolent aim of colonialism, according to this narrative, is 'to seek another's profit / And work another's gain'. It is to bring peace ('the savage wars of peace'), infrastructure ('the roads ye shall not enter, the roads ye shall not tread') and enlightenment ('(Ah, slowly!) toward the light'). Again, it is not appropriate to say that this mythology is completely

⁵⁷ Although Kipling's poem serves as a valuable tool in capturing colonial discourse in general, it should be noted that this poem was addressing U.S. policy towards the Philippines.

replicated in contemporary discourse; clearly the apologies are examples of politicians publicly evoking and renouncing episodes of colonialism that are not compatible with the altruistic and benign narrative. However, the empirical chapters of this thesis do point to important ways in which these mind-sets of paternalism and the essential rectitude of historical and present foreign policies are maintained. In his apology, Cameron (2010), for instance, emphasises the role of British soldiers who 'have served with such distinction in keeping the peace and upholding the rule of law in Northern Ireland', while simultaneously portraying a colony that, in opposition to the British rule of law, was characterised by such Orientalist tropes as disorderly and chaotic (see chapter 5). Likewise, in the Belgian and Italian case studies, one can point to adjacent rhetoric by cabinet ministers which celebrate colonial and civilisational contributions made by their state in the colonial enterprise. In comparison, the German apology places a greater emphasis on highlighting the congeniality of its contemporary foreign policies, pointing to it being a 'committed member of the United Nations, working for world-wide peace, human rights, development and poverty reduction', providing sustained assistance to the people of Africa' and looking to help Namibia 'tackle the challenges of development' (Wieczorek-Zeul 2004). It is thus, that, even in *mea culpa*, states reaffirm the essential righteousness of their interactions with the formerly colonised. Indeed, these narratives of the burdened Western state may actually be temporarily bolstered through the renunciation and distancing of episodes that can no longer be incorporated into this story.

Speaking about the West: The universality of European normative thought

As noted in chapter 1, apologies, it seems, illuminate 'normative principles' of social life (Tavuchis 1991: 4). While Tavuchis is largely analysing apologies from an interpersonal perspective, one may broaden this and posit that international apologies illuminate normative principles of international relations. This, in turn, begs the question as to just whose moral standards are being offered. Of course, in colonial times it was clearly explicitly Western normative principles that discursively legitimised policy. This is to say that it was Western conceptions of 'Christianity', 'civilisation', 'progress' and so forth that underpinned the imperial ideology. By a similar token, one can suggest that the apologies are couched in contemporary Western normative assumptions. To be specific, this discourse is located in ideological assumptions of conceptions of human rights and 'development'. It has already been noted that the German apology explicitly advocates development assistance, while the Italian apology advocates infrastructure projects. In similar ways, both the British and the Belgian apologies are entwined in policies of metropole led peace initiatives on behalf of Northern Ireland and central Africa respectively. To turn to the concept of liberalism, it is to

suggest that these apologies are seemingly self-conscious pronouncements of one's liberal sentiments and respect for human rights. It is, thus, that the apologies, perhaps unsurprisingly, are again stories more about the metropole than the colonised. There are, of course, multiple audiences for the apologies and these messages function differently in accordance to one's own position. However, though the apologies involve the recounting of actions committed against the colonised, it seems that the apologies are principally about the Western state's contemporary identity. In this sense, in many ways the colonised remain only as indistinct characters who are adopted so as to impart a story that remains about Western identity.

The political and social ramifications of enduring colonialist memories

The explicit and tacit associated socio-political ramifications of these persisting colonial narratives are explored in far more detail in the empirical chapters of this thesis. However, it is, at this juncture, necessary to recognise that these enduring narratives are not simply quirks that are academically interesting, but essentially without import to the contemporary social world. Instead, as contended throughout the thesis - memory, narrative and discourse speak simultaneously to both the past as well as existing and future policy identities and power configurations. In this sense, just as patterns of inequality and subordination have outlived the temporal parameters of official colonial rule, so too has the grammar of colonial discourse (Spurr 1993: 5). In other words, the enduring colonial narratives pertain to how Western states (especially their political elites) continue to construct their identity in relation to the formerly colonised: It entails specific and ideologically laden constructions and civic lessons as to the apologising state's contemporary normative foreign policy imperatives in relation to their former colonies. Moreover, it fosters enduring ideas as to the subaltern being objects that necessitates Western authority and oversight. In this way, prevailing discursive representations of the active-passive conjecture, the universality of Western values and the essential benevolence of the state's colonial/foreign policies continue to inform, shape and legitimise particular impositions on the subaltern and corresponding (though problematised) patterns of domination.

It is, for instance, perceptions of the passive and victimised 'Third World' that underpin contemporary policies of aid, 'development', structural adjustment and humanitarian intervention. Likewise, ideas of knowledge and the universal applicability of Western ideas correlate with the more recent hegemonic premises of neo-liberal capitalism. To relate this concretely to the empirical findings of this thesis, one can point to particular policies that are

conjoined with the apologies that relate to political and economic policy that reproduce the unequal relationship. In the case of the Bloody Sunday apology, the text seemed to, utilising the memories of the victims, reaffirm a particular constitutional status quo that privileges devolution and Westminster sovereignty. The German apology arose analogously with patterns of aid and land reform that assist in the continued asymmetry of European descendants' land holdings at the expense of indigenous peoples. The Italian apology and its adjoining *Treaty of Friendship* reproduced and enshrined aspects of both resource extrapolation and, without irony, Italian led 'basic infrastructure projects'. Equally, as shown in Chapter 6, the *Treaty of Friendship* makes provisions for racialised and securitised policies against North African immigrants.

Postcolonial analysis and spaces for resistance

In the previous section, the thesis drew upon postcolonial theory for the purpose of locating particular syntaxes and vocabularies of Western domination. To this end, postcolonial theory provides a useful doorway to apprehending and analysing such fluctuating discourses. Postcolonial thought, however, supplies more than simply an analytical yardstick: it also offers a normative rallying cry to subverting, resisting and decentring both the discourses and material apparatus of imperial domination. Like other adjacent academic fields, this educes a certain dilemma in regards to the meeting point between analysis and normative aspiration. Marxism, for instance, encounters the quandary of both highlighting the intricacies and supremacy of capitalist modes of production, while simultaneously aspiring to dislodge it. Feminism points to the endurance of patriarchy in the process of seeking to overcome it. Postcolonialism, too, wrestles with the problem of tracing the morphing and increasingly sophisticated logistics of imperialism, while simultaneously attempting to overthrow it. In some quarters this has led to - perhaps unfair - criticism that Said's (1978) depiction of unwavering European Orientalist representations is too monolithic and all pervasive, thereby ironically reproducing the very clichés and inequities that it disparages (Behdad 1994: 11). Similarly, Spivak's final assertion that the subaltern is without voice has been criticised by Parry (1987: 33-35) for its undue pessimism and for its failure to locate space and articulations in which dissent can be, and is, audible (see also McBratney 2002: 114). Notwithstanding these criticisms, postcolonialism does, in Bhabra's (2007: 15) words, work 'to challenge dominant narratives and to reconfigure them to provide more adequate categories of analysis'. In doing so, it seeks to critically assess, dislodge and subvert the Eurocentric assumptions, ideologies, mindsets and discourses that collude in the imperialist projects. In Chakrabarty's (2000) terms, it seeks to 'provincialise' Europe and open space for counter ideas and discourses.

Chakrabarty (2000), in particular, is concerned with critiquing the Eurocentric concept of linear time and notions of subaltern resistance as somehow 'prepolitical'. Such provincialising entails countering ideas of the 'continued privileging of the West as the 'marker' of *universal history*' (Bhabra 2007: 2).

Thus, as well as providing a formidable critique of imperialism, postcolonial critique also provides powerful analyses as to the insubstantial and crumbling edifices of imperial discourse. Rather than perceiving colonial discourse and coercive subjugation as an all pervasive and unassailable entity, it points to the discourse's own internal inconsistencies, fallibilities and contradictions. In Sartre's (1961) words, it is under the strain of its own weight that that 'Europe is taking in water everywhere' (Sartre 2001: 84). Such paradoxes, for instance, are that it must simultaneously debase 'the colonized to exalt themselves, denying the title of humanity to the natives, and defining them as simply absences of qualities – animals not humans', while, on the other hand, "were the colonized to disappear, so would colonization – with the colonizer'. In this way, 'the system wills simultaneously the death and the multiplication of its victims' (Sartre 1974 xxvi). In a similar vein, Homi Bhabha (1984) points to the subversion of what he calls 'mimicry'; that colonial discourse implores the subaltern to resemble the coloniser (Christian, civilised, democratic), yet any success in this (flawed) premise would undermine the very basis and necessity of the West's endeavour. Moreover, where the subaltern does impersonate the coloniser, there is a sense by which this mimicry subverts and mocks the rigid protocols and self consciously pompous formality of the colonial discourse.⁵⁸ Perhaps the most astute and devastating critique is that the colonial enterprise is destructive not only to those that it conquers, but also to the colonisers themselves; that 'it binds the colonizer to the colonized', and that the dehumanisation and alienation of the coloniser inescapably dehumanises and alienates the coloniser (Sartre 1974: 24).

In the same way, one can point to similar paradoxes and ambivalences in the processes of colonial apologies. For instance, as already suggested, the apologies are acts of political elites grappling to reclaim command of particular 'memories' of colonialism; that articulating negotiated, but still sanitised narratives shift the elites back into credible positions wherein their mnemonic constructs are once more plausible. Yet such negotiated narratives do not

⁵⁸ While clearly a classic work, Bhabha's text is notoriously dense and indecipherable. For a brilliant and lucid exposition of the idea of mimicry and mockery, see Spurr (1993: 185-7).

and cannot remain as new monolithic and unbending ‘memories’. Indeed, the more the narratives are ceded, the more challenges they will entice and the more other aspects of the ‘official’ narratives will be challenged. In other words, in apologising and seemingly neutralising and absorbing competing memories into a new ‘official’ narrative, this process, paradoxically, can only initiate further contestations and subversions of the newly moderated colonial discourse. This is just as the very notion of politicians ‘closing chapters’ with apologies inadvertently invites only more peoples to demand recognition of the colonial injustices they suffered. Gordon Brown (cited in Kearney 2005) may say that ‘we should move forward’ and that ‘the days of Britain having to apologise for its colonial history are over’, but the dynamic interplay between official and contending memories render the issue of how a society engages with its colonial past, to some degree, out of the hands of metropolitan elites. Perhaps, though, the most important frailty of state apologies (at least of this thesis) relates to their scope. As shown throughout the thesis, there is an impulse towards apologising for, and hence remembering, specific egregious acts,⁵⁹ while sanitising and celebrating wider colonial endeavours. Again, it seems that, in one sense, such a narrative becomes only harder to sustain through apologies. This is to say that the official memorialisation of such acts as the Herero genocide, the Lumumba assassination and the Derry massacre, can only elicit more cracks, ambivalence and contestations to the already compromised edifice of colonial official memory.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored and developed the theoretical foundations of the thesis, namely collective memory and postcolonialism. Collective memory is deployed to advance understanding of how apologies and their adjacent rhetoric enmesh in societal conceptions of the past. It has been recognised that the ways in which groups – particularly states – represent the past has resonance as to contemporary power configurations and policy imperatives. Given the overlap between mnemonic construction and political authority, it is typically assumed that powerful elites articulate heroic notions of the past that venerate and exalt their political community, its hierarchy and its historical foreign policy endeavours. However, while still recognising an intimate relationship between power and perceptions of the past, this chapter has sought to critique the excessively ‘top-down’ notion of collective memory. Pointing to the largely ignoble and humbling process of *mea culpa*, this chapter has

⁵⁹ The exception to this is the Italian case study. See page 171-172 for a discussion on this.

postulated that apologies represent a political elite that has a compromised grasp of dominant historical perceptions and must negotiate and mediate with contesting memories. Conjoined to this, the political elite have an incomplete monopoly over the historical episodes that it selects for representation, thereby requiring engagement with pasts that, at least at first sight, have little immediate political utility.

It is collective memory's recognition of the proximity between representations of the past and contemporary hierarchies of power that intersects with many of the key animating concerns of postcolonial study. In this way, the second part of the chapter drew on the postcolonial project of locating, dissecting and critically subverting the discourses of imperial authority. In highlighting some of the persistent themes of colonial discourse, one could bring into focus these lexicons that reappear in colonial apology. Such enduring tropes include speaking for the colonised; presumptions of the active European and the passive subaltern; the essential benevolence of the state's foreign endeavours and the continued universality of Western ideological assumptions. It has been finally contended that such enduring sentiments, like conventional colonial discourse, are replete with the internal contradictions and incongruities that make such notions problematic to sustain.

CHAPTER 3: THE GERMAN APOLOGY FOR THE HERERO GENOCIDE

A century ago, the oppressors – blinded by colonialist fervour – became agents of violence, discrimination, racism and annihilation in Germany's name. The atrocities committed at that time would today be termed genocide – and nowadays a General von Trotha would be prosecuted and convicted. We Germans accept our historical and moral responsibility and the guilt incurred by Germans at that time. And so, in the words of the Lord's Prayer that we share, I ask you to forgive us our trespasses.⁶⁰

Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul (2004)

Introduction

The above apology was offered by the German Minister for Development and Economic Cooperation at a ceremony in Omahakari commemorating the centenary of the commencement of the genocide of the Herero and Nama peoples within what was formerly known as German South-West Africa (now Namibia). In accordance with the overall goal of the thesis, this chapter situates the apology within processes by which societal recollections of the past feed into both identity construction and the political expediency. In line with this, identities and political imperatives are multiple and shift in accordance to both the given audience and pragmatic objectives. As such, it is contended that the apology emerges within the context of a multitude of different societal contestations and political expediencies that exercise pressure on the Berlin government in quite disparate ways. For instance, as is unravelled in this chapter, the apology was simultaneously a response to such seemingly incongruent factors as high profile Herero reparation claims, shifting reflections on colonialism within domestic German society through to contemporary international normative expectations.

In order to make sense of these complex and multi-dimensional facets of apology, this chapter is divided into three sections. Initially, the realpolitik considerations of the German Government are analysed; it is demonstrated that the apology must be understood as a political-economic measure to neutralise reparation claims against the German government and pursue Berlin's interest in the welfare of German descendants within Namibia (Jamfa 2008: 207). The second section analyses the apology within the process of the German state

⁶⁰ It should be recognised that Zimmerer (2008: 323) also uses this quote to commence his chapter *Colonial genocide: The Herero and Nama War (1904-1908) in German Southwest Africa and its significance*.

rhetorically reemphasising its normatively liberal complexion. This is to say that - under the spotlight of recent contestation as to its colonial past - the *mea culpa* serves to discursively underscore the state's aversion to gross human rights violations and genocide (although not colonialism in its entirety). The final section situates the apology within a slowly evolving narrative within domestic society in relation to German colonialism, genocide and the Holocaust. It is asserted that these currents within German societal memories of the past, especially among the left, created an intellectual environment and public audience that was by 2004 more receptive to and, in some quarters, even expectant of state contrition for the genocide of the Herero people.

In line with the overall argument of the thesis, the chapter points to modes by which, even in apology, there is a reconfiguring of colonial-like sentiments. In this manner, the chapter analyses how Wieczorek-Zeul's attempted marginalisation of Herero reparations is tied with the endurance of patterns of land ownership that mirror colonial disparities. Equally, the German state's restated 'special responsibility' to Namibia, combined with Wieczorek-Zeul's emphasis on orchestrating aspects of 'development' and aid to Namibia reveal a paternalistic aspect to the apology. Finally, while this chapter does recognise that there has largely been a societal reassessment of the overt violence of the colonial past, notions of an exotic and romanticised Africa are still replete within German popular culture. It is posited that this relates to the apology's renunciation of the genocide, together with its continuing lack of reassessment in regards to the wider colonial past.

Political and economic self interest

To recall, one of the core arguments of this thesis is that apologies are frequently couched in self interest. In line with this, this section of the chapter situates Germany's apology within quite conventional state political and economic expediency. This self interest manifests itself in two senses: Firstly - and most importantly - the apology appears to be a device that both rhetorically and temporally serves as an extension of the German government's unrelenting political and economic stance of refusing Herero demands for reparations. Stemming from this, it is secondly argued that the refusal to pay reparations, combined with the continued emphasis on aid - is a means to temper the threat of radical land reform within Namibia - a threat that, if carried out, would conflict with the German government's continued political and economic affinity with the white settlers of the erstwhile colony. Evidencing this argument, the following section unravels the political and economic context in which the

apology arose and points to the government's perceived intentions through both a deconstruction of the textual apology and the quite candid accompanying discourse of members of the German government and its ambassadors. Despite pointing to the economic self interest of the apology, it should be noted, however, that this is not a portrait of an all powerful German government that is oblivious to Herero demands for reparations. Rather, it is a German government who is on the back-foot and must vie with competing historical narratives and legal challenges in an attempt to stem the tide of increasingly robust contestations.

Apology within the context of reparation demands

Significantly, the apology arose within the context of ongoing court proceedings whereby in 2001 The Chief Hosea Kutako Foundation instituted a legal claim in a US court against the German government for \$2 billion in reparations and a further \$2 billion against three German companies for their role in the genocide (see Cooper 2007: 113). In order to understand the peculiarity of these proceedings being launched by a private initiative in a US court, one must explore the positions of both the Namibian and German governments. German governments comprising of varying political parties have consistently, before, after and during the apology, ruled out the possibility of reparations. Moreover, the Namibian government on their part have taken a reticent and deeply ambivalent attitude to the prospect of Herero reparations. For instance, this position is illustrated by the following exchange in an interview with Namibian President Sam Nujoma:

Interviewer: Herero Chief Riruako has started a court case for reparations from Germany, which the Berlin government rejects, What...

Nujoma: Well, you go ask him. You know where he is

Interviewer: is your point of view as a government.

Nujoma: Ask him. I was in Germany in June. We had a very good meeting, the Chancellor and I and other representatives of the government. There were also meetings of businessmen and women from Germany and Namibia. So, you know where the Herero Chief lives.

Interviewer: But you, as a government, from what I've heard and read, you reject this, the way he has done it.

Nujoma: That is your interpretation. I was in Germany in June. So we talked to the Chancellor.... (quoted in Melber 2008: 262).

Later in the interview:

Interviewer: Once more. What is your position with regard to historical reparations?

Nujoma: We never spoke about reparations. We talked about cooperation (quoted in Melber 2008: 262).

Not until 2006, five years after the initial claim to reparations, did the Namibian parliament endorse Riruko's bid for reparations. By this time it was clear that this bid was gaining less than fruitful results. In this sense, it appears that the Namibian government has, to some extent, been in collusion with the German government regarding Herero reparations. The Swapo led Namibian government, largely consisting of members of the Ovambo community, have a vested interest in continued aid for the entire Namibian state, and have no desire for this to be compromised by reparations for a minority people or upsetting the 'special relationship' on which German aid is built. Without the support of the state, and acting as a private institute, the Chief Hosea Kutako Foundation lacked the standing to submit its case before the International Court of Justice in The Hague (Cooper 2007: 115). As such, the foundation has pursued a civil liability case under the Alien Tort Claims Act (ATCA) of 1789 (Cooper 2007: 115), a section of the US Code that enables violations of the law of nations to be brought before a US court. This statute has a background of enabling non-US citizens to seek redress for human rights violations through US courts (Cooper 2007: 116).

In regards to this claim for reparations, in many respects, the German government's position and the Namibian's have been correlated: The German Ambassador to Namibia, Wolfgang Massing, explained that: 'it would not be justified to compensate one specific ethnic group for their suffering during colonial times, as this could reinforce ethnic tensions and thus undermine the policy of national reconciliation that we fully support' (Melber 2011: 256). The Namibian government's position at the time of the apology was virtually identical to this (Jamfa 2008: 208).⁶¹ Indeed, in a letter to a Namibian newspaper published just five days after the apology, Massing underscored this position, asserting that 'for the German Government, the Government of Namibia is the only partner for any negotiations with regard to development assistance' (Massing 2004). This rhetorical stance perfectly illustrates the parameters in which the German government operates; despite Wiczorek-Zeul's (2004) commitment in her apology to 'listen' to the Herero, this does not include a dialogue concerning reparations. In this sense, the demand for reparations is hamstrung: The German government refuses to negotiate with any partner other than the Namibian government; the

⁶¹ In June 2007, joining Kuaima Riruko on a trip to Berlin, Namibian ambassador to Germany, Peter Katjavivi, maintained that 'because of Namibia's colonial history, the genocide is a matter that affects everybody and touches all the Namibian people'. Moreover, 'it was the duty of the Namibian government to help facilitate a process that contributes to reconciliation and harmony firstly among the Namibians themselves, and secondly with its partners in the Federal Republic of Germany' (cited in Kössler 2007).

Namibian government itself is content with the status quo of aid without reparations. Moreover, this pertains to one of the central themes of the thesis, whereby the European orator of the apology has disproportionate voice and sets the parameters for discussion through the apology. In this way, the Herero community's voice is, to some degree, negated in the process of apology and the parameters of debate (the marginalisation of reparation claims) are established by state elites with minimal consultation of the apparent recipient of the apology.

Considering this, it is therefore essential to understand this apology as arising within the context of the aforementioned court case. In one respect it may seem odd to argue that the apology was part of a process of neutralising the Herero claim to reparations. There is, as one can observe in other cases, an entanglement between political apologies and reparations. This is evident in such cases as US Presidential apologies to interned Japanese Americans in World War II and Germany's apology to Israel, both of which were accompanied with reparations. Indeed, it is clear that the Herero community explicitly linked an apology to reparations, as evidenced by such Namibian newspaper headlines as 'Hereros insist: apology must come with Compensation' (Kuteeue 2004a) and 'No apology, no payout for Herero' (Kuteeue 2004b). Not only did German officials repeatedly refuse to discuss reparations, but it is clear that they made a conscious effort both before and after the apology to delink contrition from reparations. For instance, in October 2003 Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer candidly indicated the government's intentions, saying 'there will be no apology with relevance for compensation' (quoted in Kössler 2006). Likewise, Wiczorek-Zeul herself just three months after the apology affirmed that, rather than having any legal import, it was meant in a 'biblical sense' (Jamfa 2008: 211).

Given that the Herero themselves, like other subjugated groups, utilised the rhetoric of apology demands as a conduit to reparations, there is a sense that, by offering an apology and explicitly delinking it from reparations, the German government could partially negate the Herero claim. By steeping the apology within grammar and language that was legally savvy (explored below) and by making it clear that reparations were not within the parameters of discussion, the German government could disarm part of the Herero's claim. This is to say that, by offering the apology and appearing to at least rhetorically recognise the injustice and restore honour to the victims, the Herero claim to reparations was subsequently left to appear as merely a financial claim. This would, at least from a certain point of view, render the Herero

claim to reparations as a nakedly opportunistic financial incentive, rather than a movement for historical justice.

Deconstructing the apology text: A savvy evasion of legal responsibility

On top of the candid disassociation of apology from reparations, it is clear from the content of the apology that the claim to reparations was upmost in the mind of the German government. This is revealed by the careful legal caveats, grammar and phrasing of the apologising speech. As such, in order to demonstrate how the apology carefully evades legal accountability, the following section undertakes a deconstruction of this text.

As noted in chapter 1, it is common for formal apologies to explicitly detail the transgressions that occurred. In this case, at least according to the official text of the German Embassy⁶², Wieczorek-Zeul (2004) recognises that ‘the atrocities committed at that time would today be termed genocide’. Significantly, the use of the English second conditional gives a hypothetical quality to the sentence; by way of example, ‘if I were a millionaire I would buy a Ferrari’. As such, Wieczorek-Zeul refrained from explicitly labelling the atrocities genocide by attaching the temporal hypothetical caveat of it happening today. Such a conditional has particular legal implication, given that genocidal wars against indigenous peoples waged before 1948 are understood by most legal scholars not to have violated international law as they occurred before the UN Convention on the prevention and punishment of genocide (Anderson 2005: 1155).⁶³ Consequently, by activating the conditional, Wieczorek-Zeul could recognise the crime, while succinctly disconnecting it from contemporary legal accountability (cf. Jamfa 2008; Romanowsky 2009). Indeed, this legal position is reinforced by former German president, Roman Herzog, himself claiming in 1998 that the Herero had not been covered by International Law at the time of the genocide (Jamfa 2008: 203). It is, however, interesting that video footage of the apology reveals a slightly different nuance to the Embassy’s official text. The BBC footage reveals the statement that ‘the atrocities, the murders, the crimes committed at that time are today termed genocide’ (Olusoga 2005). This would suggest that this shift to the second conditional has been carefully edited for the official text of the Embassy.

⁶² In fact, video footage shows that she said ‘the atrocities, the murders, the crimes committed at that time are today termed genocide’ (see Olusoga 2005).

⁶³ Despite this, Jeremy Sarkin (2009) convincingly argues that International law at that time does provide a basis for legal action.

In addition, when recounting the transgressions, Wieczorek-Zeul used extraordinarily vague language and made repeated use of the 'passive voice' (cf. Romanowsky 2009). The passive voice is a useful grammatical device when the agent that undertook the verb is unknown, unimportant or purposefully excluded. For instance, 'the window has been broken' is a phrase that excludes the agent (and by extension the agent's responsibility), unlike the active voice – 'I broke the window'. An analysis of Wieczorek-Zeul's speech reveals an extensive use of this grammatical device. For instance, she declared that 'the survivors were forced into the Omaheke desert', 'they were denied any access to water resources and were left to die of thirst and starvation', 'the surviving Herero, Nama and Damara were interned in camps and put to forced labour' (Wieczorek-Zeul 2004). This use of the passive voice evades directly linking these crimes to the direct strategy of the highest echelons of the German state.

In areas where Wieczorek-Zeul utilised the more common active sentence structure, there are several mechanisms by which she, at least grammatically, divorced the atrocities from the direct orders of the state. One such mechanism was to propel Von Trotha as the architect of the genocide: 'General von Trotha's troops embarked on a war of extermination against them [the Herero] and the Nama', and 'General Trotha commanded that every Herero be shot' (Wieczorek-Zeul 2004). Undoubtedly, these statements have historical veracity and there is extensive evidence that documents Von Trotha's role as a key agent in the genocide. However, excessive focus on Von Trotha as the sole agent ignores the wider structural forces that propelled the genocide. It is to ignore the German state's direct role in instigating colonialism – a process that by its nature entails the violent dispossession of 'other' peoples. It is also to ignore the German state's strategic goals in relation to the Herero and Nama peoples as well as Von Trotha's accountability to the German state and his appointment by Kaiser Wilhelm II. Moreover, it is to ignore the fact that the concentration camps continued to function for several years after Von Trotha left the region in November 1905 (Olusoga and Erichsen 2011: 359). Indeed, though the concentration camps are estimated to have killed as many people as the initial two months following Von Trotha's extermination order, Wieczorek-Zeul did not mention them in her apology at all (Olusoga and Erichsen 2011: 359-360). As Wieczorek-Zeul (2004) said in her speech, 'nowadays a General Von Trotha would be prosecuted' – this is true, but undoubtedly so too would numerous others, including the highest governmental officials (cf. Romanowsky 2009).

There are two passages in the text where Wiczorek-Zeul (2004) does more directly allude to Germany's role: 'I want to acknowledge the violence inflicted by the German colonial powers on your ancestors'. Again, later: 'the German colonial powers drove the people from their land'. However, if one is to situate this sentence within the wider text, then it is possible to discern an apparent difference between the actions of the colonial power and the actions of Von Trotha. As such, this wider passage reads that 'the German colonial powers drove the people from their land. When the Herero, when your ancestors resisted, General von Trotha's troops embarked on a war of extermination' (Wiczorek-Zeul 2004). In other words, Wiczorek-Zeul concedes that the German colonial powers carried out violence and forced dispossession, but it was General von Trotha who carried out the genocide – a crime that is obviously more legally explosive. Again, this is an aspect of reducing the responsibility of the genocide to the sole agent of von Trotha.

Similarly, another passage where Wiczorek-Zeul evokes the role of Germany is in her statement that 'A century ago, the oppressors - blinded by colonialist fervour – became agents of violence, discrimination, racism and annihilation in Germany's name'. The caveat 'in Germany's name' is distinct from under the German state's orders – it creates an ambiguity in which the active role of the German state in the genocide is distorted, and the German state becomes only a banner under which the colonialists fought, rather than a legally accountable entity that was instrumental in the genocide. Finally, Wiczorek-Zeul requested forgiveness 'in the name of our common father'. Indeed, Wiczorek-Zeul reaffirmed just three months later that the apology was requested 'in the biblical sense'. As Jamfa (2008: 211) interprets, 'such an apology is not meant to have any legal import. Probably, the minister presented the "apology" in the name of our "common father" in order to avoid words or expressions which could serve as a legal basis for financial reparations'.

The political economy of apology

Pointing, then, to the ways in which the apology employs legally savvy phrases and grammar, one might infer that there are hard-headed political economic reasons that sit at the heart of the apology. Certainly, as all German governments have continually pointed out, the Federal Republic is a 'generous' giver of aid to Namibia. However, the semantic differences between 'aid' and 'reparations' are not trivial hair-splitting. Most importantly, there are considerable economic disparities between the two: The Chief Rirukoko Foundation's claim for \$4 billion in reparations dwarfs the \$500 million in German aid paid between 1990 and 2004 (Deutsche

Welle 2004). In this sense, one may perceive that Germany's aid is a calculated preference to the more costly reparations.

Perhaps of equal importance, however, are the political leverages attached to 'aid'. In contrast to reparations, which are morally or legally obliged on the terms of the victims, 'aid' has generous or philanthropic overtones. In this sense, unlike reparations, aid is at the behest of the benefactor and can be overtly or implicitly based upon certain conditionals on behalf of the recipient. Indeed, seemingly one of the core concerns for the German government has been the aversion of radical land reform, as seen under Mugabe in neighbouring Zimbabwe. Concurring with this, Jamfa (2008: 207) writes that 'Berlin is preoccupied with land reform in Namibia, since it directly concerns German interest in protecting Namibian citizens of German descent' (indeed, Chancellor Kohl commenced a speech on a visit to Namibia in 1995 by exclaiming "my dear fellow countrymen"⁶⁴ (Melber 2006)). This concern is underscored in the text of the apology, with Wieczorek-Zeul (2004) reaffirming 'in particular', the German state's 'assistance for the necessary process of land reform'. When directly asked if such assistance pertained to concerns over white ownership of farm land being expropriated by the Namibian government, Wieczorek-Zeul replied that she expected that reform would 'proceed in line with the Namibian constitution and relevant laws' (Integrated Regional Information Networks 2004). Here, then, one can glean a further expediency to Germany's refusal to pay reparations, even beyond crude cost-benefit calculations to the cost of aid. Aid, in contrast to reparations, can be given on German terms. It enables a continued wielding of influence within Namibia, and can provide implicit leverage over matters of the German government's concern. In this case, the focus of aid on land reform assists in continuing to shape land ownership patterns that mirror the complexions that were forged through the violent dispossessions of colonialism. To return to the core argument of the thesis: this is not to say that Germany's contemporary policies on land reform are identical to the violent dispossession of indigenous peoples in the colonial period. However, these policies do serve, at least in part, to uphold a contemporary land ownership complexion in Namibia, whereby in 2010 6,123 out of 6,292 farms are currently owned by white people, amounting to approximately 95% of the commercial farming sector (Mufune 2010: 19). Obviously a significant aspect of this enduring inequality derives from the dispossessions of the colonial period.

⁶⁴ Melber (2006) further shows the German government's concern for the 'German' community in Namibia, by referring to President Herzog's criticism in 1998 of Namibian policies that had a perceived negative impact on the status of the German language in the country.

Memory and reparations: The expediency and fragility of apology

Thus far, this section has situated the German apology within the economic context of Herero legal demands for reparations and Germany's ongoing self interest in withstanding such claims. As such, an analysis of the apology suggests that the structure, grammar and content of the text demonstrate a concerted manoeuvre to negate or neutralise these claims to reparations. This observation, then, sits with the wider argument of the thesis that *mea culpa* is utilised in the service of governmental expediency. However, again pertaining to the thesis' central contention, this is not to display the German government as an all pervasive and monolithically powerful actor that, through apology, can unquestionably bend policy outcomes to meet its strategic goals. Indeed, the very fact that the German government apologised is testimony to the metropolitan power now shaping its discourse in accordance to subaltern contestation, primarily in the form of Riruako's court proceedings. Moreover, it should be noted that Wieczorek-Zeul and her script writers' carefully constructed caveats and conditionals do not amount to an all commanding and unassailable position. In this respect, even in refusing to pay reparations, the apology actually moves the German government's position closer to some of the central claims of the Herero's case – that the events amount to genocide and that the crimes are 'rightly' worthy of prosecution.⁶⁵ Thus, one can observe a central contention of the thesis; in order to maintain the credibility of 'official' narratives (and, in this case, legal positions), governments, in apology, make concessions and cede ground to competing historical perceptions. While the apology text contains certain caveats that seem to temporarily hamstring the demand for reparations, it is not clear whether such manoeuvres necessarily indefinitely temper Herero claims. Indeed, it seems that they cause increased contestation, whereby there are further claims to reparations, for instance subsequent claims to restitution for violence committed against the Damara and San communities (see Kössler 2007). In this sense, the apology does reflect a metropolitan government that has seen a destabilisation of its entrenched position and had to enmesh and wrangle with subaltern contestations, ultimately leading the metropole to modulate its constructed discourse.

⁶⁵ To recall, Wieczorek-Zeul claimed that 'nowadays a General von Trotha would be prosecuted and convicted'. Although not appearing in the official text of the German Embassy, in the BBC footage, she is seen adding the phrase 'and rightly so' (Olusoga 2005).

So as to further compound this line of argument, it is necessary to turn the reader's attention back to observations on collective memory in chapter 2. Here it was suggested that politicians frequently cannot select memories of their choosing, but must instead contend with episodes that are of contemporary societal salience. As considered previously, politicians have a propensity for seeking out pasts that self evidently enunciate flattering aspects of national character, such as innovation, bravery and so forth. To this end, clearly the genocide of the Herero is not an aspect of German history that Wieczorek-Zeul or other politicians are reflexively inclined towards. Conversely, Wieczorek-Zeul did not recollect the genocide because of its self evident political or economic expediency, but rather because of its position in contemporary contestation. To clarify this point, it seems that Wieczorek-Zeul's apology was not born out of a pre-emptive brick wall to reparations, but rather constitutes a reaction to the Herero legal contestation. Here, then, one makes a curious observation; that the apology both reaffirms particular modes of domination (resistance to reparations/resistance to land reform), while also bespeaking a government that is not sure footed in its position and must enter into these uneasy and contrite discursive exchanges.

Apology and contemporary identity: Reinforcing the state's liberal and benign complexion

As explored in more detail later in the chapter, there are certainly relics within the Federal Republic that continue to celebrate German colonialism. For instance, there remain road names, statues and monuments that, as yet, have not been replaced or removed. However, unlike the other case studies of this thesis, there is a discernible absence of mainstream political discourse that consciously actively glorifies colonialism. Though the German state certainly seems to minimise or trivialise the colonial past, where Belgian, British and Italian politicians still have a propensity for occasional moments of exaltation, it appears that this largely does not exist outside of fringe right wing circles in Germany.⁶⁶ In contrast to the other case studies that reveal an inclination to the glorification of the past, the German case study speaks to a political discourse that is far more strident and assertive in terms of parading its contemporary liberal identity⁶⁷ and its current 'progressive' role in Africa. In this way, this

⁶⁶ Despite the general absence of this political rhetoric, there remain clichéd and orientalist representations of Africa in the mediums of literature, film and documentaries. See pages 101-102 for a wider discussion on this.

⁶⁷ While all the case studies show politicians parading their state's contemporary liberal identity, it seems that this impulse is magnified in the Germany case study.

section positions the German apology within processes of affirming a particular contemporary identity. Speaking to both domestic and international audiences, it is contended that the apology underscored contemporary socialised normative international expectations of human rights through renouncing racist and genocidal violence, while emphasising contemporary liberal characteristics. As such, the apology meets the evolving custom and international expectation of formally commemorating and, where appropriate, apologising on significant anniversaries of mass conflict. Finally, there is the expectation of rebuilding and rhetorically solidifying relationships with erstwhile colonies.

Renouncing 'excessive' violence

As discussed in chapter 1, apologies serve a variety of ends beyond the simple consolation of victims: They openly condemn the transgression and thereby publicly reinforce and strengthen the rule or norm that prohibits it (Bilder 2008: 24-25). Moreover, they assist in creating the transgressor's image anew, disavowing the offending deed and fostering an image in opposition to the action. More specifically, this pertains to two issues in relation to apologies/apologia that have been explored in chapter 1: Firstly, to recall, Gofmann (1971: 113) postulated that 'an apology is a gesture through which an individual splits himself into two parts, the part that is guilty of an offense and the part that disassociates itself from the delict and affirms a belief in the offended rule'. In this way, it seems that the recollection of the event is transformed, through apology, into an act of disavowing genocide and reaffirming Germany's concurrence with the international community's normative aversion to genocidal violence. Indeed, as explored in more detail later in the chapter, this is particularly significant owing to the Federal Republic's ideological liberal constitution in opposition to the fascist and genocidal Third Reich.

In a similar vein, this secondly relates to Ware and Linkugel's (1973) concept of bolstering – the idea that, in apologia, the speaker frequently attempts to align themselves with 'something viewed favourably by the audience'. For instance, in the speech to the audience at Okakarara, Wiczorek-Zeul (2004) pointedly affirmed that Germany is now 'multicultural', has achieved peaceful reunification, is a member of an enlarged European Union, is 'a committed member of the United Nations, working for world-wide peace, human rights, development and poverty reduction' as well as providing 'sustained assistance to the people of Africa' and supporting the NEPAD initiative. Much of this exhaustive list has little relevance to the descendants of the victims (Romanowsky 2009), instead appealing to an international audience. In this way, this

rhetoric can be couched within a discursive reaffirmation of Germany and the Social Democrat's commitments to accepted normative liberal processes.

The apology's rhetorical exposition of the Federal Republic's liberal normative complexion relates to the central of argument of the thesis in important ways: In particular, the apology reflects a curious ambivalence to the wider colonial past, as well as conspicuous reconfiguration of particular Eurocentric ideological mindsets. In terms of the ambivalence to the colonial past, it is clear that the apology is for the genocide, rather than the wider colonial process. As such, like the Belgian and British case studies, the German apology amounts to an expression of *mea culpa* for just one particularly egregious episode, while neglecting the broader context in which this transgression arose. That is, beyond Wiczorek-Zeul's vague allusion to 'colonialist fervour', the genocide is scripted as a particular outcome of a renegade general (Von Trotha), rather than an outcome of a wider process of racism, imperial fantasy, displacement and settler violence.

In this manner, the apology affirms the democratic West's potent aversion to genocide, while reproducing its more anaemic stance on Europe's colonial past. This observation may, in part, account for the incongruity of the Federal Republic's disavowal of the Herero genocide, while not offering introspection as to – for instance – the crushing of the Maji-Maji rebellion; a conflict that led to far more deaths than in South West Africa, despite not normally being termed genocide. It is this lack of introspection into this broader colonial past that implicitly establishes the more mundane practices of colonial domination as not worthy of renunciation. Here, then, one can highlight one of the peculiarities or ambivalences of the liberal reproach of the past; that it may call attention to the worst excesses of the state's violence, yet does not repudiate the central mentalities that sustained the colonial projects.

By a similar token, the rhetorical affirmation of Germany's liberal and developmental stances bespeaks a form of ideological complacency that privileges Eurocentric normative mindsets. It is to underscore Germany's ideological configuration as a universal good that is to be appreciated by both the Namibian and international audiences. Of course, in one way, this liberal normative turn does represent a shift from the mindsets of colonialism; it does not bear the same overt racial prejudices or stringent hierarchical overtones. However, the flaunting of Germany's contemporary ideological complexion that is replete in Wiczorek-Zeul's speech does represent a certain swagger in terms of affirming a superior form of contemporary German governance. Indeed, in this sense, the German apology, though ostensibly for atrocity

committed against colonised peoples, becomes a text that dwells heavily on celebrating the features of contemporary Germany. This is also evident within the developmental discourse of Wieczorek-Zeul (2004) underscoring Germany's 'sustained assistance to the people of Africa' and the aforementioned commitment to Namibian land reform. It is this accentuation of Germany's current 'benign' policy that indicates a certain paternalism and sense of righteousness that is, through the apology's process of 'boosting', highlighted in a speech about genocide. This sense of unilateral paternalism was most vividly illustrated in May 2005 when, subsequent to the apology, Wieczorek-Zeul announced, without consultation, the initiative to set aside \$25 million over the next 10 years for development as a 'process of reconciliation' (quoted in Hintze 2005). This benevolence did not win favour with the Ovaherero Genocide Committee and Marco Hausiku, the Namibian Foreign Minister, to Wieczorek-Zeul's surprise, stated that 'the Namibian government first had to consult those affected before signing' (quoted in Sarkin 2009: 136-7). It is such interactions that enable one to observe a paternal relationship whereby, with comparatively little consideration for Namibian concerns, both the apology and the aid are constituted by Germany as supposedly benevolent gestures. In this sense, the Namibians and the colonial violence inflicted appear as a backdrop to stories about a transcendent Germany that is both liberal in its political complexion and generous in its developmental practice.

The normalisation of relations with Namibia

To recall, political apologies do not happen in a vacuum; they are often a culmination of a myriad of rhetorical interchanges, water testing and confidence building. Moreover, there is a kind of implicit negotiation of the apology among a plurality of actors, including both the recipient and the apologisee, whereby perceptions and understandings of the past are exchanged, contested and forged, albeit within the confines of an unequal relationship of power. To this end, Kössler (2007: 2) writes that dialogue between Namibia and Germany functioned 'as sounding boards, throwing back and forth impulses and themes'. In agreement with Kössler, it is clear that one can situate the apology within a spectrum of increasingly friendly exchanges that were part of a process of building bridges and normalising relations with post-Independence Namibia. On its independence in 1990, owing to its ideological position and perhaps as a slight to the Federal Republic, Namibia's ruling SWAPO party entered into what one East German minister described as a 'love match' with the GDR (cited in Melber 2008: 264). Indeed, it is not coincidental that shortly before the GDR's demise, the world's last East German Embassy was opened in Namibia on 21st March 1990 (Melber 2008: 264).

On its part, the Federal Republic was faced with a far more uncomfortable relationship with its erstwhile colony, the first West German ambassador candidly conceding that it would be mistaken to expect 'a relationship that was particularly friendly or noted for its warmth' (quoted in Melber 2008: 264). Nevertheless, on 15th March as Namibia approached independence, the Bundestag passed a resolution that recognised Germany's 'special responsibility' to Namibia (Melber 2008: 265); a highly euphemistic phrase, that along with 'special relationship', is frequently used by German officials and pertains to the aforementioned enduring paternalistic mindsets. This rhetorical commitment to the special responsibility was reinforced, despite some setbacks, by quite considerable diplomatic exchanges between the two states - with 120 official delegations travelling from Germany to Namibia between May 1991 and April 1992 (Melber 2008: 265). In 1995 Helmut Kohl became the first Chancellor to visit Namibia, yet refused to meet a delegation of Herero elites and did not utter a single word concerning the genocide (Jamfa 2008: 202). In 1998 German president Roman Herzog recognised unspecified German crimes, but contended that 'too much time has passed for a formal apology to the Hereros make sense' (Jamfa 2008: 203). Not directly referring to Namibia or the Herero genocide, after the 2001 Conference Against Racism in Durban, Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, recognised the necessity for Germany to accept guilt and responsibility for its participation in colonialism (Schäfer-Wünsche 2005: 195). In 2004, shortly before the apology, the German ambassador to Namibia, Wolfgang Massing, placed a wreath at the grave of Chief Samuel Maharero - a symbolic gesture that publicly distances the German government from the conventional narrative that the Herero-German war was caused by Maharero's warmongering, thereby suggesting that the German reprisal was in some way proportional (Kustaa 2004: 1-2). While refusing to pay reparations, the German ambassador to Botswana expressed deep regret for 'this unfortunate past' just one month before the apology (BBC 2004). The point of illustrating these chequered and, at times, blundering German overtures is to demonstrate that Wiczorek-Zeul's apology did not appear out of thin air. Rather, it was elicited within the context of a series of exchanges in which - like other states' relations in terms of their former colonies - the Federal Republic's intent of enhancing relations with its former colony slowly gained momentum from the point of Namibia's independence.

The apology within German colonial and Holocaust narratives

George: [Referring to the start of the First World War] *The war started because of the vile Hun and his villainous empire building.*

Blackadder: *George, the British Empire at present covers a quarter of the globe, while the German Empire consists of a small sausage factory in Tanganyika. I hardly think we can be entirely absolved from blame on the imperialist front* (Boden 1989).

In many ways, Blackadder's retort in the eponymous BBC comedy succinctly encapsulates both the European and domestic conventional memory of the German empire; it was short lived, small and of negligible historical importance, certainly in comparison to the British, Portuguese, Dutch and Spanish empires (see, for example Lewis Gann's (1987) chapter 'Marginal Colonialism: The German case'). This narrative of Germany's marginal empire has been reinforced by historians and politicians, and not simply those on the radical right-wing of German politics. Indeed, in 2001 Hans Christian Stobele, a Green Bundestag deputy, stated that 'Germany has been driven out of colonialism early on, ... Germany can now act in an unencumbered way and take on the role of Avantgarde in Africa' (quoted in Kössler 2006). Of course, historical memories and narratives of the past are not stable and are prone to adaption and partial manipulation in accordance to the socio-political forces of the day. Moreover, as explored in chapter 2, historical narratives are competing, multiple and open to dissent. Nevertheless, by analysing the political rhetoric, media coverage and communal forms of memorialisation, it is possible to engage in an analysis of the tides of public and elite representation and perception of the German colonial experience. In undertaking this task, it is argued that since the 1960s there has appeared sporadic dissent to the apparent historical amnesia regarding colonialism. Building on this, in the 1990s and early 21st Century there has been a perceptible shift in academia, political discourse, media representation and public imagery that has become both more vociferous in engaging with the past and more critical in reflecting upon it (see Dickinson 2008). As such, one can situate the apology within the context of a German society that, like certain other Western European nations, has become demonstrably less prone to glorifying its colonial past and more willing to express contrite sentiments towards it. Indeed, this drive is especially prominent within those on the political left within German politics. In this way, though there have been general trends in German society that critically re-evaluate the state's colonial past, one must also bear in mind that the particular proponents of this are frequently situated within the Socialist-Green coalition from which the apology emerged. Expanding on this, the following section analyses in more detail the conventional narrative of German colonialism, how it relates to broader perceptions of German history, especially in regards to the Holocaust, and how shifts in this narrative have contributed to the realisation of the 2004 apology.

The conventional colonial narrative

While researching this chapter, this author entered into a casual conversation with a fellow colleague regarding our respective research. In this discussion, the colleague, a German doctor in International Relations, admitted that never before had he had a conversation about German colonialism in Africa. This, admittedly unscientific, anecdote illustrates the anaemic nature of the German colonial narrative; that is, even now, the impact on German collective memory seems to be relatively faint and there is not necessarily one monolithic or 'overarching master narrative for understanding the history of German colonialism' (Langbehn 2010: 22). In Schäfer-Wünsche's (2005: 195) words, 'if German colonialism is mentioned at all, it is often declared to have been of little consequence, since it was so short-lived'. Although, for the reasons explored below, it appears that this is beginning to change, conventionally German colonialism is not a subject that typically received abundant academic or popular attention.⁶⁸ Despite the undoubted role of colonialism in determining perceptions of race and nationalism (Langbehn and Salama 2011: xxiii) one reason suggested for this neglect of the state's colonial past is that it was only a short lived experiment – officially from 1884 – 1919, had limited role in overseas commerce and is assumed (problematically) to have minimal demographic consequences for the Reich itself (Gann 1987). As such, the perceived significance of colonialism in the unfolding of German history is conventionally only considered as negligible. In Jurgen Osterhammel's (quoted in Dickinson 2008: 130) words, when one considers the historical role of the German Empire one thinks 'understandably, at most of Cameroon and Samoa. But the social histories above all of Great Britain, Portugal and the Netherlands, and in some respects of Russia and France, must remain incomplete or incomprehensible if one divorces them from their imperial-colonial context'. Reinforcing this point, David Blackbourn (quoted in Dickinson 2008: 130) writes 'one could hardly assert that German colonies played the same central role in domestic political debates that their far larger empires did in British and French politics'. Undoubtedly, another reason for this apparent amnesia is the overbearing enormity of the Holocaust in international and domestic concepts of German history that both consciously and subliminally usurps the colonial experience and even, in many respects, casts 1945 as a kind of 'year zero'. Such a stifled or limited memory of colonialism clearly does not lend itself to colonial contrition. However, as conveyed in the

⁶⁸ For a contrasting view on this matter, see Albrecht (2011). Albrecht contends that through the 1950s and 60s issues pertaining to German colonialism did receive more media coverage than normally conceived. Moreover, she argues that in the 1960s politicians still sought to cultivate a philanthropic image of German colonialism.

following passages, this apparent amnesia⁶⁹ has undergone varying degrees and modes of contestation and revision over the decades.

Remembering colonialism – Contesting the conventional narrative

In the GDR, owing to its ideological orientation, anti-colonial discourse among political and intellectual elites was far more common place and correlated with the East German state's supposedly anti-imperialist stance. However, while the German Federal Republic took on a concerted effort at removing National Socialist insignia after the war, unlike in East Germany, many mnemonic sites (for example colonial monuments and street names) remained intact (Steinmetz and Hell 2006: 149-150). For instance, in West Germany in 1949 the Hamburg statue of Herman Wissmann⁷⁰ was reerected after having been knocked off its plinth in World War II bombings (Cornils 2011: 199) and, indeed, other new monuments glorifying the colonial past were installed (Steinmetz and Hell 2006: 150). During the 1950s, 60s and 1970s there was an initial phase of largely uncohesive and sporadic resistance to this trend. Such resistance included defacing and toppling monuments, most notably the 1967 toppling of the Hamburg statue of the erstwhile Governor of German East Africa (for interesting discussions of this, see Steinmetz and Hell 2006; Cornils 2011). Likewise, this period saw the publication of several critical novels and historical accounts of the colonial period (Steinmetz and Hell 2006: 150). Such contestation arose generally from a young generation of students who had turned to anti-establishment and direct action politics.

Since the 1980s and 1990s one can detect general trends that show certain contradictory attitudes in regards to the colonial past. On the one hand, one can point to more concerted effort within elements of civil society to dislodge the enduring colonial complacencies. To this end, this period was characterised not by the simple defacing of monuments, but organised attempts to critically annotate the monuments or even present them ironically, as 'counter monuments', as illustrated by the resurrection of the aforementioned Hermann Wissmann statue (Steinmetz and Hell 2006: 155; Cornils 2011). Similarly, a 1932 colonial monument in Bremen was reframed as an anticolonial monument in 1996. From November 2007 Von

⁶⁹ One must be critical when evaluating what is 'remembered' and what is 'forgotten' in history; forgetting or amnesia is not necessarily a passive process of history simply slipping from memory, but can be an active process of tabooing or constraining certain past events. Indeed, in some respects tabooing is the opposite of amnesia because it remains so prescient in the psyche.

⁷⁰ Wissman was Commissioner and Governor for the Western area of German East Africa from 1891 - 1896. He was infamous for ruthless attacks on the African population, including burning down villages.

Trotha-Strasse in Munich was renamed Hererostrasse (Correa 2011: 95). In a similar way, in 2002 'Trotha House' within the former Lettow-Vorbeck army barracks - complete with the portrait of the infamous general - was from 2002 referred to as 'Tanzania Park' and somewhat obliquely described as a tribute to international understanding between Germany and Tanzania (Steinmetz 2009: 254).

This ambivalence is further illuminated by Augsburg zoo's opening of an 'African village' in 2005; the zoo's director saying that it is the ideal place to foster an 'exotic atmosphere' (quoted in BBC 2005a). The project was also defended in the comment section of *Spiegel*, with the reporter maintaining that 'the hullabaloo over the Augsburg Zoo's "African Village" controversy is monkey business' and calling it 'nonsense' (Broder 2005). Rather more eloquently, Noah Sow - the founder of an institute on German race relations - captured the outrage at displaying supposed African culture 'between the baboons and the zebras' and indicated that it reflects a gaze where 'there is an urge to see those who are not white as part of something exotic or romanticised' (quoted in BBC 2005a). In an excellent and robust critique, Schiller, Dea *et al.* (2005) detail how the zoo links Africans to wild animals, stereotypes African culture and facilitates 'discrimination, barriers to social mobility, persecution, and repression'. On the one hand, the very fact that such an 'exhibition' can take place reveals the endurance of colonialist modes of thought that see supposed African culture as something to be observed for European pleasure. On the other hand, the commotion caused in civil society and the sustained sense of outrage from multiple pressure groups, academics, anti-racist campaigners and individuals shows a willingness by large parts of German society to critically challenge such mentalities.

This ambivalence is also shown in the mushrooming of contemporary popular representations of the colonial period. Pointing to recent titles such as *Nirgendwo in Afrika* (Nowhere in Africa), *Eine Liebe in Afrika* (A love in Africa), *Kein Himmel über Afrika* (No heaven above Africa), *Afrika - Wohin mein Herz mich trägt* (Africa – Where my Heart Carries Me), *Mein Herz in Afrika* (My Heart in Africa), *Mein Traum von Afrika* (My dream of Africa), Struck (2010: 260-261) describes how contemporary 'German cinema and television have widely established and exploited the discourse that locates Africa in the center of desire - for romance, adventure' and danger. In another essay, Struck (2011) captures how *Die Wüstenrose* – a popular televised melodrama set in German South West Africa (the first screening receiving viewing figures of 12 million) shows both a brutal side of colonialism (such as whipping and hanging), while simultaneously overlooking more mundane and systematic forms of oppression.

Moreover, Struck unpacks how the programme depicts clichéd colonial fantasy in the form of exoticism, costume, sexual desire and macho-ruggedness. Likewise, while the 2003 publication of Seyfried's novel *Herero*, undoubtedly created awareness of German colonialism in South-West Africa, as Steinmetz and Hell (2006: 153) comment, it 'is virtually indistinguishable from colonial novels' and 'recycles colonial racist stereotypes'.

The point of highlighting these developments is to emphasise the uncertain, ambiguous and, in many respects, ambivalent position of contemporary German society in relation to the recollection of the colonial past. That is, like the recent novels and melodramas discussed above, there appears to be a dual position in regards to the past; a general repudiation (but, conceivably, voyeuristic intrigue) of the worst excesses of colonial violence, but a simultaneous fascination at enduring racialised stereotypes and tropes. One may suggest that this perhaps feeds into the format and proffering of Wiczorek-Zeul's apology. That is to say that these impulses fit with the apology's disavowal of genocide, but absence of any condemnation of the wider colonial project. These observations also fit with the previously analysed hierarchically and paternally framed notions of developmental assistance and aid, as well as the notion of the active and overbearing General Von Trotha, in comparison to the victimised and passive Herero.

The centenary and heightened colonial awareness

Having discussed general developments in German colonial representations since the 1960s, this section now turns to specific short term trends that contributed to the 2004 apology. In this regard, Schäfer-Wünsche (2005: 198) points to the Durban Anti-Racism Conference in 2001 as being a significant moment in drawing attention to Germany's colonial history. However, more than this, the societal commotion surrounding the centenary of the genocide played a central role in raising awareness and contestation of conventional memory both internationally and within Germany, thereby contributing to the apology.

Within this context, the approach to the centenary of the conflict unleashed an unexpected mobilisation and debate within civil society (Kössler 2006). In line with the mushrooming of media representations of the colonial past, on and around January 11th 2004, as the centenary of the start of the Herero War approached, most the German daily newspapers carried extensive features (Kössler 2006). Moreover, unlike previous reporting on the matter, the term 'genocide' was now widely employed by reporters (Jones 2011: 213). In addition, there was a spate of academic conferences, museum exhibitions, television features and public

ceremonies commemorating the centenary of the war, led by both human rights and church groups (Jones 2011: 213). This surge in public interest in the genocide contributed to forging a German public and political class that was more inclined than ever before towards revaluation of the state's colonial past and the Herero genocide.

The shifting Holocaust and colonial narratives

When deconstructing the German colonial narrative there is, inescapably, an elephant in the room. The memory of the Holocaust, to a lesser or greater extent, pervades every aspect of German political and cultural life. In Olick and Levy's (1997: 921) words, 'virtually every institutional arrangement and substantive policy is a response, in some sense, to Germany's memory of those fateful years'. So, too, does this memory pervade narratives of colonialism, colonial genocide and debates regarding apology. Indeed, in deconstructing Wieczorek-Zeul's (2004) speech, it is clear from the words 'Germany has learned the bitter lessons of history', that the Holocaust hangs heavily over her apology. Moreover, her phrase 'we German's accept our historical and moral responsibility' resonates strongly with one of the most famous speeches in German history when-upon President von Weizsäcker declared on the 40th Anniversary of the end of the war that Germans must accept their 'responsibility before history' (quoted in Olick and Levy 1997: 932). Indeed, it is no coincidence that the emotionalised and politicised weight of the Holocaust was invoked by the plaintiffs in the Herero community's legal and moral bid for reparations.⁷¹

It is indisputable that the Federal Republic draws legitimacy as a polity in opposition to National Socialism and its genocide. Indeed, banning extremist parties, prosecuting war criminals and paying reparations to Israel were key elements in legitimising the Federal Republic (Moses 2007: 4). As such, given Germany's willingness to 'learn the lessons of history', so to speak, it is perhaps not surprising that Germany became the first state to apologise for a colonial genocide (Zimmerer 2008: 323). Moreover the emotive response to

⁷¹ The Herero's court statement reads that 'foreshadowing with chilling precision the irredeemable horror of the European Holocaust only decades later, the defendants [the three German companies] and Imperial Germany formed a German commercial enterprise which cold-bloodedly employed explicitly sanctioned extermination, the destruction of tribal culture and social organization, concentration camps, forced labor, medical experimentation and the exploitation of women and children in order to advance their common financial interest (quoted in Schaller 2011: 53-54). Likewise, in a motion before the Namibian parliament, Riruako (2006) has pointed to the 'payment of reparation to the Jews for similar crimes committed by the Hitler regime', saying that 'such an attitude on the part of the German government is nothing but a naked act of Racism against black people in general and the Ovaherero in particular'.

genocide contributes towards explaining the disparity in Germany apologising for the genocide of the Herero, rather than the wider atrocities of colonialism in general.

However, it is not enough to simply argue that Germany's strong rhetorical aversion to genocide explains the apology. Firstly, it does not explain the peculiarity of the apology emerging in 2004, when an apology could have been offered in any of the preceding years. Secondly, it does not take into account the 'unresolvable cross-pressures' generated by Germany's historical relationship with the Holocaust (Olick and Levy 1997: 933). This is to say, that the 'lessons' of the Holocaust are not always self evident for the German state: For instance, on the one hand the historical legacy may instruct Germany to offer unequivocal support for Israel, on the other hand it may tutor against the illegal occupation and ghettoisation of 'other' peoples. Such a tension also relates to the issue of the historical footing of the genocide of the Herero people: On the one hand there is the drive to renounce genocide, on the other hand there is the concern that apologising for a *comparatively* small-scale massacre may in some way trivialise the enormity of the Holocaust.⁷² Bearing this tension in mind, the argument of this section is that accompanying the gradual shift in the colonial narrative has been a small, but perceptible revaluation of the role of the Holocaust in the continuum of German History. This shift, led by the German left, has created an environment in which there is less focus on the historical singularity or 'uniqueness' of the Holocaust, and therefore more willingness to recognise and express contrition for alternative atrocities. Related to this, there has been a move away from the idea that the Nazi period occurred in a kind of historical vacuum in isolation from the continuum of German and European history. As such, one can understand the apology as occurring in an intellectual space where analysis of colonial atrocities no longer contaminates the idea of Germanness or national identity in quite the same way. In order to sustain this argument, it is necessary to illustrate the conventional positioning of the Holocaust within German history and how this is intertwined with the colonial narrative.

National Socialism as an anomaly in German history

Moses (2007: 8) writes that owing to its reflections on the Holocaust, the German Federal Republic is 'constituted as an anti-genocidal community and inheritor of positive German

⁷² Bridgett Lau (1989), for instance, infamously argued that terming the colonial massacre 'genocide' trivialises the South African occupation of Namibia.

traditions'. This, like most legitimising myths, requires some mental acrobatics to sustain – to simultaneously reconcile both the moral integrity of a nation's traditions and the recognition of a state orchestrated genocide. Such a reconciliation was partially managed through adopting an ultra-intentionalist interpretation of the National Socialist history. In other words, the crimes of the Nazis were cast as the exclusive responsibility of carefully considered planning on behalf of Hitler and his inner-circle of henchmen.⁷³ More than this, National Socialist rule was frequently portrayed as a kind of meta-physical evil, where Hitler and his inner circle were endowed with almost other worldly wickedness. In this endeavour it became common to refer to the Nazi period as a 'catastrophe' (Nolte 1993: 3), thereby suggesting the Nazi era was, like an earthquake or tsunami, a misfortune that befell the German people without prior warning or cause. Through this process, the Third Reich was presented as what Zimmer (2008: 324) critically terms '12 'dark years'' and a 'derailment from an in other respects positive track'. In this way, the period was consciously severed from the continuum of German history. This point is illustrated when attacks on the Cologne synagogue and a wave of anti-Semitic vandalism in the late 1950s were zealously attributed by German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, to delinquent 'hoodlum[s]', while maintaining that 'the German people have shown that these thoughts and tendencies have no foundation in it' (Olick and Levy 1997: 927). Likewise, to sustain the discontinuum of the Third Reich from German traditions, it is also necessary to maintain that previous periods were basked in benevolent tradition. To this end, the intentional destruction of a people and the use of concentration camps in German South-West Africa do not sit comfortably with this legitimising myth. It is within this context that one can comprehend the political expedience and, in some respects, necessity of the narrative of Germany's marginal empire. In such circumstances colonial apology is not politically feasible.

Central to maintaining the marginal empire narrative, then, is the preservation of the idea of the singularity of the Holocaust. Maintaining this 'uniqueness' serves to disconnect the Holocaust from colonialism in two important respects: Firstly, it maintains an almost other worldly or theological impression regarding the destruction of the Jews; as Bauer (1978: 31) describes, there is an impression by which 'it took place outside of history, it becomes a mysterious event, an upside down miracle, so to speak'. This impression preserves the

⁷³Likewise, in the context of the onset of the Cold War, the U.S. found it politically expedient to delimit the number of prosecutions to only the most zealous Nazis.

absolute evil of Hitler and his inner circle, thereby largely divorcing wider German society's responsibility in the genocide. Moreover, it curtails any idea that any entrenched anti-Semitic, fascist or racist attitudes among German society contributed to the Final Solution. Secondly, and in a similar way, the discontinuum from history dislodges any perception that the mechanisms of the genocide, both in terms of its sustaining ideologies, but also its application – concentration camps, bureaucratic ruthlessness – grew out of Germany's colonial practice. Indeed, any attempts to dislodge any of these pillars of the National Socialist singularity were fiercely censored.⁷⁴ Illustrative of this, historian Fritz Fischer's thesis highlighting a continuity between the Kaiserreich and the Third Reich led to the public refusal of some prominent historians to shake his hand and a seemingly connected withdrawal of a government grant enabling him to lecture in the U.S. (Evans 1987: 761). Likewise, the attempt by Bundestag President Philipp Jenninger in a 1988 speech to account for Hitler's appeal led to the storming out the chamber by several deputies and his resignation. In Olick and Levy's (1997: 931) words, 'his focus on how Hitler had made sense to some people violated the absolute demonization of Hitler, and focussing in German problems violated the long-standing avoidance of attention to ordinary people as supporters of the Third Reich'. This strong focus on the singularity of the Holocaust and the apparent anomaly of National Socialism placed constraints upon any public consideration of colonial atrocities and genocide that may bear any resemblance to those committed in the Third Reich. Such constraints played a prohibiting role in the realisation of introspection or apology for German colonial genocide. This lack of introspection was further compounded by the enduring shackling of Herero contestation due to apartheid South African occupation of Namibia until 1990.

Shifting memories – challenging the singularity of the Holocaust

Nevertheless, upon entering the new millennium, there has been, especially among the left, both within and without Germany, a gradual loosening of the perceived singularity and other worldliness of the Holocaust. This process, interlinked as it is with the changing colonial narrative, has opened up a space in which alternative genocides may be explored and analysed. Where Arendt and Fischer were previously lone voices, there has in recent times been an emerging literature which either directly connects or draws tentative parallels between colonialism, the Herero genocide and the Nazi orchestrated genocide (for example,

⁷⁴ Not censored in the sense that they were legally prohibited. Rather, as the proceeding examples suggest, they were censored in so far as those challenging such assumptions risked social and political alienation.

Kössler 2005; Madley 2005; Zimmerer 2005; Haas 2008; Olusoga and Erichsen 2011). This intellectual environment, especially with a left leaning government at the helm, enabled a space where, unlike in previous decades, colonial introspection and apologies are possible. This argument is explored through an analysis of the altering perceptions of the Holocaust by the third generation since 1945 and societal developments since the infamous Historian's debate of the 1980s.

The full complexity of the *Historikerstreit*, or historians' debate, is too broad to be considered at length in this chapter.⁷⁵ However, one of the key facets of this - at times heated - debate surrounded the singularity of the Holocaust. The debate entailed conservative historians attempting to exonerate and normalise German history so as to no longer be held hostage to Auschwitz, so to speak. Ernst Nolte, for instance, highlighted the Soviet Gulag as an instrument in class genocide comparable to the Nazi racial genocide (see Evans 1987: 765). Likewise, Hillgruber situates the Holocaust within the context of mass resettlement of peoples throughout the 20th Century; he points, for instance, at the expulsion of Germans from East – Central Europe and 'the first genocide – that of the Armenians in Turkey' (quoted in Evans 1987: 772). The goal here was to manufacture a historical consciousness within Germany that is not tied with shame, at least beyond the transgressions that all states have committed, but, like other states, draws on proud traditions. In opposition to this were liberal historians who were dismayed at what they perceived as the trivialisation of the Holocaust by conservative and nationalistic sentiments. As Zimmerer (2008: 335) also points out, there is an irony at the heart of this debate in that both groups implicitly downplay colonialism and colonial genocide; the conservatives because of the desire to uphold the dignity of wider German history, the liberals because of fear of eliciting comparisons with the Holocaust. The point here is that this debate, which 'ended with an implicit ban on comparative research on mass violence', seemed to further entrench the genocide of the Herero people as a marginalised episode in public consciousness (Zimmerer 2008: 335). Within these intellectual parameters, public and academic awareness of colonialism was marginalised and even tabooed, thereby prohibiting contrition. Nevertheless, though the challenge to Holocaust singularity emerged from the German right, one may contend that this highly publicised challenge did lay the foundations for a debate within German society regarding the historical relationship of the German state,

⁷⁵ For recommended reading, see the edited book by Knowlton and Cates (1993) entitled *Forever in the shadow of Hitler?: Original documents of the Historikerstreit, the controversy concerning the singularity of the Holocaust*. See also Low (1994).

past and present – with the Holocaust. As explored below, this is a debate that contorted in new directions in the 1990s, this time driven by those on the left of the German political spectrum.

The generational shift

Bearing in mind its malleable and contested nature, one can point to inter-generational variances in memories of the past. Indeed, as the temporal distance between National Socialism has increased, it is possible to discern alternative perceptions of how the generations since 1945 have perceived their parents' and their respective grandparents' roles in National Socialism, World War II and the Holocaust. By extension, this also has consequences for German society's perceived placement of colonialism within the spectrum of German history. Though trading in generalisations, Axel Körner (2000: 61) succinctly sketches the divergences between the inter-generational perceptions:

The first generation of postwar Germans was, in the famous phrase, “unable to mourn”, unable to accept personal responsibility for what it had happened, unable to express sorrow. The second generation of postwar scholars constructed a complex system of structural and social explanations for the Holocaust and the Nazi crimes. The third generation took an important step further and embraced the work of a young scholar as a new way to deal with Germany's “unmasterable past”.

In other words, Körner points to the much rhapsodised '68 generation and highlights how in the accompanying social changes of the 1960s there was the start of a move, at least in academia, away from the ultra-intentionalist perceptions of the Holocaust being the sole product of Hitler's unwavering plan. However, though this new emphasis on structural accounts may have been uncomfortable for their parents' generation, the emphasis on 'the structure of the regime, the clinical quality of the death camps, the impact of institutions like industry and bureaucracy on the Holocaust' remained impersonal and enabled the narrative of virtuous German historical (colonial) traditions largely untouched (Körner 2000: 70).

The 'young scholar' that Körner refers to is Daniel Goldhagen. This pertains to his infamous 'Hitler's Willing Executioners' thesis in which he contends that, far from simply being passive puppets of Hitler's fanatic world-view or cogs in a bureaucratic machine, large swathes of ordinary Germans knew about and enthusiastically participated in the Final Solution because of their latent anti-Semitism (Goldhagen 1996). In terms of this project, the importance of this thesis does not lie in the debate over the book's historical veracity or methodological quality, of which both German and international academics have, on the whole, been extraordinarily

critical,⁷⁶ but rather in how the book's enormously popular reception in Germany speaks to the wider society's perceptions of the past. The book received enormous popular attention within Germany, with Goldhagen attaining an almost rock-star like status. Indeed, the first printing of the book in Germany sold-out within just five days and Goldhagen appeared on numerous talk shows and panel discussions (Eley 2000: 3-4). Despite the academic criticism, Goldhagen was received by enthusiastic German audiences and the debate caught the imagination of young German's in particularly apt ways. As Ash (1997: 405-6) writes, 'while older Germans attacked Goldhagen for using collective nouns like "the Germans" to describe the killers of the Shoah, [...] younger ones seemed largely immune to such language. Rather, many of them appear to feel the need for a confrontation with real existing grandparents in order to make them account for their deeds, and with parents for keeping silent or failing to enact this confrontation with their own parents'.

To situate the Goldhagen debate within the context of colonial apology: To be clear, Daniel Goldhagen and his book are not in themselves important to eliciting an apology for the Herero genocide. Their significance lies in illustrating important shifts in popular perceptions of the past that facilitated and enabled the apology. Goldhagen's book is less a prophetic academic revelation, than a well timed intervention that spoke to the already present and evolving sentiments among younger German citizens. In other words, unlike the preceding generations, the generation coming of economic and political age at the turn of the century was more willing to uncover and be directly accusative of 'ordinary' Germans and German history. Whether historically accurate or not, this sentiment debases the idea that the Holocaust was the sole result of Hitler's inner circle and, moreover, destabilises the concept of Germany's virtuous historic traditions. By extending the responsibility of the destruction of the Jews to the 'everyday' German, one can dispense with the aforementioned metaphysical evil, the 'catastrophe' of the '12 dark years' and the Holocaust's historical discontinuum. It is to show the pervasiveness of the idea that genocide was not immune from the German people before Hitler. This illustrates a popular audience, especially amongst the young and the left, that is, unlike their previous generations, receptive to more critical reflections of the past, revaluations of historical orthodoxy and historical contrition. In the context of the 2004

⁷⁶ Scathing attacks include Raul Hilberg (2007), for instance, declaring the book 'wrong about everything. Totally wrong. Exceptionally wrong'. Eberhard Jäckel's review in *Die Zeit* was entitled 'Simply a Bad Book' (see Kershaw 2000: 255).

apology, this reflects a political landscape where evaluating and assigning guilt is no longer limited to the narrow National Socialist clique, but can be broadened to evaluate the wider actions of the German public in its history. Thus, in the midst of wider contestation into the colonial past (legal demands for reparations, renewed academic interest, awareness created by the centenary of the genocide), the Holocaust is no longer the same obstacle to contrition that it was several decades ago. Indeed, memories of the Jewish genocide may now help facilitate introspection into other genocides.

Conclusion

This chapter has positioned the 2004 German apology for the genocide of the Herero community amongst a plurality of political, social and economic pressures, none of which can be understood in isolation. The first part of this chapter examined the impact of Chief Riruako's challenge in the form of legal demands for repartitions for the Herero community. As evidenced by the text, its timing and the accompanying rhetoric, it seems that an important aspect of the apology was addressing and attempting to neutralise such reparation demands. Beyond the demands to reparations, the chapter has also positioned the apology within contemporary liberal states' normative compunctions of disavowing 'excessive' human rights violations. The final section situated Wiczorek-Zeul's speech within a context of heightened awareness within Germany of the state's colonial legacy, combined with a displacement of the conventional narrative of a marginal or benevolent German empire. In particular, such renewed introspection into the colonial past sits within shifting contemplations of the Holocaust within German society. It has been suggested that the gradual loosening of the Holocaust as a unique or metaphysical event has enabled further introspection into colonial atrocities committed by the German state, particularly the Herero genocide.

Correlating with the core arguments of the thesis, this chapter has also pointed to modes by which, even in *mea culpa*, there are persisting colonial and Eurocentric expositions within the German apology. In regards to the refusal to pay reparations, the apparent political and economic expediency of stifling Herero reparations represents a more typically self-interested ambition than a genuine disavowal of colonialism. Moreover, the decoupling of apology from reparations and the continuing policy of aid facilitate conditions whereby the land owning patterns of Namibia continue to be dominated by farmers of European descent. Similarly, one can highlight sentiments of aid and 'assistance with land reform' (Wiczorek-Zeul 2004) that represent a paternalistic discourse that appears rather more self congratulatory than contrite.

In the same way, the apology's emphasis on Germany's contemporary liberal complexion represents a certain conceit, whereby the apology for genocide becomes an exhibition of the Republic's current benign character. Finally, like other case studies in this thesis, it is pertinent to note that the apology was limited to the genocide of the Herero community, rather than representing a disavowal of the wider colonial mentalities and political and economic modes of governance that facilitated it.

CHAPTER 4: THE BELGIAN APOLOGY FOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE ASSASSINATION OF PATRICE LUMUMBA

This attitude, which can be described as insensitive neutrality and apathy to the fate of Patrice Lumumba, can be considered as a serious breach in terms of good management and respect for the rule of law. In light of the criteria today, some members of the then government and some Belgian actors of the time bear some irrefutable responsibilities in the events that led to the death of Patrice Lumumba.

The Government believes, therefore, it is appropriate and suitable to present to the family of Patrice Lumumba, the families of Mr Mpolo and Okito and the Congolese people its profound and sincere regrets, together with its apologies for the pain that has been inflicted by this apathy and cold indifference.

Louis Michel (2002: 50-51)

Introduction

In 2002, Belgian Foreign minister, Louis Michel, offered the above apology in the aftermath of the Lumumba Committee's⁷⁷ findings into its investigation into the 1961 assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the first elected Prime Minister of the Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville).⁷⁸ Accompanying the apology, Michel announced the establishment of a Patrice Lumumba Foundation, worth an initial EU3.75 million. As recognised by the committee itself (Chambre des Représentants 2001a), the investigation was established following debates and ministerial questions regarding the 1999 book *De moord op Patrice Lumumba* (The assassination of Patrice Lumumba), a book which lay the responsibility for the Prime Minister's death with Belgian authorities (De Witte 2001). While De Witte's book was undoubtedly a catalyst for the commission and subsequent apology, like the other case studies, clearly the *mea culpa* emerged within a wider social environment of political expediencies, societal pressures and mnemonic contestations. Exploring this nexus of pressures, this chapter is divided into three sections.

The first section dissects the party political expediencies that cut across the apology. In a manner comparable to the British case study (see chapter 5), it is contended that the *mea*

⁷⁷ Fully titled the 'Parliamentary Committee of enquiry in charge of determining the exact circumstances of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba and the possible involvement of Belgian politicians', this chapter refers to this body as the committee or Lumumba committee.

⁷⁸ After previously being named Zaire under the leadership of Mobutu, Lumumba was the first post-independence Prime Minister of what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

culpa buttressed political advantage in rhetorically distancing the governing VLD party (Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats) from the previously discredited conservative leaning coalition. In particular, following recent societal turmoil and perceptions of corruption, the apology sat with the new coalition's strides to reinvigorate the polity and enhance their image as one of progressive change and transparency (cf. Kerstens 2008: 190-191). The second section explores the processes by which the contrition parallels the geopolitical stances of the coalition. It is posited that the apology corresponded with a shifting foreign policy agenda that was more vociferous in its professions for human rights, regional peace processes and, by extension, Belgian proactive diplomacy within the region. From one perspective, at least, it might be thought that apology for past transgressions facilitated this more interventionist stance (cf. Kerstens 2008: 191-194).

The final section explores the central role of the colonial narrative as a unifying memory amidst Belgium's complex identity politics. It is demonstrated that, in recent years, the narrative of a benevolent Belgian colonialism has become increasingly contested and under strain. In this manner, the apology represents a concession or a disavowal of an episode of the state's dealings with its former colony that no longer sits with this conventional overarching narrative. Nevertheless, even in apologising for this particular episode, this chapter highlights modes by which Michel (the apologist) himself continues to revere the colonial past and discursively reproduce its conventional legitimising tenets. Beyond the apology text, the chapter also points to mnemonic sites (museums, school curriculums) that revive recognisable and enduring colonial complacencies.

The electoral expediency of introspection

As explored in Chapter 1, apologies simultaneously offer stories that inform the audience about both the victim and the orator. That is, in apologising, the orator is engaging in a form of remedial work that, subsequent to an offence, seeks to bolster their impression among others. Indeed, in terms of intergenerational state apologies, such remedial work can have additional expediency to one's image, as it is clear that the apologising politician is not actually himself/herself guilty of perpetrating the offense. In this way, apology can serve as an expedient impression management device for distancing oneself from both those who are actually guilty of the past atrocity and, moreover, adjacent conservative politicians who have often been perceived to have stiff-collared and increasingly awkward stances towards past indignations. By extension, as elaborated on in more detail in chapter 5 in the British case

study,⁷⁹ the 1990s and early 20th century witnessed the rise to power of a number of supposedly 'progressive' politicians who cultivated a new aesthetic or style of politics that appeared to be more flexible, colloquial and 'in touch' than that of the orthodox political class. It is this reflective style of politics that, it is argued, sits more comfortably with the offering of contrition (Cunningham 2004a: 80). It is here, then, that one can observe an electoral utility to the mnemonic reshaping of Lumumba's death. As explored in the following passages, it is in the context of the episode's renewed controversy within society that the truth commission and subsequent apology offered a means for the new government to exhibit these traits and, in turn, rhetorically and illustratively distance themselves from the former government that had been perceived as discredited and out of touch.

The party political and societal context

Locating the apology within the orbit of domestic party politics requires an understanding of the societal turmoil that led to the 1999 rise of the VLD Party at the expense of the long governing Christian Democrat Party. Symbolic of this crisis was the Dutroux affair (Kerstens 2008: 191), whereby, subsequent to his arrest in August 1996, it became apparent that there had been severe inadequacies in the police investigation into Dutroux's kidnapping and murder of several young girls. This exposed the police and judiciary as bungling or even potentially fraudulent (Hooghe and Rihoux 2000: 132). Such systemic failures 'were to a large extent attributed by public opinion and the national media to the judiciary's close links with the political establishment' (Gies 2003: 260). It was this sense of dissatisfaction that led to the 'White March', whereby over 300,000 people converged for the biggest protest in Belgian history (Walgrave and Manssens 2000: 217). As well as protesting against child abuse, there was also a demand for a renewed transparency and political accountability in Belgian governance (Kerstens 2008: 191). This anger was only heightened by Dutroux's brief escape from court in 1998 and a series of financial and ecological⁸⁰ scandals that forced resignations from both the Flemish Socialist Party and the Christian Democrats, thereby further reinforcing the impression of elite incompetence (Hooghe and Rihoux 2000: 132).

It is within this context that the 1999 general election took place, with the VLD party riding the ticket of a 'New Political Culture' (Kerstens 2008: 190). The election saw substantial losses for

⁷⁹ See pages 144-148.

⁸⁰ It was exposed that dioxin had contaminated poultry feed, thereby poisoning the entire food chain. This led to the removal of products from shops and another blow to Belgium's international reputation.

both the Socialist and Christian Democrats, entailing the latter's removal from office for the first time in over forty years (Hooghe and Rihoux 2000: 140-1) and ensuring for the first time since the 1920s that the Christian and Socialist parties no longer held a majority in Parliament (Fitzmaurice 2000: 178). The necessity of recognising the electorate's message was seized upon with the Liberal Party entering into a 'rainbow' coalition with the Socialist and Green parties at the expense of the Christian Democrats.

The Lumumba Commission and the 'New Political Culture'

Given the prevailing currency of the 'New Political Culture', one can situate the Lumumba Commission within the context of a multitude of exploits that manufactured clear water between the new government and the discredited orthodox political establishment. To do so requires a brief consideration of the increasing global norm and prevalence of Truth Commissions.

Truth Commissions are, at least in premise, designed to carry out a variety of functions. At the most basic level, they aim to investigate unknown or contested past events and establish and disseminate the 'truth'⁸¹ as to what occurred. In doing so, they establish individual accountability and identify the perpetrators (Crocker 1999: 49). Indeed, this basic function of exposing the 'truth' is acknowledged in the Lumumba Commission, wherein the Foreign Minister noted that he could not answer parliamentary questions regarding the assertions of Ludo de Witte's *The assassination of Lumumba*, 'based on a book'. Therefore 'in order to reach conclusions from an official Belgian instance, it was decided to create a parliamentary investigation committee' (Chambre des Représentants 2001a). However, beyond disseminating 'official' truth, Commissions are designed to have a cathartic and healing societal effect; in Rotburg's (2000: 3) words, they aim 'to reconcile the old with the new, and to move forward in effective harmony'. In this sense, Commissions frequently occur after civil wars (Kosovo) or the fall of authoritarian regimes (South Africa, Cambodia). Much like apologies, Truth Commissions attempt to provide a kind of closure to traumatic pasts wherein a mutual recognition of the past and the victims' experience has a therapeutic effect on both victims and perpetrators.

⁸¹ There is a critique of the concepts of 'truth' and the commission's supposed scientific rigour on pages 129-131.

Unlike the examples above, Belgium did not undergo a civil war or a transition from an authoritarian regime. However, one can point to the party political advantages of utilising such a format to evoke a positive transition to a seemingly more progressive form of politics. Firstly, such a Commission sits easily with the 'New Political Culture' emphasised by the Liberal party, in that it represents an apparent openness, transparency and truthfulness that appeared to be lacking in the previous government. Clearly, the epoch defining fall of South African Apartheid and the adjoined rise of the ANC and its Truth and Reconciliation Commission are in no way comparable to the Liberal Party's victory over the Christian Democrats in Belgium. However, there is a sense in which Belgium's progressive 'Rainbow Coalition' could bask in the new political currency of South Africa's 'Rainbow Nation' (Verdoolaege and Kerstens 2004: 84). Likewise, the format of a Commission and ensuing apology enabled the Liberal Party, including Prime Minister Verhofstradt and Foreign Minister Michel, to trade in a style of politics that they could capitalise on. Interestingly, a similar commission in the form of the Rwandan Commission⁸² in 1997 had been politically costly for the conservatives, while allowing Guy Verhofstradt, leader of the VLD, to enhance his reputation as an untainted and upstanding figure (Verdoolaege and Kerstens 2004: 80). Indeed, whereas the outgoing Christian Democrat Party could often appear stuffy and elitist, this form of political discourse, in line with other social democrats in the late 90s and early 21st century (one thinks of Blair, Clinton *et al*), allowed for a more reflexive, amiable, almost idiomatic style of government. This presentational mode appeared to come more naturally to the Verhofstadt government and seemed to generate political capital through a further departure from its discredited predecessors.

The format of a Commission into Lumumba's assassination was also politically expedient for the Liberal party in so far as it clearly had less to lose than the Christian Democrats. This is to say that, though most of those implicated in the Commission were by then dead, those responsible for the murder were invariably on the conservative arm of Belgian politics. However, though the perpetrators themselves are mostly dead, there remains in Belgium a sizable minority of people who worked in the Congo and spent their formative years there.⁸³ Many of these people suffered or were forced to flee in decolonisation and some continue to

⁸² Fully titled the Parliamentary commission of inquiry into the events in Rwanda, it was established after over 200,000 petitioners demanded an enquiry into the killing of ten Belgian Paratroopers in Kigali in 1994 (Verdoolaege and Kerstens 2004: 80) and the societal shock into the subsequent genocide.

⁸³ For an overview of some of the reflections and attitudes of former Belgian officers in the Congo, see Dembour (2000).

both perceive Lumumba as a criminal and glorify Leopoldian colonialism.⁸⁴ Thus, the format of a Commission provided, though limited, a certain insulation from Lind's (2008: 35) 'backlash phenomenon'.⁸⁵ In other words, the format of the commission superficially delegated the historical and moral judgement of Lumumba's murder away from the minister himself and towards this Commission. Rhetorically empowered by the language of officialdom and 'truth' it is almost as if Michel's subsequent apology were not loaded with political opportunism or a particular ideological or historical world view, but were merely a neutral and unavoidable outcome of an investigation into truth. This enabled Michel, to some extent, to both satisfy the 'New Political Culture' of transparency, while neutralising claims to historical revisionism from the former colonials. Indeed, in his apology text, Michel (2002: 49) made palpable overtures to the former colonials, saying that 'the powerful images of compatriots returning to Belgium having left everything behind in Congo have greatly contributed to shape the image it was felt happening in Congo. We must of course express our emotion to the Belgian victims. The pain of our compatriots cannot be ignored here'.

The enduring Eurocentrism of the 'New Political Culture'

To return to one of the core arguments of this thesis; rather than radically empowering the previously colonised, apologies represent certain reconfigured, yet enduring, Eurocentric complacencies, assumptions and power complexions. It is, in pointing to the presentational and electoral expediencies of the Commission and apology, that one can detect such lingering sentiments. Firstly, in relation to the style of politics, one can ascertain that there is a sense by which the apologies, like the British case study, mnemonically draw on past episodes of colonial violence so as to cultivate the politicians' own manufactured image. In this sense, Lumumba and the consequences for the Congo become almost a backdrop by which European politicians flaunt and enhance their own constructed persona.

Likewise, one can make similar arguments in regards to the supposed cathartic societal effects of the Truth Commission. To recall, an important objective of Truth Commissions is its supposed curative social effects; Desmond Tutu, for instance, spoke of the need 'to assist in the healing of a traumatized, divided, wounded, polarized people' (quoted in Andrews 2000:

⁸⁴ Hochschild (2006: 311) points to the existence 'two dozen organizations of Belgian "old colonials," with names like the Fraternal Society of Former Cadets of the Centre for military training of Europeans at Luluabourg'. He also points to websites that have defended Leopold against his recent criticisms.

⁸⁵ Lind points to the empirical phenomenon whereby apologies can untowardly elicit more vociferous denial and glorification of the past from conservatives.

84). Indeed, though not to the same scale as post-apartheid South Africa, there is, as explored above, a sense in which the Commission was fashioned to symbolise a healing effect from the turmoil within Belgian society in the 1990s. To this extent, the Lumumba committee itself spoke of the need to come 'to terms with the past' (Chambre des Représentants 2001a). However, when discussing coming to terms with the past, it is necessary to question who this is designed for. It would appear that this catharsis, this social healing, is forged for a Belgian audience, rather than the contemporary DRC. That is, the apparent dealing with the past and reassuring of conscience seem to be rather more blithely accomplished in contemporary Belgium than in the DRC, where contemporary inequalities frequently remain rooted in the legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

The geopolitical dimension of apology

Beyond these narrow party political expediencies, one can, like the other case studies of this thesis, sketch an intersection between the process of *mea culpa* and a fluctuating foreign policy position on the international stage. In this regard, this section locates the apology within the context of a shifting foreign policy agenda that, subsequent to the foreign policy retreat of the mid 1990s, sought to reposition Belgium for playing a more interventionist role in Central Africa (Kerstens 2008: 191-193). This foreign policy retreat followed the death of 10 Belgian paratroopers in Rwanda in 1994 and the government's immediate withdrawal of its forces, contributing to the perception that the Belgian military played a causative role in, or at least failed to halt, the Rwandan genocide. This ordeal manifested itself in the government's decision to no longer send troops to former colonies, even under the auspices of the UN (Kerstens 2008: 192). To this end, Smis and Oyatambwe (2002: 421) describe a situation where, by '1998 the government coalition in Belgium had almost no African policy'. As explored in this section, it is the rise of the Verhofstadt government that signposted the more assertive geo-political policy.

The contention that the truth commission and apology overlap with a more strident foreign policy is not based merely on tenuous inference, but is plainly stated in the Committee's Summary of Activities (Chambre des Représentants 2001a), reading that 'the incompletely explained past inhibits collaboration with a number of countries from Central Africa. This obstacle needs to be removed now that it is clear that Belgium together with its partners in the European Union, intend to take initiatives in order to make amends to that region and contribute to the well being of the population by closer international collaboration'.

Correspondingly, in his parliamentary speech immediately before Michel's apology, Geert Versnick (2002: 44), President of the Lumumba Commission and member of the VLD, advocated apology and remarked that 'this government has implemented a new African policy but it must start its collaboration with Congo on a good foundation'. In a similar vein, Michel's (2002: 49) parliamentary apology speech opined that it 'is likely to positively influence our relationship with Congo, as well with the Congolese population'. He additionally utilised the platform accorded to him in his *mea culpa* to herald the more assertive role, saying

Last year, the government announced an action program for regional stability in the Great Lakes region and in particular, for the Democratic Republic of Congo. (...) Moreover, our country has devoted its European presidency to the theme of greater European attention and greater cooperation with the countries of this region. Currently, we are involved in diplomatic activities to the success of the imminent inter-Congolese dialogue and resolution the issue of militias and foreign troops on Congolese territory (Michel 2002: 52).

Thus, as explored below, the apology intersected with the government's foreign policy agenda, both in terms of making symbolic overtures to the DRC leadership and in exalting Belgium's role in peace brokering and human right advocacy (Kerstens 2008: 194).

Forging cordial relations with a strategic partner

As seen to different extents in the UK and Italian case studies, one of the core political expediencies of political apologies is that they bolster relations with strategically significant partners. To this end, the Lumumba Commission can be understood as a symbolic mode of belatedly renegotiating Belgian foreign relations following Mobutu's overthrow from office and the subsequent rise to power of Laurent-Désiré Kabila in 1997. This relates to the work of Nobles (2008), who contends that political apologies function by ratifying another's interpretation of history, thereby bringing previously marginalised groups away from the political wilderness and into mainstream membership.⁸⁶ Through this rhetorical mode, the Lumumba Commission served as expedient for winning favour in post-Mobutu DRC, and fostering partners that the new Belgian government could work with in its new proactive stance in supporting the Lusaka Agreement, assisting conflict resolution and establishing co-operation with Kinshasa (Smis and Oyatambwe 2002: 422).

⁸⁶ It should be made clear that Noble's (2008) thesis is based upon 'national membership'. The argument posited here stretches this from membership of a national polity to membership of the international community.

Reflecting this shifting relationship with significant actors, upon entering office Congolese President L.D Kabila was largely marginalised and treated with disdain by Belgian elite circles: On his only official visit to Belgium under the previous government, he was symbolically shunned; the Belgian King refused to shake his hand in public and he was accused of massacring Tutsis (Smis and Oyatambwe 2002: 422). However, the fact that L.D Kabila portrayed himself as a descendant of Lumumba (Kerstens 2008: 194), enabled the new Belgium government to begin forging closer ties with the Congolese leader through the tentative rehabilitation of Lumumba's character. As such, the Lumumba Commission enabled Belgium to make the transition from routinely portraying Lumumba (and, by extension, Kabila) as a communist, towards a more measured approach. Indeed, the committee's conclusions recognised that Lumumba was 'called a Satan by some and honoured as a true people's hero by others' (Chambre des Représentants 2001b). Furthermore, the establishment of the 3.75million Euro Lumumba Foundation could be understood as a device to resurrect Lumumba's reputation and acknowledge Kabila's (and, more generally, the DRC's) mythology of the leader. As such, the commission seemingly functioned, at least on a symbolic level, to shift the footing with which Belgium was dealing with Kabila; it moved him from outcast to potential ally. Though this appears to be an important overture by the Foreign Minister, in actuality the consequences were largely negated by L.D Kabila's assassination in 2001, almost exactly forty years after Lumumba's assassination.⁸⁷

Guilt in a negative sense: the paternalistic lessons for contemporary foreign policy

As already alluded to, beyond forging closer ties with the DRC leadership, the apology was entangled with Belgium's increasingly assertive roles in peace brokering within the central African region. As pointed to by Michel's aforementioned statements in the apology, this entailed a larger diplomatic role for Belgium within the region. As Verdoolaege and Kerstens (2004: 85) write, Michel did not necessarily 'need the commission for his Africa policy, but he could use it as an illustration of his commitment'. Indeed, far from providing a narrative that forewarned European powers against intrusion into the affairs of previously colonised states, a reading of the apology indicates the imparting of a cautionary tale that advocates a *larger* role for Belgium in central Africa. Illustrating this, the acceptance of responsibility and the offering

⁸⁷ Despite being shot by his bodyguard, the motives and the identity of the wider orchestrators of the assassination remain unclear.

of *mea culpa* for Lumumba's death was not because the government or the commission accepted, as de Witte (2001: xxii) convincingly contended, that 'it was Belgian advice, Belgian orders and finally Belgian hands that killed Lumumba'. In contrast, the apology emphasised the committee's findings that 'the parliamentary investigation committee has found no indication or evidence to demonstrate that the Belgian government of the day would have required the physical elimination of Patrice Lumumba' (Michel 2002: 50). Instead, Michel underscored Belgian guilt in a negative sense; pronouncing that the government of the time 'revealed a lack of consideration for the physical integrity of Patrice Lumumba, a physical entity clearly subordinated to other interests' and that the apology was offered for the 'insensitive neutrality and apathy to the fate of Patrice Lumumba' (Michel 2002: 50). It is this narrative that draws on a past assassination to weave a paternalistic lesson for contemporary Belgian foreign relations: That transgression occurs, not through military endeavours in foreign lands or a particular racist, expansionist or civilisational worldview, but a lack of empathy or protection for the formerly colonised. It is this paternalistic narrative that emphasises Congolese dependence upon Belgium and intersects with Belgium's more contemporary 'peace building' policies in its former colonial territories.

Advocating human rights and 'good governance'

By extension, just as the apology is laden with paternalistic foreign policy lessons, one can observe that, like the British and German case studies,⁸⁸ it is also pregnant with universalistic and complacent assumptions of 'good governance'. In particular, this is manifested by Michel's announcement (within the apology speech) to 'fund a Patrice Lumumba foundation up to 3,750,000 EUR, supplemented by a minimum annual amount of 500,000 EUR' (Michel 2002: 52). 'The purpose of this foundation', Michel (2002: 52) explained, was 'to seek democratic development in Congo by financing of projects for prevention of such conflicts, strengthening the rule of law and training of youth'. Even looking beyond this rather parsimonious figure – a figure that Gibney (2002: 281) terms 'intolerable' and bordering 'on the obscene'⁸⁹ – there remain important conundrums with this discourse: Given the

⁸⁸ As explored in chapter 3, the German government emphasised its role in facilitating Namibian land reform. Chapter 5 analyses Britain's self appointed role in the consociational Northern Ireland peace process and its mediating between the supposed 'two traditions'.

⁸⁹ As Gibney (2002: 281) writes, 'a price tag of \$U.S.3 million for assassinating a national and world leader of this talent and magnitude is itself intolerable'. He later adds that 'three million dollars and a Patrice Lumumba Foundation in a country where war continues unabated and where AIDS will claim the lives of millions seems like a very good bargain for assuaging the Belgian guilt' (Gibney 2002: 282).

aforementioned various scandals among political and judicial elite circles in the preceding decade, there is a sense that Belgium is in no position to preach good governance. More pressingly, Leopoldian ‘governance’ of the Congo Free State entailed some of the worst crimes in human history, including causing approximately 10 million deaths and innumerable amputations (see Hochschild 1998). In more contemporary times, 1980s Belgian aid to Zaire under President Mobutu exceeded \$100million (Willame 1998: 27), a figure dwarfing that of the Lumumba fund and presumably not contributing to democratic development. It is this ideological complacency that sits with the overriding argument of the thesis: Despite the hypocrisy, there nevertheless remains, even in the apology itself, an enduring discourse that seeks to impose a Western hegemonic world view onto the erstwhile colony.

Exploring the Belgian colonial narrative

One MEP recently described Belgium as ‘a non country’ and ‘an artificial construction’ (quoted in BBC 2010b). To this end, it is useful to employ Benedict Anderson (1983) and remind oneself that all states are ‘imagined’. However, beneath the ranting of the fringe right-wing UK Independence Party, there is an element of truth: Belgium has historically had difficulty manufacturing a national consciousness, particularly considering its multilingual make-up. Thus, as explored in this section, a colonial memory based on Leopold’s divine rule and a compassionate Belgian civilising mission had become, even up to the 21st century, a central component of an otherwise weakly constructed Belgian identity (Ewans 2003; Vanthemsche 2006). Consequently, this section argues that the apology must be understood as a means by which Belgian elites responded and attempted to reappropriate (or at least attempt to carry out damage limitation on) central pillars of the state’s identity that had, in recent years, come under sustained contestation.

Like the German and British case studies,⁹⁰ the Belgian apology arose amidst increasing media and civil society awareness and critical examination of the colonial past. As explored in the previous chapter, German colonialism entered into the public spotlight through the publicity surrounding a relatively high profile reparations claim and the centenary of the start of the German-Herero War. In Belgium, colonial introspection reentered public discourse primarily through the explosive effects of two books: Adam Hochschild’s 1998 *King Leopold’s Ghosts*

⁹⁰ As illustrated in chapter 6, there is a sense in which the Italian apology also arose amidst increased societal introspection regarding the colonial past. However, it seems that this did not emerge under the same intensity as the other case studies of this thesis.

and Ludo De Witte's 1999 *'The assassination of Lumumba'*. Both these books generated enormous public attention, contestation and debate. In order to comprehend the impact of these books and the ensuing public debate, it is first necessary to explore the conventional state constructed memory of Belgium's colonial past.

The conventional narrative

As discussed in other chapters, there are inevitable problems with discussing a nation's constructed narrative as if it were one monologue. In Belgium this problem is even more pronounced as there are clear divergences in historical memory amongst the complex and pluralistic fabric of cultural, linguistic and political identities within the nation (see Labio 2002). Nevertheless, one can point to clear attempts among political elites to use the levers available to the state – public statues, education, museums and so forth – to manufacture a monolithic state crafted colonial narrative. Indeed, as explored below, it is the very heterogeneity of Belgian society and its absence of strong unifying myths that led the state to so forcefully forge such a unifying central colonial narrative.

Though the public were not initially enthusiastic colonialists, the colonial project was later seen as a valuable means by which to engineer this absent sense of national identity. Thus, despite being unpopular in his lifetime, on his death Belgian elites set about creating a Leopoldian cult, the purpose being to provide justification for colonialism and imbue the population with a patriotic 'colonial spirit' (Vanthemsche 2006: 92). The simple message, as Ewans (2003: 170) writes, was 'one of patriotic fervour, that their country, in the persons of brave and self sacrificing individuals, had brought the light of Christianity and civilisation to a savage and heathen continent'. Importantly, this 'official narrative' of a wise and pioneering Leopold and a benevolent Belgian project remained largely intact in mainstream discourse until the 1990s and even beyond (Vanthemsche 2006). Indeed, on writing a foreword to a 1999 edition of his book *The King Incorporated: Leopold the Second and the Congo*, Ascherson (1999: 10) observed that 'In my 1963 introduction, I remarked that the Belgians had avoided any real reassessment of the Congolese past, and that Leopold II was still honoured as a national hero for his *mission civilisatrice*. It never occurred to me that this would remain the case more than thirty years later'.

This lack of real assessment is reflected in education. In a Belgian schoolbook for 12 year olds in 2006 for instance, Belgian colonialism was presented in the following terms:

When the Belgians arrived in the Congo, they found a population that was victim of bloody rivalries and slave trade. Belgian civil servants, missionaries, doctors, colonialists and engineers civilized the black population step by step. They created modern cities, roads and railroads, harbours and airports, factories and mines, schools and hospitals. The work greatly improved the living conditions of the indigenous people (quoted in Vanthemsche 2006: 90).

In this respect, the reproduction of civilising narrative remained largely unchanged from Leopoldian times. Nevertheless, there is another sense in which the narrative may have altered from outright glorification to becoming a taboo (see Braembussche 2002) or subject to amnesia: Castryck (2006: 76-80), for instance, points to the amnesia within Belgian education where African studies are at the periphery of education and academia. Illustrative of this is how, in 2006, in the Flemish community net schools (the former state schools in Flanders) only one hour out of the entire school curriculum is allocated to 'The Belgian colonial adventure in the Congo' (Castryck 2006: 85).⁹¹ In the words of Guido Gryseels, Director of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, 'my generation was brought up with the view that Belgium had brought civilisation to the Congo, that we did nothing but good out there...I don't think that in my entire education I ever heard a critical word about our colonial past' (quoted in Ewans 2003: 170) The overall effect is, at least until recent contestation, a peculiar mix of taboo and glorification; taboo at the vast murders, slave labour and atrocity, glorification at Leopold's civilising endeavour.

Beyond education, the colonial patriotic message was also transmitted through the media and, most overtly, through the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren. In Castryck's (2006: 2) words, 'the museum is part and parcel of this history and is without doubt the single most important relic or witness to Belgian Colonialism'. In this sense, the museum is both 'exhibitioner' and 'exhibited' – in many respects more illuminative about Belgium and its constructed identity than about Africa (Castryck 2006: 2). It is therefore a useful exercise to explore the Belgian colonial narrative through the Royal Museum.

Colonial memories as located in the Museum for Central Africa

The museum was established by Leopold II as an 'ideological tool' (Rahier 2003: 61) through which to communicate a powerful propaganda message at the 1897 World Exhibition in

⁹¹ Castryck (2006:15) also points out that in the other three educational nets there was no provision for studying Belgian colonialism at all. This is not to say that school students receive no education in this history – individual teachers may choose to study this subject with their students.

Brussels. Indeed, the museum website states that the showcase was ‘to give the development and ‘civilization’ of Congo a higher profile, and also to give the Belgian public a better idea of the economic possibilities of the area, Leopold decided to establish a kind of museum to ‘showcase’ his Congo.’ (Royal Museum for Central Africa n.d.a). In terms of analysing the colonial narrative, it is significant that such jingoistic sentiments have largely remained. As Rahier (2003: 62) wrote just after the apology, ‘the propaganda message that Leopold II wanted to convey at the time is still there, displayed without subtlety, despite the superficial or cosmetic changes brought to the permanent exposition at various occasions’. Indeed, the director of the museum himself conceded in 2002 that ‘the museum itself hasn’t changed for 44 years’ and ‘has a colonial spirit to it’ (Osborn 2002). This colonial spirit has been widely deconstructed and critiqued by several authors (Rahier 2003; Hochschild 2005; Hasian and Wood 2010). However, to give a few examples of how these messages are conveyed one can, for instance, point to placards reading “‘La Belgique apportant la civilization au Congo” [Belgium bringing civilization to the Congo], “La Belgique apportant le bien-etre au Congo” [Belgium bringing well being to the Congo], “L’esclavage” [slavery]⁹² and “La Belgique apportant la securite au Congo” [Belgium bringing well-being to the Congo]’ (Hasian and Wood 2010: 136). Equally, Rahier (2003: 59) writes that

While some statues are made in what looks like shiny copper – the ones in which white bodies are displayed – others, representing exclusively African people, are made in a dark material that appears as secondary vis-a-vis the shiny copper. Most of the dark statues were installed in a lower position than the shiny copper ones, as if to suggest to the visitors that they represent people in a naturally lower position than the white bodies, which are the focus of the golden-like sculptures. When there is, in the latter, a black body accompanying the white character, it is almost always either a child or an adult in a subaltern position’.

In unravelling this conventional narrative, it is clear that even at the time of the 2002 apology and into the 21st Century, this officialised mnemonic site continued to reproduce an account of colonialism that celebrates Belgium’s civilising role, venerates Leopold and omits the mass atrocities committed in the Congo. Under these conditions, an apology and disavowal of colonialism seems quite infeasible. In many respects this is similar to the preceding chapter where it was demonstrated that in the 1980s and 1990s the narrative of a benevolent German

⁹² To be clear, the reference to slavery refers to Arab slavery. This is reinforced by depictions of ‘an Arab slave trader forcing an African woman into slavery after having killed her companion’ (Rahier 2003: 59). Indeed, Belgium liberating the Congolese from unscrupulous Arab slave trading was an important element of the Leopoliand propaganda message.

state (excluding the historical derailment of the Third Reich) prohibited an apology. Like the German case study, the Belgian apology arose in a context whereby this conventional narrative had come under sustained challenge.

Contesting the colonial narrative

As already alluded to, the catalysts for the robust challenge to the aforementioned colonial narrative was the publication of two books – Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghosts* and De Witte's *The Assassination of Patrice Lumumba*. However, one might refine this observation: The cause of this challenge was not so much the books themselves, but the *public reception* of these books. Certainly, the content was oppositional to the typical Belgian presentation of the past; Hochschild (1998) emotively used the word 'holocaust' in his discussion of events of the Congo Free State and the estimated 10 million death toll. Like the impact of Goldhagen's thesis in the German case study, the public reaction to these books cannot simply be explained as occurring through the exposure of sensational revelations of previously unknown events. Indeed, the gross human rights abuses in the CFS had been infamously publicised a century ago by, amongst others, Morel, Twain and Conrad and the Congo Reform Association (see Ascherson 1999: 12). Moreover, Belgian researchers including Jules Marchal, Danny Vangroenweghe, Jean Strengers, Jan Vansina and Jean-Luc Vellut had already previously exposed much of the information that Hochschild drew on (Castrick 2006: 5-6; Vanthemsche 2006). These books were compounded by the 2000 commercial release of the Raoul Peck (2000) film *Lumumba*, dramatising the final months of the Prime Minister's life. As such, the enormous public reaction to these books must be couched within underlying trends in Belgian society. As explored more extensively in the first section of this chapter, one can point to a particular turmoil within Belgian society, perhaps creating a social context in which these new revelations enmeshed with a public mood that was increasingly hostile to the orthodoxies of the political class.

Within the context of these releases, like the German case study, the previously tabooed⁹³ subject of the state's colonial history became a topic of popular and academic discussion. Where previously academic work challenging the core tenets of the official narrative was marginalised and received little public attention, the University of Ghent held a conference entitled 'Belgium's Africa Conference: Assessing the Belgian legacy in and on Africa: the social

⁹³ For a wider discussion on Belgian colonialism as a 'taboo', see Braembussche (2002).

sciences' in which de Witte was a participant (Ewans 2003: 177). Hochschild himself addressed audiences in Antwerp and Brussels, with listeners 'concerned about human rights' and, as he writes it, 'uniformly apologetic that they had learned nothing at school about their country's past in Africa' (Hochschild 2006: 311). Also contesting the official narrative, in 2004 Ostend's reverential statue of King Leopold II had one of the hands cut off of an adjacent Congolese figure that gazes admirably at the King. The anarchist group responsible demanded that the statue be critically annotated (Licata and Klein 2010).⁹⁴ More recently, in 2008 an artist smeared red paint onto a statue of Leopold at the Place du Trône in Brussels (Stanard 2011).

One can get a measure the impact of the immediate contestation on the colonial narrative by the Belgian state's defensive posture. The Belgian foreign minister released secret advice to Belgian diplomats around the world as to how to handle tricky questions regarding Hochschild's book; the premise being that 'a proactive public relations effort would be futile; instead, change the subject to Belgium's work for peace in Africa today' (Hochschild 2006: 312). Similarly, on the announcement that the RMCA would consider alterations to its exhibitions an official maintained that this was 'absolutely not because of the recent disreputable book by an American' (quoted in Hochschild 2006: 312).

Apology as a defence of the colonial narrative: 'How to pretend to acknowledge something without really doing so'

In the 2006 Afterword of *King Leopold's Ghost* Hochschild comments on some of these alterations to the RMCA in response to the recent challenges to the conventional colonial narrative. The museum website bills the 'Memory of Congo' exhibition as 'a new look at the colonial past in which not only the European, but also the African players take their part' (Royal Museum for Central Africa n.d.b). In other words, the new exhibition was a means in which a public forum for Belgian memory could respond to its recent challenges. Certainly the new exhibition did provide counter examples to the overarching-narrative; for instance, four of Morel's pictures of mutilated victims of the rubber harvest were displayed (Hasian and Wood 2010: 139) and there was a painting of an African man being whipped (Riding 2005). However, while these representations remain at the periphery of the exhibition, the overwhelming emphasis reiterates 'that the Congolese desired colonialism' and that, despite some

⁹⁴ Licata and Klein (2010: 55) write that such a critical annotation 'would change the monument's identity-related assertion from "We are a nation that colonized another for its own good" to "We are a nation that unfairly colonized another, but we have learned the critical lessons of that experience."'

uncontrolled excesses, the Congo remained a model colony (Hasian and Wood 2010: 138). Hochschild (2006: 312) terms these representations – that is the interweaving of negative images within a larger picture of positive imagery – as an example of ‘how to pretend to acknowledge something without really doing so’.

The point here is that the technique of pretending to acknowledge something without really doing so is also central to understanding the narrative weaved in Michel’s apology. This is to say that the Lumumba Committee and the entailing apology can be, as communicated by Louis Michel, framed as part of ‘a transparent attempt to cast light, without taboos, on the African past’ (Persdienst Buitenlandse Zaken 2004). As such, the Lumumba Committee is presented almost as if the Belgian state has now lain to rest its misdemeanours with Congo. Of course the assassination of Patrice Lumumba is a significant crime for which it is appropriate to acknowledge culpability. However, as Gibney (2002: 281) also argues, ‘these events were simply manifestations of much larger phenomena and much deeper wrongs’. In this case, like the British and German apologies, offering *mea culpa* for one aspect of Belgian colonialism is to isolate the incident and, at least by implication, detach it from the wider structural mechanisms, ideologies and mindsets that provided the context. In this sense, apologising for the Lumumba assassination is to portray certain events as ‘over-stepping the mark’ or ‘out of character’, while negating the more comprehensive and firmly rooted injustices of which this murder was symptomatic.

Where the wider colonial project was not subject to *mea culpa*, sitting with the methodology of the thesis, an analysis of governmental rhetoric outside of the apology text provides an insight into the broader narratives proffered regarding the colonial past. An illuminating case of point was the response to the airing of the BBC documentary *White King, Red Rubber, Black Death* (Bate 2003), a documentary that repeats many of the core tenets of Hochschild’s book. After apparent opposition to the documentary from the Royal Family, state television allegedly agreed to censure any comparison to Hitler and any reference to the sources of the current Royal Family’s wealth (The Flemish Republic 2004). Moreover, Michel took the unusual step of releasing an official statement through the Foreign Affairs Press Office condemning the programme as ‘partisan’ and failing to recognise a ‘set of positive contributions that our Congolese partners do not fail to recognise’ (Persdienst Buitenlandse Zaken 2004). More recently, in his later position as an MEP, Michel, the very politician who offered the apology, labelled Leopold II as ‘an ambitious visionary’ and ‘a hero who had ambitions for a small country like Belgium’. Against accusations that Leopoldian colonialism turned Congo into a

labour camp, he contended that it was ‘a false accusation. Leopold II does not deserve such a reproach. The Belgians built railways, schools and hospitals and stimulated economic growth in Congo. A labour camp? Not at all’. Although conceding that ‘some things did go wrong’, he maintained that ‘eventually civilisation was introduced’ (quoted in Flandersnews.be 2010). Coming from a liberal leaning, human rights advocate, such rhetoric correlates with the central arguments of the thesis: There is a sense in which apology does impart revised and penitent aspersions on a particular aspect of the past; yet, adjacent to the *mea culpa*, there endures clichéd assumptions of civilisation, progress and veneration of leadership that are reminiscent of the conventional colonial discourse. In this sense, it seems that the proffering of apology for narrow aspects of the past is not a matter of radically overhauling prevailing colonial mindsets. Instead, in conceding some limited aspect of the past, it is a discursive act of preserving, in so far as possible, the larger architecture of the colonial narrative against further contestation.

Speaking for the Subaltern: The Eurocentric narrative of The Lumumba commission

There is equally a sense in which the Commission investigating Lumumba’s death, in its very establishment and structure, is itself pregnant with Eurocentric assumptions and complacencies. Such assumptions are couched in the enquiry’s positivistic and methodical language. For instance, the commission speaks of ‘experts’ for ‘content related and historic-scientific work’ as well as the ‘scientific objectivity of this commission’ (Chambre des Représentants 2001a). Likewise, Michel employs a similar discourse in the actual apology, esteeming the ‘reliability and quality of work’ and its ‘pleasing contribution of scientific, cultural, historical, political and even therapeutic character’ (Michel 2002: 52). It seems, then, that there is a certain triumphalism in the committee’s methodological process and findings, almost as if it is only the scientific rigour of the commission that could uncover such past events. Of course, like the British governmental Inquiry into Bloody Sunday (see chapter 5), the idea that this was an act of violence by a colonial power had long been understood by the colonised. Yet, the implications of the proceedings are that such findings can only be validated or authenticated under the auspices of the metropole’s state apparatus. To recall (see chapter 2), postcolonial thought is sceptical as to the existence of one ‘objective truth’ and posits that such discourse is inextricably concurrent to the vocabulary of domination and imperialism. Linked with the central argument of this thesis, this comprises a discernible process by which the mechanics and trappings of a European state narrate and authorise a

particular officialised subaltern past, in this case, 'the exact circumstances of the assassination of Partrice Lumumba and the possible involvement of European politicians'.⁹⁵

Additionally, this self-appointed and rather pious solemnity and scientific rigour was extended to illuminative degrees in the committee's investigative process. As recorded in the report, 'during the appointment of experts, candidates were not only assessed on their scientific qualities but emphasis was also placed on their independence and neutrality' (Chambre des Représentants 2001a). In this regard, it is interesting that the 'experts' did not include any African historians in the composition of the Commission. In the interest of objectivity, four domestic historians were picked from different language and ideological groups within Belgium (Castruck 2006: 77). However, though Belgians could seemingly be impartial, as (Castruck 2006: 83) writes, 'Belgian paternalism decided that no Congolese historian was able to be neutral in this matter'. Instead, there was one Congolese historian, Jean Omasombo, who 'assisted' the experts 'in a number of specific assignments' (Chambre des Représentants 2001a). Omasombo later recorded that his role amounted to 'window dressing' (quoted in Bustin 2002: 546), saying

I was officially part of the team with the ambiguous denomination of 'ad hoc' and/or 'deputy' expert. As far as I was concerned (...) the reason for this treatment was that they thought that I, as a Congolese, could not be neutral. Though I was 'expert', during the few months I was permitted to meet the 'real experts' I was imposed a 'methodology' consisting above all of interdictions: I could not work with the group and I was not permitted to 'touch Belgian archives in order to 'protect me', so they said! (...) It was for me the occasion to feel being a Negro, being perceived as having no proper personality, because of biological determinism, representing part of the world and being its spokesman. I really could feel how much the colonial view was still heavily present in the conduct (quoted in Castruck 2006: 84-85).

Beyond the omission of Congolese historians, the methodology of the commission - relying on the 'factual' data of the archives - also contributed to the omission of Congolese accounts. In total only about thirty people testified before the commission, almost all of whom were Belgian politicians or civil servants. 'Only a small number of Congolese testified, and they were often people available in Belgium at the time' (Verdoolaege and Kerstens 2004: 88).

⁹⁵ To use the full title of the committee.

Unsurprisingly, this methodology and composition of the Commission manifests itself in the positivist, clipped and authoritative findings that the Commission narrates. To take just two examples:

With regard to the exact circumstances of the murder of Patrice Lumumba: after a thorough analysis it is highly probable that Lumumba was executed in the jungle on 17 January 1961 between 9.40pm and 9.43pm' (Chambre des Représentants 2001b).

And

The execution occurred in the presence of Katangan ministers and was carried out by Katangan gendarmes or police officers, in the presence of a Belgian police commissioner and three Belgian officers who were under the authority, leadership and supervision of the Katangan authorities' (Chambre des Représentants 2001b).

As Bustin (2002: 547) writes, the text 'strikes a middle-of the road, 'adult' prose'', akin to 'settling an argument between children'. Such discourse reflects the rhetoric of the 'objective' mechanics of Lumumba's death. However, it negates the subjective mentalities of racism and superiority that underpinned both the colonial process and Lumumba's assassination. Such sentiments could not be captured in the format of the commission and, as such, are negated in the official narratives of Lumumba's death.

Conclusion

In examining the 2002 Belgian apology for involvement in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, this chapter has unfolded a context that straddles a nexus of social, political and mnemonic conditions from which the apology both arises and addresses. The first section of the chapter analysed the party political environment from which the apology arose. In a similar way to the British case study (chapter 5), the apology occurred under a period of discontent with perceived corruption within the orthodox political-class. In this respect, the apology expediently intersected with the new coalition's championing of a 'new political culture' and a construction of their own political image as trustworthy and transparent (cf. Kerstens 2008). It has been suggested that such political posturing indicates, to some extent, a *mea culpa* that is rather more absorbed with domestic presentational and electoral matters, than a thorough examination of violence committed against the former colony. Likewise, in foreign policy terms, the offering of apology for this past episode could further lubricate the government's parlance of international human rights. In this way, the contrition was in line with the government's geo-political objectives of playing a more active diplomatic role in the region of its former colony (cf. Kerstens 2008). In this respect, it has been contended that the

apology is pregnant with paternalistic overtones that underscore the merits of Belgian benevolence in the region.

Finally, the chapter positioned the apology within the increasingly contested 'official' state narrative of the colonial past. Certainly recognition of culpability for Lumumba's death does, in one sense, represent a break from the typically aggrandising plotline of Belgium's past interactions with the Congo. Nevertheless, the analysis here underscored numerous ways by which, even in apology, familiar colonial discourses and mindsets circulate. This is not least indicated by the apologising agent's continued apologia and reverence for Leopold II. Likewise, the chapter has explored processes by which such sites as school textbooks, curriculums and the Royal Museum of Central Africa reproduce paternalist and, to varying degrees, exalting assumptions of the colonial past. Indeed, even the very constitution of the Lumumba commission facilitated both a condescending stance towards Congolese historians and a discernibly self-congratulating approach to the metropole undertaking a 'scientific' investigation into violence committed in the former colony. Sitting, then, with the overriding argument of the thesis, this chapter has examined a web of contestations and expediencies that intersect with the state's *mea culpa*. Inseparably from this, it has underscored processes by which, despite the narrow apology for a particularly egregious episode of violence, there is a persistence of discourses, representations and ideologies that are reminiscent of those that the colonialists used to legitimise their endeavours. These discourses linger beyond, and even within, the apology.

CHAPTER 5: THE BRITISH APOLOGY FOR BLOODY SUNDAY

The conclusions of this report are absolutely clear. There is no doubt, there is nothing equivocal, there are no ambiguities. What happened on Bloody Sunday was both unjustified and unjustifiable. It was wrong. Some members of our armed forces acted wrongly. The Government is ultimately responsible for the conduct of our armed forces and for that, on behalf of the Government – and indeed our country – I am deeply sorry.

David Cameron (2010)

Introduction

On 30 January 1972 the British army opened fire at a civil rights march in Derry, Northern Ireland, killing fourteen⁹⁶ unarmed civilians. In a subsequent report initiated the next day by the British government, the Widgery Tribunal, to all extents and purposes, exonerated the soldiers and army chain of command⁹⁷ and stated that there was a 'strong suspicion' that some of those killed 'had been firing weapons or handling bombs in the course of the afternoon' (Widgery 2001: 100) This report is now discredited and universally regarded as unsafe. Indeed, as Hayes and Campbell (2005: 145) astutely contend, the Widgery Tribunal was 'from the beginning, overtly political in its function'. By contrast, The Bloody Sunday Inquiry (hereafter referred to as the Saville Inquiry), which published its findings in 2010 and drew an immediate Parliamentary apology from British Prime Minister David Cameron, has been held up as a model example of a state holding itself to account (Cameron 2010). The argument outlaid in this chapter is that, while the findings of the Saville Inquiry are clearly more palatable than that of Widgery, the Saville Inquiry's establishment and subsequent apology are no less political in their function. Like the other case studies, it is argued here that there is no single political expedience that elicited the apology, but rather several political factors that coalesced in facilitating it. Recognising this, this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section situates Saville within the context of the Northern Ireland Peace Process. It is posited that a renewed introspection into the massacre operated as a means to facilitate the incorporation of the nationalist community within the consociational vision of the

⁹⁶ Thirteen died on the day. A fourteenth died later due to his injuries.

⁹⁷ Widgery (2001: 99-100) does write that at one end of the scale the 'firing bordered on the reckless'. However, he writes that 'there is no reason to suppose that the soldiers would have opened fire if they had not been fired upon first', and moreover that 'there was no general breakdown in discipline. For the most part the soldiers acted as they did because they thought their orders required it'.

process. Moreover, this renewed judicial process reinforced Britain's posturing as an impartial and objective arbitrator in the process.

The second section, explores the style of political discourse fostered by British Prime Ministers, Tony Blair and David Cameron (the key figures in offering contrition). It is suggested that these Prime Ministers' propensities for emotionalised gestures of pseudo sincerity enabled a forum in which the apology becomes – to some extent – a narcissistic story about the supposedly desirable traits of these politicians. The final section, like other case studies in this thesis, traces the modes by which the apology reconfigures a narrative that resembles tenets of the archetypal colonial discourse. It is suggested that the apology shows a reverence for the armed forces that sits with idealised colonial fantasies of the heroic and chivalrous British soldier. By extension, the apology advances a plotline that detaches the massacre from the wider colonial enterprise in Northern Ireland and, instead, discursively contextualises it within a Northern Ireland that is caricatured with the colonial imagery of chaos and disorder.

The Saville Inquiry as a parallel to the Peace Process

To restate; a core argument of the thesis is that state leaders draw on *mea culpa* in the service of political expediency. In concurrence with this argument, this section situates the Saville Inquiry and subsequent apology within the context of London objectives in regards to the Northern Ireland Peace Process. To this end, the Saville Inquiry reinforced and buttressed the structure and mentality of the Peace Process in two overlapping ways: Firstly, within a consociational process that gives institutional eminence to the constructed communities of Irish Nationalists and Ulster Unionists (Gilligan 2003: 22), the inquiry functioned to symbolise Britain's posturing that it could mediate between the communities in a non-biased and objective manner. Secondly, by going some way towards ratifying nationalist memories of this pivotal and emotive event, the Inquiry served as a means to entice nationalists into the dynamics the peace process. In this sense, readdressing an alienating past event sought, in the parlance of the process, to 'build confidence' and demonstrate to the nationalist community Britain's benign intentions.

Contesting and converging memories: Ratifying the Nationalist narrative

So as to grasp the mnemonic and political significance of both Bloody Sunday and the Saville Inquiry within the Peace Process, it is first necessary to explore the divergent ways in which this event is conventionally recollected, both by British elites and by the nationalist

community. In undertaking this task, this is not to say that the nationalist community (or, indeed, British elites) is a homogenous entity, nor is it to contend that there is a single monolithic narrative of Bloody Sunday within this sector of society. Indeed, as Halbwachs (1980: 48) recognised, each member of a group draws from societal memory from their own particular viewpoint. Nevertheless, by pointing to particular mnemonic sites, it is possible to locate common themes within this sector of society. Indeed, as Conway (2003: 305) comments (prior to the apology), Bloody Sunday traditionally evoked 'two contesting memories' – that of the 'official' memory encapsulated in the Widgery Tribunal, and that of a 'popular memory [that] has emerged in resistance to this that carries the remembrances of the victims' families and of the wider Nationalist community' in Ireland.

Embodying the official British memory, the Widgery Tribunal, which was initiated the day after the massacre and published its findings just eleven weeks later, essentially served to hastily acquit British security services of any wrong-doing, while apportioning blame to the protestors and 'hooligans'⁹⁸ (Widgery 2001: 98). Stand out sentences from Widgery's rather brief conclusions affirm that 'there is no reason to suppose that the soldiers would have opened fire if they had not been fired upon first', and that 'there was no general breakdown in [army] discipline'. Regarding the protestors, he stated that 'there would have been no deaths in Londonderry on 30 January if those who organised the illegal march had not thereby created a highly dangerous situation in which a clash between demonstrators and the security forces was almost inevitable' (Widgery 2001: 97). Likewise, 'none of the deceased or wounded is proved to have been shot whilst handling a firearm or bomb. Some are wholly acquitted of complicity in such action; but there is a strong suspicion that some others had been firing weapons or handling bombs in the course of the afternoon' (Widgery 2001: 99-100). The overt political function of these findings by the former army officer appear obvious: In broad daylight in front of television cameras the British state had killed its own citizens who were attending a civil rights march. Thus, in the mist of worldwide protest⁹⁹ and the transparent breakdown of order within its own sovereign territory, it was thereby necessary to attempt,

⁹⁸ A word that Widgery employs several times in the report. For instance, he describes how 'hooligan gangs in Londonderry constituted a special threat to security forces' (Widgery 2001: 16). Obviously this word confers on the protestors a mindless violence that is detached from a legitimate civil rights movement.

⁹⁹ British embassies around the world were picketed, with the British embassy in Dublin besieged and set on fire. There were expressions of solidarity and sympathy from the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and the African National Congress (McCann 1992: 206).

however crudely, to construct a narrative that underscored the security forces' use of violence as legitimate and to cast those that dissented as illegitimate.

The nationalist memory, in contrast, is conventionally represented in oral storytelling, popular culture (for example, the pop band U2's song 'Sunday Bloody Sunday'), an annual public commemoration in Derry (see Dawson 2005), 'street murals, granite monuments and commemorative rituals' in the town (Conway 2003: 306; see also Conway 2010). One permanent memorial on Rossville Street, the *Bloody Sunday Monument*, is dedicated to the memory of those who 'were murdered by British paratroopers'. Likewise, the *Bloody Sunday Mural* represents the iconic image of Father Edward Daly waving a white handkerchief and attempting to guide the mortally injured John Duddy to safety. The mural also depicts an armed British soldier standing (or trampling) on a white civil rights banner. The civil rights banner is blood soaked in a manner that creates a red cross against the white background so as to resemble the English flag. These images, amongst others within Derry, interweave the memory of Bloody Sunday within the fabric and landscape of the community. The images clearly contest the Widgery narrative, and portray an aggressive and murderous British military in juxtaposition to the unarmed civil rights protestors. On their part, the families of those who died have become central carriers of this counter narrative, continually campaigning for the recognition of the innocence of their relatives. In particular, this has manifested itself in civil society movements in the form of *The Bloody Sunday Initiative*, a group formed in the late 1980s by relatives of the victims, and by the launch of *The Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign*, initiated in 1992 on the 20th anniversary of the massacre (Dawson 2005: 154). Thus, the central tenets of this narrative rest on the innocence of the victims and the unchecked aggression of the British army.

Clearly, then, the official narrative enshrined in the Widgery report is not only contradictory to the nationalist memory, but is also highly antagonistic to it: Compounding the fact that British security forces shot those who dissented to its policies, the judicial processes of the British state, supposedly designed to uphold law and justice, instead served the interests of the British establishment in acquitting the killers and criminalising the dead. In Walsh's (2000: 284) words, 'the failure of law and justice encapsulated by Bloody Sunday is so fundamental that it is seared into the collective consciousness of the nationalist community. It, more than any other individual incident, law or practice, has instilled in the nationalist community a fundamental distrust in the capacity of the law and judicial process to protect them against hostile forces within the province of Northern Ireland.' Indeed, as Cameron (2010) himself

acknowledged in his apology, Bloody Sunday marked an escalation in IRA recruitment and a spiralling of violence.

In this way, one must locate the apology and shifting 'official' memory both within processes of powerful contestation towards the narrative offered by the Widgery report and within shifting political contexts and expediencies. In this vein, the Widgery Report was published in and around the context of the breakdown of the Stormont Assembly, the imposition of direct rule and a challenge to the monopoly of the British state's violence. As such, it can be seen as a knee-jerk act of preserving the state security forces' immediate legitimacy, and therefore, by necessity, was an act of marginalising a community that it perceived (or wished to construct) as a threat. In this context, it appears that the political imperative was the immediate preservation of state legitimacy. Moreover, the exclusion of the nationalist and wider Irish Catholic community sat with both the dynamics of the political situation in Northern Ireland (i.e. direct rule) and the concurrent 'othering' of Irish migrants that was virulent within Britain of which, despite their white skin, reflected an enduring colonial racism (see Hickman 1995; Mac an Ghaill 2000).¹⁰⁰

In contrast, by the 1990s and 21st century, one can observe a shifting societal and political landscape in which these narratives circulate. On the one hand, in Britain (like other case studies) the most overt markers of anti Irish-racism had, by the 1990s, declined, even if it had not entirely disappeared. Moreover, in an increasingly multi-cultural society, alternative ethnic minorities had acquired the role of 'other' within British society. More significantly, in regards to the onset of the 1990s Peace Process, where direct rule required the active marginalisation of the nationalist community, the shift towards devolved governance required the nationalist community's active participation in the governance of the province. To this end, it is useful to draw on the work of Melissa Nobles. In her book, *The Politics of Official Apologies*, Nobles (2008: 2) contends that 'organised groups and state actors demand and provide apologies in order to help change the terms and meanings of national membership'. She argues that apologies are an important device through which to ratify a politically ostracised group's interpretation of history. As such, they are a means for political elites to register their ideological and moral support for certain minority groups, thereby bringing

¹⁰⁰ Of the 19th and early 20th century representation of the Irish 'other', Mac an Ghaill (2000: 138) shows that 'there was a wide range of markers of difference that juxtaposed the dirtiness, drunkenness, laziness and violence of the alien Irish with the purity, industriousness and civilization of the English'.

‘outsider groups’ in from the political wilderness and incorporating their historical struggles into a mainstream encompassing narrative.

Considering Nobles’ insights, it is clear that the Saville Inquiry and David Cameron’s apology did go a significant way to ratifying dual pillars of the nationalist memory – the innocence of the victims and the brutal culpability of the Army. Most significantly (through his paraphrasing of the report) Cameron (2010) contradicted Widgery by recognising that ‘on balance the first shot in the vicinity of the march was fired by the British Army’ and that ‘none of the casualties shot by soldiers of Support Company was armed with a firearm.’ Moreover, in contrast to Widgery’s account that there had been no general breakdown in army discipline, Cameron said ‘that Support Company “reacted by losing their self, forgetting or ignoring their instructions and training”’ with ““a serious and widespread loss of fire discipline””. The Prime Minister also graphically relayed Saville’s findings that ‘one person was shot while “crawling away from the soldiers”, and another ‘was shot, in all probability, “when he was lying mortally wounded on the ground”’. Indeed, with an obvious intimation to the nationalist audience, Cameron addressed his comments ‘to those looking for statements of innocence’ that ‘crucially...none of the casualties was posing a threat of causing death or serious injury, or indeed was doing anything else that could on any view justify their shooting’ (Cameron 2010). As such, Cameron consciously ratified two central elements of the nationalist narrative: Firstly, he affirmed the innocence of those killed. Secondly, although he did not use such words as ‘murder’, Cameron utilised Saville to ratify the nationalist narrative of unjustified and unprovoked killing.

It is, at this juncture, pertinent to recall insights from Chapter 2, whereby it was contended that societal memories cannot be reconfigured with instantaneous effect, but can only shift over an elongated period. Likewise, this also sits with Yamazaki’s (2004) observation that apologies are not ‘standalone’ texts, but are frequently co-constructed through extended processes entailing a certain to-ing and fro-ing between various interested parties and their mediators. In this sense, although it was the Westminster apology that garnered a high degree of media attention, one must consider this as an aspect of a series of political and rhetorical exchanges that paralleled the Peace Process and both addressed and made escalating overtures to the aforementioned nationalist narrative. Evidencing this: at the embryonic stage of the Peace Process, British Prime Minister John Major stated in an open letter to John Hume in December 1992 that ‘those who were killed on ‘Bloody Sunday’ should be regarded as innocent of any allegation that they were shot whilst handling firearms or explosives. I hope the families of those who died will accept that assurance’ (quoted in BBC 2005b). It is not

surprising that such a timid statement regarding such a violent and judicially mishandled event failed to appease the victims' families. Following 1997, a series of affairs coalesced to intensify the necessity for introspection. The most significant event was the publication of Don Mullan's (1997) book *Eyewitness Bloody Sunday* – a book that interviewed scores of witnesses and convincingly discredited much of Widgery's conclusions. In a related move, the Irish government announced its own commissioning of a report into the events of Bloody Sunday based on the recent evidence that had come to light (Herron and Lynch 2006: 72). Finally, 1997 saw the election of a Labour government in Westminster, thereby creating a British government that was arguably more reflexive and open to contrition than its predecessor (see pages 144-148). According to his Chief of Staff, Tony Blair was himself willing to offer an apology, but was persuaded by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Irish government that an apology without an independent inquiry would not be sufficient (Powell 2008: 45). This account is corroborated by former Irish Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, who revealed he 'had put a lot of pressure on Tony Blair' because, in his words:

The Irish government had done a submission, and we had put a lot at stake in building up nationalist confidence that we would be able to work with the British government and work with Tony Blair. So to have them refuse to give us the inquiry, a full judicial sworn inquiry in front of judges at that time, it would have unsettled all the organisations that were in Derry fighting the British for a long time' (quoted in McDonald 2010).

The purpose of illustrating this political wrangling is to illustrate that Cameron's overtures to the nationalist memory - the recognition of the innocence of the victims and the unjustifiable nature of the killings - cannot be understood in isolation. In fact, Cameron simply happened to be the inhabitant of Downing Street on the day of Saville's publication (although clearly Cameron did make the decision to respond to the inquiry by offering an apology). Thus, just as the Good Friday Agreement must be located in the context of numerous developments (both before and since), so too must the apology. To this end, the reorientation of Britain's 'official' stance on Bloody Sunday did not just occur in 2010, but developed, non-coincidentally, in a manner that paralleled the peace process. Indeed, subsequent to the apology, in 2011 Queen Elizabeth II made the first visit of the British head of state to Ireland since its independence. Though unspecific, she continued the theme of contrition, extending her 'deep sympathy' 'To all those who have suffered as a consequence of our troubled past' (quoted in Cowell 2011). That the various contrite stances appear over an elongated period reflects both the nature of shifting memory (that it cannot be instantaneously transfigured) and its concurrence with the logic of the Peace Process. In other words, where a final constitutional arrangement for

Northern Ireland is uncertain and continually delayed, this establishes a situation whereby it 'provides a framework through which disagreement can be constrained without resort to violence' (Gilligan 2003: 22). In this way, the situation of perpetual conflict management and elongated outreaching to the two communities (in this case the nationalist community) sits with the nature of the Peace Process, which requires a 'permanent process' (Gilligan 2003).

British fair play: Treating 'both sides' equally

Beyond enticing the nationalist community into the Peace Process, a second aspect of the Saville Inquiry was in symbolising and further crystallising British elites' unwaveringly rhetorical emphasis on Britain as an impartial facilitator of peace. A central component of this posturing rests on the concept of parity of self esteem. The concept of parity of self esteem 'is grounded in the assumption that there are two mutually exclusive and hostile cultures in Northern Ireland, and that those cultures must be accommodated' (Ruohomäki 2010: 164). This is to say that the approach to the 'Peace Process' has been for the negotiators to deal even-handedly with both so called 'traditions' in Northern Ireland, in regards to institutional arrangements, but also in regards to the dignity accorded to their history and culture. Northern Ireland Secretary Patrick Mayhew defined this in 1999, saying that 'each of the main components of the community will be given recognition by the other, and in any settlement each must be accorded parity of esteem, the validity of its tradition receiving unqualified recognition' (quoted in Ruohomäki 2010: 168). Likewise, the *Frameworks for the Future* document published by the UK and Republic of Ireland governments in 1995 confirmed that

Any new political arrangements must be based on full respect for, and protection and expression of, the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland and even-handedly afford both communities in Northern Ireland parity of esteem and treatment (cited in Ruohomäki 2010: 169).

Such outwardly equal treatment is meticulously embodied in the language regarding the institutional and constitutional make ups of official texts on the peace process, enabling 'specific procedures for the allocation of committee chairs, ministers, and committee membership in proportion to party strength in the assembly.' There are also arrangements for parallel consent and weighted majority voting regarding key decisions (Wolff 2003: 9). The assumption of such a parity of esteem is that the British government may act as a neutral arbitrator between the two traditions. This supposed impartiality of the British government was most equivocally codified in the 1993 Downing Street Declaration that underscores that Britain has 'no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland'. Instead, according to

the document, Britain's role is to 'encourage, facilitate and enable the achievement of such agreement over a period through a process of dialogue and cooperation based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland' (Reynolds and Major 1993). It is within this context of the supposed equality of the two traditions that one can situate the Saville Inquiry. Indeed, in his account of the Peace Process, Tony Blair's Chief of staff, Jonathan Powell (2008: 46), noted that 'the aim [of the Saville Inquiry] had been to demonstrate to nationalists and republicans that we were even-handed and that the British government no longer had anything to hide'. In other words, the Saville Inquiry was forged almost as a microcosm of the peace process; it symbolically underscored early in Blair's premiership that both the British government and judicial process could operate transparently and openly in deeply divisive issues of the past.

The idea that Britain is a neutral arbitrator in the conflict and the Saville Inquiry, rests on the assumption that Ireland 'is deeply, indeed irrefutably divided between two competing ethno-national communities' (Taylor 2006). This notion is not simply conjecture but is ingrained in the very fabric of the peace process: Indeed, the very nature of the peace process, from the Downing Street Declaration, the Good Friday Agreement to elite discourse habitually uses the language of two 'traditions'. In doing so, it fosters a mentality in which Northern Irish society is characterised as consisting of two competing sides¹⁰¹ – Protestants and Catholics – who are uncritically assumed to be synonymous with Ulster Unionism or Irish Nationalism (Taylor 2006: 217). Indeed, this is inscribed in the findings of the Saville Inquiry, reading that 'throughout much of Northern Ireland there were deep and seemingly irreconcilable divisions between nationalists (predominantly Roman Catholic and a majority in the city) and unionists (generally Protestant and a majority in Northern Ireland as a whole). In general terms the former wanted Northern Ireland to leave the United Kingdom and unite with the rest of Ireland, while the latter wanted it to remain part of the United Kingdom' (Saville, Hoyt et al. 2010: Volume I chapter 2). This concept of 'sides' within a zero-sum game is perfectly illustrated in British Prime Minister John Major's reflection that 'if one side was happy, I knew I had probably got it wrong. If my proposals attracted no more than grumbling and grudging acquiescence from both sides, I was perhaps on the right track' (quoted in Dixon 2001: 358). The idea that *Bloody Sunday*, *The Troubles*, the *Peace Process* or any other euphemism are about two-sides is both

¹⁰¹ Blair's chief advisor, Jonathon Powell (2005), reflected (five years before the publishing of the report) that, in hindsight, Saville 'had failed to give satisfaction to either side'.

an oversimplification and a distortion of Britain's colonial role in such creations. Firstly, the euphemistic two 'traditions' or 'communities' are not intrinsic givens, but imagined constructs: They are based on the colonial and condescending mentality that Northern Ireland can only be understood through the lens of irreconcilable ethno-national divisions. It is to attribute to the province a kind of tribalism that is frequently ascribed to other colonised territories; namely that the colonised society, unlike the metropole, is not stratified by class or ideology, but a pre-modern, irrational form of clanship.

Moreover, if one is to follow the sport's analogy of the 'two-sides', this is to cast Britain in the dubious position as officiator. This adjudicating position is reflected in both a British Law Lord again residing over the events of Bloody Sunday and Britain's rhetorical positioning as an 'unselfish' party and facilitator of peace. This is to elevate Britain above the sectarian divide and negate the fact that Britain and its security forces are themselves a central party in the conflict. As McCann (2008) writes, 'the British Government is one of the "sides" as far as Bloody Sunday is concerned. The January 1972 atrocity wasn't perpetrated by one community against the other. It was perpetrated by soldiers of the British government'. Beyond Bloody Sunday, the British Army and security forces have participated in 'counter insurgency' methods, including collusion with Loyalist paramilitary organisations,¹⁰² internment without trial, curfew,¹⁰³ mass house searches and seemingly arbitrary arrests (Campbell and Connelly 2003). Casting the London government as a mediating force above the sectarian divide is to show a negation as to Britain's colonial role in instigating 'the Troubles'.

One must also be critical as to the political realities of any claim to neutrality embedded within the Saville Inquiry and the wider Peace Process. The consociational nature of the process – together with Britain's supposed neutrality – have created tensions that are ambiguous, contradictorily and serve to reinforce prevailing inequalities. In the political rhetoric of the metropolises' politicians, such contradictions can be demonstrated in Major's dual remarks that he was 'scrupulously fair to both traditions...It does not favour one side or the other', while

¹⁰² Collusion refers to members of the security forces operating either formerly or informally in cohort with paramilitary organisations, death squads and gangs to carry out extra-legal activities such as the elimination of dissent. For a discussion of collusion within Northern Ireland see Symth and Ellison (2000: ch 8).

¹⁰³ For an analysis of the July 1970 Army curfew in Belfast's Lower Falls district see Campbell and Connelly (2003).

simultaneously being 'Four Square' behind the Union (quoted in Dixon 2001: 357-358).¹⁰⁴ Showing a similar contradiction and ambivalence, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, announced 'I value the Union. I have throughout my time in this job tried to facilitate an accommodation, and I have said at times therefore I am impartial. I value the Union but I am not taking one side or the other, because we need in this process to pull together' (cited in Dixon 2001: 358-359). Beyond such oratory, the same contradictions are evident in the documents that underpin the peace process. For instance, the Downing Street Declaration simultaneously recognises that

The British Government agree that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish.

And that

The Prime Minister, on behalf of the British Government, reaffirms that they will uphold the democratic wish of the greater number of the people of Northern Ireland on the issue of whether they prefer to support the Union or a sovereign united Ireland (Reynolds and Major 1993).

In other words, the Peace Process pays lip service to the irreconcilable aspirations of both nationalists and unionists. It affirms Britain's openness to a united Ireland and the nationalists' right to self determination, while simultaneously making the former a virtual impossibility owing to the existing demographics of Northern Ireland. Consequently, such claims to impartiality – as embodied in both the Saville Inquiry and the peace process more broadly – must be scrutinised through a critical lens. Britain remains sovereign over Northern Ireland and its claim to impartiality should not be dehistoricised from colonial, judicial, military and economic measures that continue to impact on social relations to this day. To relate this to the overriding argument of the thesis, one can point to how the Saville Inquiry and subsequent apology, reflect a metropole that is supposedly benign and judicious in its discourse, yet still reproduces conditions that resemble colonial political complexions. In making this argument, one must recognise that clearly the conditions of the Peace Process are both different and

¹⁰⁴ Almost as if there is a script that successive Prime Minister's are compelled to follow, Thatcher was 'Rock Firm for the Union', Major 'Four-square' behind the Union (quoted in Dixon 2001: 357). Cameron, referring to possible Scottish independence, said he was a 'unionist head, heart and soul' (cited in The Telegraph 2012).

favourable to the periods of British direct rule. Nevertheless, the posturing of neutrality and 'no selfish interest' serve the enduring configuration of Westminster sovereignty over Northern Ireland.

Cultivating the political style of Tony Blair and David Cameron

Chapter 4 contended that an important feature of Belgium's foreign minister, Louis Michel, offering an apology was in underscoring his government's more amiable and reflexive nature. In contrast to the previous administration that was considered stiff collared, contrition appeared as a device to show a certain humility and 'of the people' quality. This section argues that one can apply a similar analysis to Cameron and Blair's respective roles in the Bloody Sunday apology. This is to posit that the offering of the apology was facilitated by the Prime Ministers' propensities for emotive acts of public pseudo-sincerity. In this sense, it is contended that the *mea culpa* feeds into a certain showmanship in regards to the Prime Ministers, whereby the apology becomes, in part, an indulgent act of utilising atrocity in the cultivation of a perceived political style. This line of argument is situated within an analysis of the increasing inclination towards a colloquial, emotionalised and personalised style of contemporary electoral politics.

The personalisation and emotionalisation of political discourse

Of course, 'personality politics' and the political use of affected emotion is nothing new; as far back as antiquity, Roman statesmen Cicero (Cicero and Watson 1986: 135) advised on the utility of tears in the practice of oratory. Likewise, before Putin and the Clintons, senior statesmen such as Lincoln and Churchill were no strangers to welling up in public. However, social changes, the growth of instantaneous multi-media platforms and the infusion of popular culture into politics have resulted in the emergence of an 'emotionalized experience from politics' that is more prominent than in the past (Richards 2004: 340). In line with this, there is decreasingly a distinction between the 'public' and 'private' lives of political leaders, creating a transformative effect on the way the public 'consume' and the media and politicians construct politics. To this end, the voting public increasingly demand that, beyond policies or ideology, their leaders exhibit desirable personality traits – warmth, strength and relaxed sincerity (Cronin 2008: 349). In turn, politicians acquiesce and buttress these demands: For instance, Cameron illustrated this trend in the run up to the British 2010 General Election, observing that 'if you want to be prime minister you should open up' and that 'people want to know what makes you tick, what motivates you, and I think trying to explain a bit about your family,

your background, your life, what it's like, just helps people to see what you're like' (quoted in Mulholland 2010). To this end, democratic politicians are, away from 'hard politics', increasingly required to garner support on chat shows, candid interviews in glossy magazines and so forth.

Compared to the US, in the UK there has conventionally been more constrained in the exhibition of the biography and personal qualities of leading politicians. However, like other European leaders – Shroeder, Verhofstadt – the 1990s seem to have bucked this trend. As Langer (2010: 63) writes, Blair 'is a paradigmatic example of the politicisation of private persona'. He clearly invested in and was skilled at appearing as 'one of us' and 'down to earth'. He was accomplished at such techniques as shifting between a vernacular and more formal style of language; the repetition of personal pronouns; a seemingly off-the-cuff 'script' interspersed with moments of hesitation – all of which coalesced to anchor his discourse in that of the 'normal guy' (Fairclough 2000: 7-8; Pearce 2001). John Lancaster (2003) captures how Blair's 'dewy-eyed, slightly fumbling sincerity – his brilliantly articulate impersonation of earnest inarticulacy – has all along been tied to this self-projection as a Good Man'. His striving to appear as down to earth is reflected in his infamous sentiment that 'I think that most people who have dealt with me think I am a pretty straight sort of guy' (quoted in Abrams 1997). Likewise, a 1997 election showed Blair in his kitchen with his family, drinking tea and teasing his son about homework.¹⁰⁵ Entangled in this is a propensity to permeate his discourse with emotionalised and sentimental enunciations that could 'capture the mood' of the public. This is most vividly illustrated with his mournful and faltering 'People's Princess' sound bite at the death of Princess Diana.¹⁰⁶

On his part, there can be no doubt that Cameron has adopted, even imitated, Blair's style; cultivating himself the reputation as 'heir to Blair' (Davis and Seymour 2010: 751). In a strikingly similar move to Blair, Cameron allowed cameras into his home during breakfast with his wife and children. He later showed his apparent common touch by observing that 'along with draught Guinness in cans, Sky+ is one of the great inventions of our time' (cited in Mulholland 2010). The purpose of illuminating the projected political style of these Prime Ministers is to demonstrate how it facilitates contrition. Where previous British leaders had

¹⁰⁵ For a detailed deconstruction of this, see Pearce (2001).

¹⁰⁶ For an analysis of this speech and its relationship to Blair's rhetorical style, see Fairclough (2000).

shown a rather reserved and ill at ease manner in their dealing with awkward issues (to recall, Major's statement that 'those shot should be regarded innocent' was delivered in a letter to John Hume), Cameron and Blair are clearly more comfortable with highly public and emotionalised gestures. Indeed, one can point to numerous examples of this where this has led to other instances of contrition: Blair, for instance, offered high profile apologies to the Guildford four who spent 15 years in prison after wrongly being convicted of pub bombings in Guildford and Woolwich (McKittrick 2000). If not entirely meeting the standards of apology, Blair also offered contrite sentiments regarding Britain's historic role in the slave trade. Cameron has offered apologies for failing to foresee the 2008 banking crisis (Nelson 2009) and for not including the decision to cut child benefit in the election manifesto (Wintour and Watt 2010). In a strikingly similar speech to the Bloody Sunday apology, Cameron (2012) offered a parliamentary *apology* 'on behalf of the Government – and indeed our country' for both failings that led to the Hillsborough disaster¹⁰⁷ and police efforts to falsely implicate Liverpool supporters as responsible. Clearly, such apparent sincerity sits comfortably with *mea culpa*: Apologies are, after all, apparent expressions of empathy with another's suffering, a public expression of introspection, self-awareness and ethical concern.

The expedience of relaxed sincerity

On one level, the politicisation of public persona – the music a politician listens to, the football team they support - is trivial and banal. On another level, as Langer (2010: 62) writes, 'the personal is not just visible or public but also politicized because it is used in the construction of a leader's persona and its assessment by the media, woven into ideological commitments and used to infer and underwrite (or undermine) political values as well as to try to legitimize policy'. This is to say that the leader's public persona is not simply of incidental importance, but is constructed to set the tone for his/her leadership and contains a clear electoral expediency. In this way, just as the Belgian apology occurred in the context of perceived endemic corruption among political elites (see chapter 4), so too did Blair and Cameron's contributions. The 1997 election of the Labour government came off the heels of 'Tory sleaze'; the term 'sleaze' entering the lexicon of British political discourse amid financial malpractices, (for instance allegations that cash had been paid for parliamentary questions), assorted extra-marital affairs and a culture of cronyism (see Farrell, McAllister et al. 1998). Not dissimilarly,

¹⁰⁷ The Hillsborough disaster involved 96 supporters dying at a crush at a football match in 1989. Cameron's apology followed the release of the Hillsborough Independent Panel report.

the 2010 election was competed against the backdrop of public outrage at *Daily Telegraph* revelations regarding widespread corruption and misuse of MPs' expenses. In these contexts, both Blair and Cameron sought to position themselves as champions of transparency, and openness. Blair famously proclaimed that his government would be 'whiter than white, cleaner than clean' (cited in McNair 2004: 326), while Cameron spoke of the need to 'blow apart the old system. Overthrow the old ways. Put people in the driving seat' (cited in Shipman 2010). As such, one can situate Blair's initial willingness to apologise and subsequent establishment of the Saville Enquiry amidst a range of measures designed to underscore a new openness and transparency at the heart of British governance.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, Cameron's candid account of the Bloody Sunday massacre spoke to an eagerness to reaffirm - early his leadership - a statesmen like posture; that he was a man of integrity and frankness. Indeed, Cameron (Cameron 2010) was careful to underscore in his apology that he had 'acted in good faith by publishing the Tribunal's findings as quickly as possible after the General Election'.

To retrace this point back to the key argument of the thesis: it seems, indeed, that one can point to a certain political expediency in the establishment of the Saville Inquiry. For both Blair and Cameron, these gestures provided opportune moments to exhibit electorally popular gestures at times of deep-seated public disquiet with the political establishment. In particular, for Cameron, the apology served as a posture to further discard his party's 'nasty'¹⁰⁹ image and continue its rebranding as a new and supposedly more compassionate and moderate Conservative party. Moreover, for both Prime Ministers, the gesture suggests to both domestic and foreign audiences a principled statesmen-like leadership and a moral authority.

Nevertheless, in observing such political expediencies of the Saville Inquiry, one must also recognise that this pertains to a more complex process than these elites master-manipulating the past to their own cynical ends. As noted in chapter 2, politicians do not have a free hand in selecting past episodes for representation, but must deal with episodes that are salient and contested at the particular moment. As such, it is clear that to a large extent Cameron did not unrestrictedly select a past episode to exhibit his cultivated self image, but rather the episode was selected by circumstance. That is, the Saville Inquiry published its findings while he was in

¹⁰⁸ Other measures include the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the reform of the House of Lords.

¹⁰⁹ In 2002 Theresa May, current Home Secretary in the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition, famously described in the Conservative conference that some people call the Conservatives 'the nasty party'.

office and he, as Prime Minister, had little choice but to publicly acknowledge it. Moreover, as a judicial inquiry set up before he came into office, Cameron had approaching zero input into the findings that Saville arrived at. It is certainly true that Cameron and his advisors could underscore certain findings of the Saville Inquiry and gloss over others; he could also draw on the Inquiry in a way that magnifies his political style. However, while this can be seen as politically opportunistic and even advantageous, it must be understood that he was acting within certain parameters that were outside his complete control. A similar analysis can be applied to Blair's establishment of the Saville Inquiry: Certainly this move did fit with his posturing as a statesman of integrity and frankness, but again this is not an episode entirely selected by him, but one that was about within societal contestation. The point of illustrating these constraints is to position the analysis within the wider argument of the thesis: Clearly politicians do use *mea culpa* in their political expedience. Nevertheless, these politicians still have to wrestle with awkward contestations within society and prominent episodes of the past that are not entirely of their choosing.

To this end, whatever the constraints and contestations placed upon Blair and Cameron, it is clear that these contrite stances did buttress a symbolic political expediency. In observing this, it is necessary to highlight a certain narcissism that sits at the heart of this process. That is, the apology becomes a story about the politician and his desirable and magnanimous traits. By extension, the memory of a colonial massacre is transfigured, at least partially, into a narrative about contemporary leadership in the metropole. This correlates with one of the key pillars of the enduring complacencies of apology: That it is the metropolitan elite who speaks and, in recounting colonial violence, is aggrandising himself/herself. In this analysis, one must maintain a scepticism as to any notion that the apology represented a genuine disavowal of colonialism. Indeed, it seems that, more than the ravages of colonialism, the infusion of the private and public persona and the emotionalisation of political discourse speaks to presentational and electoral considerations of the contemporary media age.

Apology as a defence of Britain's wider role in Northern Ireland

One of the key arguments of this thesis is that, in *mea culpa*, state elites reformulate narratives that resemble the core legitimising tenets of the conventional colonial enterprise. In deconstructing the parliamentary speeches by which Blair established the Saville Inquiry and Cameron apologised, it is possible to point to three key modes by which this process reconfigures a discourse that is reminiscent of the colonial narrative. First, even in apology,

the speeches demonstrate a reverence for the armed forces that has its roots in imperial fantasies of intrepid, righteous and law abiding British soldiers. Second, in contextualising Bloody Sunday, Cameron portrays 1970s Northern Ireland in archetypal colonial terms; as chaotic, violent and awash with terrorism. Third - related to this representation of Ireland - there is a decipherable absence of any contextualisation of the massacre within the logic of British colonialism. That is, rather than showing introspection or contrition for the colonial enterprise, the apology discursively divorces the massacre from wider colonial repression and positions Bloody Sunday as an anomaly within otherwise seemingly favourable and benign British security operations. These arguments are expanded upon below.

Reverence/veneration for the army

With some hyperbole, in his 1995 speech to the Conservative Party conference, Defence Minister Michael Portillo said

Let us teach our children the history of this remarkable country. I don't mean the wishy-washy sociological flimflam that passes for history in many of our schools today. I don't mean the politically correct, debunking, anti-patriotic nonsense of modern text books. I mean the real history of heroes and bravery, of good versus evil, of freedom against tyranny. Of Nelson and Wellington and Churchill....We are not ashamed to celebrate Britain's military prowess. On the land. At the sea. Or in the skies [....]. We will speak of pride, of honour, of valour in battle and yes, of glory (quoted in Ball 1998: 160).

Of course, the UK is not the only state where a reverence for the army has been harnessed in the construction of the imagined community. Indeed, 'the soldier hero has proved to be one of the most durable and powerful forms of idealized masculinity within Western cultural traditions since the time of the ancient Greeks', with this image pervading notions of nationhood in many polities (Dawson 1994: 1). Yet, as Dawson (1994: 1) writes, 'in England, soldier heroes such as Shakespeare's patriot king, Henry V, and popular heroes such as Drake, Marlborough, Wolfe, Nelson and Wellington have historically occupied the symbolic centre of English national identity.' In his book, *Warrior Nation*, Paris (2000) traces how an idealised and masculinised conception of the soldier – heroic, brave, chivalrous, loyal and honourable – has permeated British popular culture since Victorian times and informed policy as well as notions of identity and nationhood. Such fantasies of fearless adventure remain abundant in more contemporary popular representations of the military, such as Andy McNab's (1993) bestseller *Bravo-Two Zero*, Michael Ashcroft's (2008) *Special Forces Heroes: Extraordinary True Stories of Daring and Valour* and the popular soap actor, Ross Kemp's (2010), recent book *Warriors*:

British Fighting Heroes. Even where the legitimacy of recent wars, such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq, have been highly contested and debated within British society, there has been widespread valorisation of the army, even among critics of the war, whereby any criticism of the serving forces is often seen as taboo.

Such a reverence for the military, situated within romanticised notions of courage and duty, can be observed in both Blair and Cameron's discourse in regards to Bloody Sunday. In his establishment of the Saville Inquiry, Blair (1998) proclaimed that

I want to place on record our strongest admiration for the way in which our security forces have responded over the years to terrorism in Northern Ireland. They set an example to the world of restraint combined with effectiveness given the dangerous circumstances in which they are called on to operate. Young men and women daily risk their lives protecting the lives of others and upholding the rule of law, carrying out a task which we have laid upon them.

Likewise, in his parliamentary speech on Bloody Sunday, Cameron (2010) prefixed the apology, saying that

I am deeply patriotic. I never want to believe anything bad about our country. I never want to call into question the behaviour of our soldiers and our army who I believe to be the best in the world.

In the same speech he later said

Our Armed Forces displayed enormous courage and professionalism in upholding democracy and the rule of law in Northern Ireland. Acting in support of the police, they played a major part in setting the conditions that have made peaceful politics possible.

In this way, even in dealing with a colonial massacre perpetrated by British troops, Blair and Cameron continue to display an unshakeable reverence and veneration for the army. As discussed in Chapter 2 in regards to collective memory, pointing to the Prime Ministers' continued reverence of the British military is not necessarily to attribute grand neo-colonial schemes on behalf of these men (although they have certainly shown a proclivity for overseas wars on rather negligible pretexts). Rather, it is to show how traditional and axiomatic vocabularies can become obdurate and recurring in political discourse. That is, there is a socialised expectation in Britain where it is anticipated and, in some respects, demanded that politicians venerate the army and security services. It is in this discourse that one can point to persistent vocabularies that are reminiscent of the reverence of the colonial 'heroic' soldier.

Continuing this theme, perhaps Cameron's (2010) most striking comment in his apology was that 'you do not defend the British Army by defending the indefensible'. This is to tacitly acknowledge that Widgery's exoneration of the army, while expedient at the time, could not be beneficial for the long term credibility of the institution. Indeed, after such prolonged contestation, (in the forms of previously mentioned family campaigns, academic research and so on) and elite ceding (Major's statement on the dead men's innocence) the narrative fostered by the Widgery Tribunal was simply no longer credible or tenable. Consequently, to refer back to Chapter 1, it is possible to see that apologies can function so as to carry out remedial work on one's image by simultaneously castigating oneself and saving face; that is, by showing mortification for a particular act, one can forge an image whereby this act is seen as outside the scope of the offender's normal behaviour and understood by the offender to be unacceptable. Thus, the recognition that 'Bloody Sunday was both unjustified and unjustifiable' (Cameron 2010) was a statement that, in a sense, actually bolsters the impression of Britain's security record in Northern Ireland. Cameron underscores this with the observation that 'we do not honour all those who served with distinction in keeping the peace and upholding the law in Northern Ireland by hiding from the truth'. In this way, Cameron's message is clear: While the massacre of civilians in Derry was an unacceptable and isolated incident, the wider security operations kept the peace and upheld law. This represents an enduring emphasis on the benevolent and positive role of British militarism.

Representing Northern Ireland as lawless and chaotic

Beyond the enduring reverence for the British army, one can trace a discourse proffered by Cameron that positions the massacre within a landscape that is imbued with characteristics that are reminiscent of aspects of the archetypal imagined colony. Just as Blair (1998) juxtaposed 'terrorism' and 'dangerous circumstances' with the British troops 'upholding the rule of law', one can trace an almost identical discourse in Cameron's apology. For instance, in the parliamentary apology Cameron (2010) contextualised the massacre in the following terms

Since 1969 the security situation in Northern Ireland had been declining significantly. Three days before 'Bloody Sunday', two RUC officers - one a Catholic - were shot by the IRA in Londonderry, the first police officers killed in the city during the Troubles. A third of the city of Derry had become a no-go area for the RUC and the Army. And in the end 1972 was to prove Northern Ireland's bloodiest year by far with nearly 500 people killed.

This depiction of Northern Ireland adheres to a classic caricature of a colony; a Hobbesian state of nature – chaotic, disorderly with a mindless and irrational violence. Indeed, despite Ireland's geographical location in Europe, such rhetoric is highly reminiscent of Edward Said's (1978) elaboration on the construction of the Oriental 'other'; that the colonised is characterised - in opposition to the metropole - as chaotic and irrational, as opposed to orderly and rational.

While Cameron explicitly located Bloody Sunday within the well-trodden British narrative of 'the Troubles', there was a marked decontextualisation of the role of the British colonial enterprise and the Unionist administration in creating a context in which 'the Troubles' took hold and civilians were massacred. There was, in other words, an absence of introspection as to why the 'security situation' had deteriorated. In the apology there was no mention of systemic discrimination against Catholics: discrimination in access to public housing (Walsh 2000: 23), internment without trial, the prohibition of protest, the precedent of RUC baton charges on previous Derry protests (Purdie 1990: 3) or the Special Powers Act.¹¹⁰ Interestingly, the Saville report itself actually acknowledges aspects of this context in Volume I, Chapter II, recognising the hostility created by the ban on marches and that 'the nationalist community in particular regarded internment without trial with abhorrence, considering it yet another illegitimate means employed by the unionist Government'. Indeed, though Cameron (2010) selectively quotes from chapter II of the Saville Inquiry in describing parts of Derry as a "no go" area, he omitted Saville's finding from the exact same paragraph that states that by January 1972 'the nationalist community had largely turned against the soldiers, many believing that the Army, as well as the RUC, were agents of an oppressive regime'(Saville, Hoyt et al. 2010 Volume I chapter 2). In this way, empowered by his position as Prime Minister, his Parliamentary address, replete with extensive coverage of the apology, afforded him the opportunity to modulate Saville's findings into a more politically agreeable format. In some respects, Cameron does not sanitise the bloodiest findings of the Saville Inquiry and he does graphically illustrate the immediate effects of the shootings. Nevertheless, the wider context portrayed by the Prime Minister paints a narrative that casts Bloody Sunday as an anomaly; it conceals any idea that Bloody Sunday was part of the fabric – albeit a particularly grotesque

¹¹⁰ Section 1 of the Special Powers Act gave the minister for home affairs the power 'to take all such steps and issue all such orders as may be necessary for preserving the peace and maintaining order' (cited in Walsh 2000: 33). Clearly this is an aspect of subverting the rule of law to enable extreme measures to combat dissent. Such measures 'conferred on the police sweeping powers of stop, arrest, detention, interrogation, entry, search and seizure' (Walsh 2000: 33).

example – of a more mundane and sustained colonial repression. Thus, while the *mea culpa* clearly shifts the narrative of Bloody Sunday from certain pillars of the Widgery plotline, familiar representations of the wider colonial narrative endure.

Conclusion

In line with the overall argument of the thesis, this chapter has traced the modes by which the elongated process of apology for Bloody Sunday has facilitated political expediency. Most significantly, it has been suggested that the evolving narrative proffered by British elites and the process of *mea culpa* has paralleled the Northern Ireland Peace Process, both temporally and in terms of its underlying logic. Where Bloody Sunday has conventionally been a memory that fostered understandable distrust of the British establishment among the nationalist community, the process of contrition has sought to ratify key nationalist perceptions of this contested and emotive event (particularly the culpability of British soldiers and the innocence of the victims), thereby seeking to build bridges with this community in their necessary inclusion into the process. Beyond the enticement of the nationalist community, the Saville Inquiry has also functioned as a device to underscore Britain's supposedly impartial and facilitating role in the Peace Process.

The second section positioned the apology amidst the cultivated political styles of Tony Blair and David Cameron. It is posited that the apology was partially facilitated by these Prime Ministers' predilection for emotionalised gestures of apparent sincerity. To this end, the colonial atrocities perpetuated in Northern Ireland are, to a degree, transfigured into narratives regarding the cosmetic personal qualities of the London politicians. The final part of the chapter offered an analysis of the shifting plotline enunciated by the process of apology. In one sense, by unambiguously apportioning blame to the soldiers and emphasising the innocence of the victims, the contrition diverges significantly from Widgery's earlier exoneration of British forces. Nevertheless, despite this shift in the narrative of the events of the day in question, it is suggested here that many of the core colonial complacencies remain in circulation. For instance, there remains a reverence of the British army where, outside of Bloody Sunday, the security services are venerated for their heroism, and valour. This creates a plotline whereby Bloody Sunday appears as an anomaly within Britain's otherwise progressive role in the province. Moreover, while the British army is celebrated for its role in upholding the rule of law, by contrast, 1970s Northern Ireland is depicted in classic colonialist terms as chaotic and violent.

CHAPTER 6: THE ITALIAN APOLOGY FOR COLONIALISM IN LIBYA

It is my duty to express to you, in the name of the Italian people, our regret and apologies for the deep wounds that we have caused you.

Silvio Berlusconi (quoted in Gazzini 2009)

Introduction

In the Belgian and British case studies, it has been possible to point to politicians who have cultivated a compassionate style of politics that sits with apparently contrite stances towards the past. In contrast, Silvio Berlusconi, at least in the projected media image of him, is not renowned for such a style.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, on 30th August 2008 Berlusconi symbolically lowered his head before the son of a hero of the Libyan resistance and uttered the above apology for the Italian colonial period in Libya (Gazzini 2009). Accompanying this apology, Berlusconi and his Libyan counterpart, Colonel Gaddafi, committed their states to *The Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya*.¹¹² As is the goal of this thesis, this chapter deconstructs the apology along with the adjacent treaty and accompanying discourse. In doing so, the chapter interprets particular narratives conveyed by the apology and situates such enunciations within the context of dynamics within Italian politics and foreign affairs, especially in regards to bilateral relations with Libya. Like other case studies, there are a multiplicity of narratives and meanings imparted by the apology, many of which are seemingly designed to alter depending on the given target audience. Such discrepancy thereby allows for the incongruity of Gaddafi claiming the apology represented a 'historic' moment and disavowal of Italy's 'killing, destruction and repression' (quoted in Sarrar 2008), while Berlusconi somewhat more flippantly suggested that the treaty equated to leading to fewer immigrants and more oil for Italy (Dinmore and Saleh 2008).

In recognising the multifariousness of narratives emanating through the apology, this chapter is thereby divided into three sections. The first section explores the way in which Italian colonialism has frequently and unsurprisingly remained a fractural episode in the states'

¹¹¹ For example, one thinks of the infamous case where in April 2009 he advised 17,000 Italians made homeless by an earthquake in L'Aquila that 'they should see it like a weekend of camping'. Earlier that year, Berlusconi dismissed the idea of extra security forces on the street to confront rising rape cases, saying 'we would need as many soldiers as there are beautiful girls in Italy – which we will never manage' (quoted in Kington 2010).

¹¹² Henceforth this treaty is referred to simply as 'the treaty' or 'the Benghazi treaty'.

bilateral relations, with the apology thereby serving as a device by which to reconcile relations. Moreover, in entering into such a *Treaty of Friendship* with a central state of the European Union, the apology/treaty acted as a symbolic gesture to further indicate Libya's pre-Arab Spring rehabilitation into the 'international community'.

The second section locates the ways in which Italy's self interest in regards to economics and immigration is embedded within the treaty. Whereas similar self interest appears to be evident in other apologies, strikingly – unlike the German case study where economic self interest is concealed beneath obscure language – in this case study such self interest is far more overt and even bragged about by the Italian prime minister. In an analysis of the ways in which this self interest is inscribed in the treaty, it is contended that this reproduces a recognisably colonial script. That is, while the treaty assists enormous strategic access to both the development and consumption of Libyan natural resources, in return it commits Italy to completing 'basic infrastructure projects' in Libya, including health care facilities, a highway and the provision of scholarships in Italian universities (Camera del Deputati 2008). This resembles the archetypical depiction of a benevolent colonial Italy bringing medical sanitation, modern transportation and education to its erstwhile colony. Moreover, in terms of the draconian provisions for immigration consolidated within the treaty, it is argued that this aspect of the agreement can be situated within a wider political discourse that both securitises and racialises the immigration debate, reproducing the image of the African 'other' that is both threatening and requires securing against.

The final section locates the apology within the fluctuating spectrum of the wider colonial narrative as constructed within Italy since 1945. It is posited that, though the *mea culpa* does correspond with a series of more introspective governmental gestures over the last decade and a half, the apology largely reproduces the conventional compulsions towards obfuscation and silence. In this manner, the vague apology – without reference to any specific crimes – lends itself to the wider societal trend (outside of a handful of academic works) of evading any genuine introspection into the atrocities of colonialism. Moreover, an analysis of surrounding rhetoric from both Berlusconi and his colleagues illustrates a political establishment that continues to advance a particular discourse that reflects familiar cultural complacencies. Such discourse includes ideas of the 'superiority' of Western civilisation in juxtaposition to Islam, notions of the civilising role of Italy in Libya and trends in fascist rehabilitation. Thus, in making the above arguments, it is suggested that – in important ways – the apology and adjacent

discourses reconfigure a narrative that resembles conventional notions of Italy's benign and progressive role in Libya.¹¹³

Scripting reconciliation and rehabilitation

As explored in Chapter 1, the most basic function of apology is to act as a gesture of reconciliation. In this way, the apology and accompanying treaty 'contributed to creating a favourable climate for a major improvement in bilateral relations' between Italy and Libya' (Ronzitti 2009: 125). As such, this section posits that the apology functions as a device to further normalise bilateral Italian relations with Libya and, more broadly, to further emphasise Libya's 'rehabilitation' into the so called international community. The apology serves these purposes in three important ways. Firstly, as Lind (2008) theorised in relation to other case studies,¹¹⁴ the apology acted as an indicator of Italy's peaceful intentions towards Libya. Secondly, in Gaddafi cultivating the depravity of Italian colonialism as an ideological pillar in his regime, an apology thereby endorsed an integral aspect of his claims to legitimacy, while eliminating a thorny issue between the two countries that has intermittently undermined bilateral relations. Thirdly, in signing the *Treaty of Friendship*, Italy thereby played an important role in affirming Libya's consolidated position in the international community. These points are considered in more detail in the following passages. However, before doing so, it is necessary to contextualise the 2008 apology and demonstrate the timely convergence of both Italy and Libya's shared interest in the North African state's reintegration into the international community.

In the parlance of Washington, by the 1980s Libya was regarded as a 'rogue' or 'pariah' state (Takeyh 2001; Oakes 2011). This was especially following the shooting of a 1984 policewoman outside the Libyan embassy in London, the state's apparent links to a 1986 terrorist attack on a West Berlin discotheque and the 1988 bombing of flight Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie killing 270 civilians. These events resulted in the 1992 implementation of a UN embargo on aviation and weapons transfers, followed by the 1993 freeze of Libyan assets (Schwartz 2007: 557). More

¹¹³ In the process of finalising this project, Chiara De Cesari's (2012) article *The paradoxes of colonial reparation: foreclosing memory and the 2008 Italy- Libya Friendship Treaty* was published. This author was not aware of the article until September 2012 when proof reading the chapter. Like this chapter, Cesari also emphasises the strategic expediencies of the treaty in terms of immigration and the economy. She also discusses the process of 'social forgetting' (De Cesari 2012: 317) within Italian society. Any overlap with De Cesari's excellent analysis is purely coincidental.

¹¹⁴ Lind (2008) is essentially concerned with apologies from Japan and Germany for World War II atrocities.

than any other state, Italy has had a continued interest in Libya's reintegration into the international community. On the one hand, as explored more thoroughly in the next section, Italy is highly dependent upon Libya in terms of access to energy sources. However, of equal importance, successive Italian governments have recognised the geopolitical strategic importance of Libya to Mediterranean security interests – previously in terms of a bulwark against Soviet expansionism in the region and, more recently, as an ally in the perceived conflict with Islamic fundamentalism (Varvelli 2010: 117). Similarly, Libya is seen as both a problem and potential solution to alarmist and securitised notions of illegal immigration into Europe. Finally, Libya's geographical position converges with Italy's aspirations to be a medium power in the region whereby, since at least the 1980s, Italian governments of varying ideologies have sought to position Italy in the 'geopolitical role of 'mediator' or 'bridge-builder' between Europe, North Africa and, occasionally, the Middle East' (Coralluzzo 2008: 116). Thus, as a foreign policy aimed at stabilising and establishing privileged economic relations with geographically proximate countries, Italy has consistently forged a policy of maintaining a dialogue with Libya with the aim of promoting its inclusion into normalised and cordial international relations (Coralluzzo 2008: 117). On Gaddafi's part, there was also a convergence of interest in terms of his pre-2011 desired reintegration into the international community, especially given the dissolution of the Soviet sphere of influence leaving his position somewhat more isolated. Equally, the post-2001 onset of the War on Terror did not provide an international climate favourable to isolated and authoritarian Arabic leaders. It is within this pre Arab Spring context that one must locate the apology and, more broadly, Libya's normalisation of relations between Italy and other Western states.

Writing the 'normalisation' of relations

In terms of enhancing or 'normalising' Italian-Libyan bilateral relations, it is useful to draw on the work of Jenifer Lind to illustrate the symbolic and communicative significance of apologies between states. Lind (2003) draws on constructivist theory to hold that there is a link between ideas, discourse and perceived threats. To this end, she demonstrates that denial and/or glorification of past atrocity damage bilateral relations and create the perception of a state having hostile intentions. On the contrary, states that apologise and atone for the past can appear to have peaceful intentions and a desire to restore good relations (Lind 2008). That the apology and accompanying treaty were a means of forging more cordial bilateral-relations is beyond dispute. Indeed, the treaty itself being entitled 'The Treaty of friendship, partnership and cooperation' thereby gives a flavour of this consolidated relationship. Moreover, just as Lind emphasised that apology can be a device for eliminating hostile postures and offering a

metaphorical olive branch, this, too, is codified in the treaty. For instance, the treaty invites Libya to no longer celebrate October the 30th as the 'Day of Vengeance'¹¹⁵ and that both countries will supposedly consider August 30th as 'Libyan – Italian Friendship day'. More significantly, Articles 1 -7 of the treaty under the subheading 'General Principles' establish procedures for the respect of sovereign equality, commitment not to resort to threat or use of force and commitment to non-interference in internal affairs (Camera del Deputati 2008). It should be noted that these points were considered more than just banal diplomatic courtesies, especially given that in 1986 relations hit crisis point when, following US bombings of Tripoli,¹¹⁶ Libya responded by launching two SS-1 Scud missiles at US military installations on the Italian island of Lampedusa (Varvelli 2010: 119). While there are no suggestions that missiles had been launched from any Italian based stations, Gaddafi claimed that use had been made of a US transmission station situated on the island (Ronzitti 2009: 126). It therefore appears that this event had been taken into account in the Treaty of Friendship, with the clause 'not to use or allow the use of their territories in any hostile act against the other party' (Camera del Deputati 2008).¹¹⁷ As such, a treaty seemingly precluding violence and the use of force, including the use of territories, had specific importance to the military postures of the two states. Thus, if we are to understand apologies as discursive scripts that indicate non-hostile intentions, this seems to be affirmed by the apology's accompanying Treaty. Despite such commitments, Italy played a collaborative role in the NATO led 2011 war in Libya, with Italian airfields used for bombing raids (Willey 2012) and, symbolically, a ballroom used by Mussolini adopted as a headquarters for NATO commanders and intelligence personnel (Coughlin 2011).

More than just signalling supposedly peaceful intentions, the treaty and apology served to underscore Libya's apparent pre 2011 rehabilitation into the international community. As already mentioned, Italian foreign policy had consistently placed emphasis on bilateral dialogue and inclusiveness with Libya. By 2008, these objectives had converged with Libya's, with Gaddafi having made several cautious overtures at renewed acceptance; most notably gestures such as surrendering the main suspect of the Lockerbie Bombing, Libya's post-2001

¹¹⁵ The 'Day of Vengeance' marked the 1970 expulsion of Italian settlers from Libya.

¹¹⁶ President Reagan ordered *Operation El Dorado Canyon* in response to the bombing of a Berlin discotheque that killed two US soldiers.

¹¹⁷ Notwithstanding these commitments, in the midst of international condemnation of Gaddafi's response to the Arab Spring, the Italian government, after initial caution, pledged support for NATO operations in Libya, offered support to the rebels and allowed NATO the use of strategic air bases (see Lombardi 2011).

collaboration with the War on Terror and its 2003 renunciation of nuclear and chemical weapons (for more details, see Zoubir 2002; 2009). Thus, the treaty's endorsement of 'friendship' with a Western state was to further impart Libya as an integrated and legitimate member of the international community. Indeed, beyond Libya as a state, in mentioning Gaddafi as 'the *leader* of the Revolution' (Camera del Deputati 2008), the treaty adopted his regime's phraseology and endowed his leadership with a form of international recognition.

In the same way as imbuing international state legitimacy, the apology can be understood as a script for affirming one of the central legitimising tenets of Gaddafi's domestic leadership. From the inception of his leadership, Gaddafi drew on Italian colonialism as a unifying rallying cry through which to juxtapose his revolutionary regime. This is most evident in the expulsion of approximately 20,000 Italians and the appropriation of their property shortly after coming to power. Moreover, throughout his rule, Gaddafi drew on the necessity for apology and reparations as a central ideological objective of his regime. Indeed, on coming to power he vowed not to visit Italy until Rome apologised (Zoubir 2009: 411). In this sense, the apology allowed Gaddafi to claim a moral and rhetorical vindication in regard to his efforts to elicit an apology. Thus, the pomp of the ceremonial returning of the Venus of Cyrene statue and Berlusconi's bow before the son of a Libyan resistance leader appear designed for a Libyan audience. It is here, then, that one can grasp the divergent representations of the apology by the two leaders: Where Berlusconi promoted the economic benefits to the Italian audience, Gaddafi emphasised the contrite sentiments of the apology. In doing so, he stated that 'in this historic document, Italy apologises for its killing, destruction and repression against Libyans during the colonial rule' (quoted in Sarrar 2008). This is to suggest a somewhat more emphatic apology than actually offered in either the treaty or Berlusconi's speech.

The economics and migratory dimensions of apology

A reading of the accompanying treaty makes it evident that beneath the apology lies a patently *realpolitik* deal concerning relations pertaining to both economics and immigration. Rather than based on inference, this is plainly stated by Berlusconi himself, with the Italian Prime Minister widely reported as saying that the treaty would lead 'to fewer illegal immigrants leaving from the coast of Libya and coming to us, and more Libyan oil and gas' (quoted in Dinmore and Saleh 2008). Extending from this, although the treaty is framed in terms of forging an equal partnership, this section contends that a closer analysis reflects an endurance of colonial-like postures that emphasise familiar narratives of European expertise and

infrastructure building while maintaining essentially exploitative access to natural resources. Moreover, an analysis of the immigration policies attached to the treaty and openly boasted about by Italian political elites reflects a familiar discourse which securitises the African 'other' and legitimises both their exclusion from Italian society as well as draconian security responses.

Before turning to the particular ways in which the immigration and economic agreements have been scripted, it is first necessary to briefly sketch the economic context in which the treaty took place. The central importance of Libya in Italy's energy policy can be vividly illustrated with several observations: Libya is Italy's primary supplier of oil and third largest supplier of natural gas (Varvelli 2010: 117). Since 2004, the Italian energy company, ENI, has used a subsea pipeline to export almost 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas each year (Varvelli 2010: 117). Despite Italy's aforementioned desire for Libya's reintegration into the international community, in some senses its renewed dealings with other states represented a decline in Italy's privileged relationship in comparison to other powers, even if Libya's more open market benefited Italy in absolute terms (Varvelli 2010: 122). As Varvelli (2010: 122) records 'between 2002 and 2006, Libyan exports to Italy dropped from 42.8 per cent of the total to 37.4 per cent, while imports also dropped from 25 per cent to 14 per cent of the total. The indispensable reciprocity linking the two countries was apparently weakened because the rise in global oil demand, now that Libya was no longer isolated, made it easier to replace Italy as the biggest importer'. Thus, one can situate the deal within the context of Italy's declining economic role in Libya and its desire to reaffirm this special relationship in an economic as well as political sense. Thus, as the following passages explore, although the treaty commits Italy to apparently substantial commitments, one can point, beneath such outwardly gallant reconciliatory sentiments, to significant dimensions of economic strategic self interest.

Exploring the terms of the treaty

Under Article 8 of the Treaty of Friendship, 'Italy is committed to achieve in Libya 'basic infrastructure projects' to the value of US \$5 billion over twenty years. Likewise, under Article 10, Italy commits itself to achieve, for an as of yet indeterminate cost, a number of 'special initiatives'. These initiatives include such projects as the construction of 200 housing units, the allocation of a number of university scholarships, treatment at Italian institutions for Libyan victims of mine explosions and the return of Libyan manuscripts and artefacts that, in the sanitised words of the Treaty, were '*transferred* to Italy in the colonial era' (Camera del Deputati 2008). Excluding the undisputed economic self interest embodied in the Treaty, \$5

billion dollars is not an insignificant amount of money and diverges substantially from Belgium's derisory 'Patrice Lumumba Fund' (see Chapter 4). However, in critical analysis, one may point to resembling characteristics between the terms of the treaty and erstwhile colonial relations. Such characteristics can be seen both in terms of the practicalities of economic relations and in terms of the language and rhetorical functions by which these unequal relations are narrated.

In regards to the practicalities of the relationship, it is clear that the \$5billion, although eye-catching, is not necessarily the straight forward compensatory scheme as widely reported in the media at the time (for instance, The New York Times ran the headline 'Italy to pay Libya \$5billion' (The New York Times 2008), while France 24 led with 'Italy's Berlusconi hands Libya \$5bn apology' (France 24 2008)). In fact, in the terms of the treaty, no money is actually transferred to Libya, but rather the money is to provide for 'basic infrastructure projects', for which 'Italian companies [are] to ensure completion' (Camera del Deputati 2008). Moreover, 'the financial funds are managed by the Italian party while Libya will make the land available, at no cost to Italy or the manufacturers' (Camera del Deputati 2008). In other words, while the treaty purports to establish an 'equal and balanced relationship' (Camera del Deputati 2008), it is clear that it emphatically ensures that the means of production remain in the metropole. To situate within Wallerstein's (2004) world systems analysis, this represents a continuation of the core's use of advanced technology, while the periphery merely provides the raw material and land which is extracted by the core. Thus, while undoubtedly a significant sum, the oft quoted \$5billion dollars is a reinvestment into Italian businesses and corporations and is dwarfed by recent lucrative contracts for Italian companies, such as ENI's 2008 signing of six Exploration and Production Sharing contracts ensuring Italy's oil supply from Libya for a further forty-four years for oil and forty-seven years for gas (Varvelli 2010: 126). This is to illuminate an economic relationship whereby the \$5billion is less compensation, than strategic investment in a lucrative bi-lateral relationship.

Beyond the unequal economic configurations reproduced through the treaty, one can, as is central to the thesis, point to important ways in which such compositions are scripted in a manner that is reminiscent of colonial discourse. This is most evident in the paternalistic projects for which the treaty commits Italy. For instance, there is a convergence between the myth of the road building, infrastructure laying, benign Italian colonialist and the 'basic

infrastructure projects' (Camera del Deputati 2008) that are central to the treaty.¹¹⁸ In other words, just as the conventional Italian colonial narrative celebrates bringing roads, education and hospitals to Africa, so too does the treaty enable a 1,700km highway across Libya to be built by Italian companies (Reuters 2010),¹¹⁹ the allocation of university scholarships and the treatment program for mines victims. Indeed, the very language of Italy achieving 'basic infrastructure projects' is to infer on Libya the classic colonialist perception of a country that is inadequate in providing fundamental provisions without the aid of European assistance. Likewise, in Italian companies ensuring the completion of such projects, there is the implication that such expertise resides uniquely in the metropole and requires European implementation in Africa. Of course, it is unclear the extent to which such a convergence between colonial and contemporary discourse is either a conscious or unconscious process. Nevertheless, the salient point is that, even if one is to accept that such convergence was not consciously premeditated, it clearly and without irony reflects a reproduction of the central themes of colonialism, whereby it is the burden of the metropole to benevolently contribute the rewards of modernity to the colony. In such a way, the treaty allows for the construction of the apology and Treaty as Italy's '*Grande Gesto*' (Gazzini 2009), whereby the treaty is not framed as reparation for the devastation of colonialism, but a continuation of the amiable and civilising Italian presence in Africa, even to the extent in which the treaty requests to 'respect the commitments made by Italy' (Camera del Deputati 2008).

Immigration – a securitised and ethnicised debate

As stated above, it is contended here that the Treaty codifies an immigration discourse and policy that is framed in racialised and securitised language. Article 19 of the Treaty allows for the intensification of 'cooperation in combating terrorism, organised crime, drug trafficking and illegal immigration' (Camera del Deputati 2008). Thus, in its first sentence on the matter, the treaty unreflectively reproduces the familiar conflation of African immigration with drugs, crime and the 'War on Terror'. Likewise, the immigration debate is infused with racial prejudices. For instance, Marcello Pera, President of the Senate, at a political rally in 2005 stated his aversion to uncontrolled migration and warned of the dangers of Italy 'becoming all half-caste' (quoted in Triulzi 2006: 433). Similarly, Berlusconi, responding to criticisms

¹¹⁸ For a wider discussion of this narrative see pages 165-176.

¹¹⁹ According to Italy's infrastructure minister, Altero Matteoli, the road stretching virtually the breadth of the country from near the Egyptian border to the Tunisian boarder has a value of 'something more than 5 billion'. The minister did not specify in which currency (Reuters 2010).

specifically related to deporting migrants to Libya, stated that ‘the left’s idea is of a multi-ethnic Italy [...] that is not our idea’ (quoted in Babington 2009). In espousing an overtly violent agenda towards immigrants, Umberto Bossi, a minister in Berlusconi’s cabinet from 2008, was reported calling for boats carrying illegal immigrants to be shot out the water, regardless of whether the boats were carrying children. To capture the flavour and virulence of this rhetoric, it is worth repeating part of the interview as reported in *Corriere della Sera* (BBC 2003).¹²⁰

Bossi: Either the interior minister [Giuseppe Pisanu] comes to the cabinet meeting on Friday with extremely convincing regulations for the implementation of the law on immigration in his pocket or the whole thing is going to go to blazes. And I will not be happy with just any old regulations. No, I want to hear the cannon roar.

Interviewer: I beg your pardon?

Bossi: There is no point in our wasting time taking each other for a ride. There are two ways to implement the law approved a year ago. Either we say in a general kind of way, as some people would like, that our ships will tackle the illegal migrants' vessels and take on board only the women and children. Or else we write down in black and white that force will be used, and that is the way I want it.

Interviewer: The use of force? How?

Bossi: After the second or third warning, boom... the cannon roars. Without any beating about the bush. The cannon that blows everyone out of the water. Otherwise this business will never end.

Interviewer: Opening fire on rusty old boats full of defenceless and starving wretches, maybe even women and children?

Bossi: Illegal immigrants must be hounded out, either nicely or nastily. Only those with a job contract can enter the country. The others, out! There comes a time when it becomes necessary to resort to the use of force. The navy and the finance police are going to have to line up in defence of our shores and to use guns.

It is only within the parameters of this discourse that the specific policies consolidated under the treaty can be contextualised. In terms of substantial policy, the treaty is rather vague; it reaffirms commitments to agreements made in 2000 and 2007, as well as promoting ‘the realisation of a system for control of land borders [in] Libya to be entrusted to Italian companies [who] possess the necessary technological skills’ (Camera del Deputati 2008). In

¹²⁰ Despite the newspaper’s meticulous transcript, Bossi insisted his views were misrepresented (BBC 2003).

concrete terms, this serves to strengthen the existing collaboration on immigration that has been in place since at least 2003. Such collaboration has included, 'joint naval patrols and readmission agreements in return for aid' (De Haas 2008: 1309), the establishment of Italian led training courses for Libyan boarder police officers, the supply of technical equipment to assist Libyan border controls and the 2003 financing of a camp for illegal immigrants within Libya (European Commission 2004: 58-59; Lutterbeck 2009: 172). Similarly, in 2003 Italy approved the 'the financing of a program of charter flights for the repatriation of illegal immigrants from Libya towards the originating countries' (European Commission 2004: 59). This effectively entails a relationship whereby Libya had 'been collaborating closely with Italy in concerted expulsions of thousands of undocumented migrants from Italy via Libya to their alleged origin countries' (De Haas 2008: 1310). In other words, the Treaty effectively entails a consolidation of a system that allows third country nationals intercepted in international waters to be transferred to Libya. Amnesty International has stated that it 'is gravely concerned that human rights have become a casualty of the measures taken by Italy to curb irregular migration. The organisation renews its call on the Italian authorities to cease the interception and return of third-country nationals to Libya' (Amnesty International 2010). Interestingly, although the treaty calls upon both parties to have 'respect for human rights' and observe the UN Charter and Declaration of human rights (Camera del Deputati 2008), as Varvelli (2010: 128) observes, this aspect of the treaty is not legally binding.

In analysis, it is pertinent to note that such collaboration regarding immigration closely parallels archetypal colonial structures of rule. This is to say that it is the metropole that apportions large parts of its 'security' activities to the colony. In other words, through exchanges in technology, training and detention apparatus, it is the Libyan state that takes on a larger role in ensuring Italy's objectives of minimising undocumented immigration across the Mediterranean. Moreover, with its authoritarian complexion under Gaddafi and the fact that it is not party to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Libya represents a convenient partner for democratic Italy to delegate thorny issues that potentially violate norms of human rights and legislation in the EU. In this sense, the collaboration is not dissimilar from the US's practice of extraordinary rendition and establishment of Guantanamo Bay, whereby foreign territories are utilised so as to transfer potential human rights infringements away from its own sovereign territory. As already mentioned, such security arrangements necessitate a particular surrounding discourse that - as epitomised by Pera, Berlusconi and Bossa - casts immigration as a threat to Italian society and values, thereby requiring robust solutions. It is this 'othering', entangled as it is with racial prejudice that, like

conventional colonial discourse, enables the realisation of policies such as those consolidated through the 2008 Treaty of Friendship.

Situating the apology within the wider colonial narrative

This section draws on the conventional and evolving ways in which Italy's colonial history is narrated by both political elites and within public discourse. It is widely recognised in the academic literature that Italian society has not substantially reflected on its colonial past. In concurring with this observation, this section suggests that there are broadly two discernible yet overlapping elements to the conventional narrative of Italian colonialism. The first element is exemplified by its enduring absence from popular, political or even academic debate.¹²¹ Secondly, where it is alluded to, Italian colonialism tends to be characterised as being of a 'less pernicious' and somehow more moderate and more amiable nature than that of other European empires (Andall and Duncan 2005: 11). While since the mid 1990s there have been various ambiguous and contradictory government incursions into the colonial past, it is argued here that the core pillars of silence and historical sanitisation remain to this day. In situating the apology within this narrative, it is contended that the apology and its surrounding discourse actually perpetuate these constructed distortions. Of course, the apology does unavoidably endow Italian colonialism in Libya with a negative implication. However, in being vague and nondescript, the apology resembles the obfuscating impulse of the conventional narrative. Moreover, as explored below, the apology is supplemented by political rhetoric from both Berlusconi and members of his cabinet that enounce the 'superiority' of Western civilisation, the 'progress' that Italy made in Libya and even a rehabilitation of Mussolini's rule. In making this argument, the following passages commence with a discussion of how colonial memory has been marginalised in the post-war years, together with an exploration of the distorted image of a benign colonialism as testified by the concept of *Italiani Brava Gente*. Finally, through a deconstruction of the apology and accompanying political discourse, it is suggested that Berlusconi's *mea culpa* sits with recent forays of introspection, yet ultimately recasts sentiments that are reminiscent of the conventional colonial narrative.

¹²¹ Since the 1970s there has been an increase in academic research on Italian colonialism. Nevertheless, this period remains starkly under researched, especially in comparison to the vast literature on other aspects of Italian history.

‘Silence’ and ‘obfuscation’¹²²

As Andall and Duncan (2005: 9) write, ‘in the decades after Italy lost possession of its colonies, colonialism appeared to have no place in the nation’s collective consciousness and was absent from public discourse’. In analysing the mystification and negation of Italian colonial history, it is important to recognise that ‘silence’ is not merely the negative or passive absence of an entity, but is frequently constructed or willed into being. To this end, Del Boca (2003: 18) writes that ‘post-war governments not only eluded their obligations to clarity but actively impeded the emergence of truth’. Certainly in the period following the war there was no genuine introspection into Italian colonialism from either academia or political parties of any end of the ideological spectrum. After the war there was no Italian equivalent of the Nuremberg trials and both Italian political elites and those of the victorious powers found that introspection (legal or otherwise) into colonial events would be of no utility at a time of post war rebuilding and the onset of bipolar Cold War tensions. To this end, early Republican governments used ‘delay, trickery and every possible expedient’ to evade legal requests from former colonies for the trial of those considered war criminals (Labanca 2004: 308; see also Pankhurst 1999). Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of World War II there seemed to be a consensus regarding colonialism from both the right and the left, where even left wing parties and anti-Fascist movements were arguing for the return of liberal and fascist era colonies (Labanca 2005: 29; De Michele 2011: 106).

Beyond the evasion of accountability for war crimes, in the post war climate Del Boca (2003: 18) identifies the most significant government distortion of colonial history as the publication of *L’Italia in Africa*, a text composed by a committee of which fifteen of the twenty members served as governors or officials in the colonial enterprise. Del Boca (2003: 18) summarises this text in the following terms:

It should suffice to mention the colossal, costly and almost incredible effort of mystification promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the publication, in fifty volumes, of *L’Italia in Africa*. The supporters of this corpus claimed to intend to provide an assessment of the Italian presence in the colonies of Eastern and North Africa. Instead, *L’Italia in Africa* is a coarsely and impudently falsified account that aims to exalt Italian colonialism and underline its “difference” from other contemporary colonialisms.

¹²² Employing the term *obfuscation* in regards to constructed notions of the Italian past, Palumbo (2003: 11) writes that ‘the postwar historiographical neglect and obfuscation of the Italian colonial past is naturally matched by the blankness left by this past in the national culture’.

For all their density, these accounts omit to mention the existence of concentration camps in Libya, Somalia and Eritrea or the use of chemical weapons in the Ethiopia (Del Boca 2003: 19). This initial negation of the colonial past extended far beyond the initial post war years, and continued throughout the Cold War (von Henneberg 2004: 39). Importantly, owing to the stripping of her colonies in the 1940s, Italy did not undergo the same crisis of decolonialism experienced by other metropolises in the 1960s. There was, as von Henneberg (2004: 38-39) explains, 'no Indian or Algerian crisis or catharsis for Italy – no Ghandi, Fanon or even Sartre or Camus to inspire or inflame public opinion on the question of Italy's moral and international responsibility'. In this sense, while other European countries experienced post-colonial pangs, this was not the case in Italy. Indeed, even the social protests of the 1960s tended to focus on inequalities within capitalism and war in Vietnam, rather than grappling with Italy's own specific colonial past (von Henneberg 2004: 39).

In her study of high school textbooks, De Michele (2011) illustrates how this theme of obfuscation is also evident in the state education system. While the overt colonial and racist stereotypes of immediate post war textbooks have largely dissipated, colonial occupation of Libya is 'discussed briefly as something of little importance', thereby strengthening 'the traditional view that Italians had not committed atrocities and that the colonial campaigns were a brief parenthesis in Italian history' (De Michele 2011: 116). In a similar study, Leone and Mastrovito (2010) find that the majority of contemporary textbooks use vague and ambiguous language that veil Italian atrocities. Likewise, one can point to examples of overt attempts to remove Italian colonialism from societal introspection during the latter years of the First Republic. The 1981 film *Lion of the Desert*, with an all star cast including Oliver Reed and Anthony Quinn, was banned by the Italian government on the grounds that it was 'damaging' to the army's honour (The Economist 2008). By the time of the 2008 apology, the film had still not been publicly broadcast in Italy. Similarly, the 1989 BBC documentary *Fascist Legacy* detailing crimes committed under Mussolini was protested against by the Italian Foreign Minister and by the Italian ambassador in London (Petrusewicz 2004: 269; Mellino 2006: 466). The documentary was immediately purchased by the state television channel RAI, reportedly for a 'high price' (Walston 1997: 179), yet was not broadcast until 2003 and only then 'on a small private channel', rather than by the state broadcaster (Mellino 2006: 466). Such a climate of negating and tacitly censoring the colonial past is obviously not conducive to the offering of a government apology.

On top of the archaeology of silence, a further pillar in the conventional characterisation of Italian colonialism pertains to its supposedly ‘less pernicious’ nature (Andall and Duncan 2005: 11). In one sense, this is remarkably similar to the perceptions fostered in Germany (see chapter 3), where, like Germany, Italy was perceived as a ‘late comer and junior partner’ (Triulzi 2005: 149) in comparison to the other colonial powers; certainly not a *real* colonial power like Britain, Portugal, France and so forth.¹²³ Moreover, Italian colonialism and fascism were frequently presented, both inside and outside of Italy (although not in the countries that actually suffered Italian colonialism), in the context of a mythical national characteristic ascribed to the Italian populace. This supposed national trait – as captured by the concept of *Italiani Brava Gente* – is now explored in regards to how it sits with narratives of the colonial and Fascist past.

Exploring *Italiani Brava Gente*

Upon the Italian Prime Minister’s visit to the US in 1985, Ronald Reagan enquired: ‘How’s your crisis going?’ Drolly, Craxi’s response was ‘very well thank you’ (quoted in La Palombara 1987: 1). It is this response that is indicative of an apparent light hearted or carefree persona. As Ventresca (2006) writes, ‘politicians, intellectuals, the general public – have cultivated, promoted and internalised the myth of Italians as *brava gente*’. Roughly translating as *Italians good people*, the motif asserts the well trodden stereotype of an essentially amiable and good natured national trait. In Favero’s (2010: 138) words, *Italiani Brava Gente* functions ‘as an ideological laundry for reformulating and then setting aside disquieting moments of national shame’. It is by this formula that, for instance, the German character is perceived as militaristic, in contrast to Italian fascism which is seen as more moderate and comparatively benign. Embodied by the fictional Captain Corelli courting women and playing mandolin while the German fascists engage in the real violence (Favero 2010: 140), the representation enables a central theme of post-war Italian memory that ‘juxtaposes the ‘good Italian’ against the ‘bad German’ and casts Italy as a victim rather than a partner of the Nazis’ (Ventresca 2006: 192). Likewise, where Hitler is represented as the incarnation of evil and all surveying totalitarian leader, as Ahmida (2006: 177) writes, ‘even critics of Mussolini portrayed him merely as a buffoon or ordinary dictator’.

¹²³ It is, of course, true to say that in its geographical and temporal span Italy was more marginal than other colonial powers such as Britain. Nevertheless, it seems disconcerting to say that any one colonialism is somehow ‘better, ‘worse’ or in some way more amiable than another.

Importantly, the depiction of Italians as essentially good people serves to absolve the population from atrocities in both Africa and Europe (Petrusewicz 2004: 269). In relation to colonialism, it paints a picture of 'the good Italian, sympathetic, always ready to help his neighbor, a bringer of civilization and human values' (Mellino 2006: 463). As Mellino (2006: 463) writes, 'not only did it promote the idea of Italian colonialism as an atypical example of the genre, but it also sweetened the image of fascism, in practice dissociating fascism from the Nazi Holocaust'. Thus, unlike the intense French introspection into the Vichy regime and collaboration, Italians, in relation to the Holocaust, are not understood as being anti-Semitic and the notorious race laws and deportations can be explained merely through Italy's junior relationship to Germany. More recently, while the facilitating role of Italy in the Holocaust is largely evaded, there has instead been an emerging emphasis on so called 'good camps', where Jews were saved from transportation to Nazi death camps (Walston 1997: 170).¹²⁴ In relation to Italian colonialism in Africa, as Del Boca writes 'there were no doubts: those ruling upon Eritrea and Somalia were "good people"' (cited in Favero 2010: 146).

In this way, the pervasive idea of *Brava Gente* enabled Italian colonialism to be, if remembered at all, recalled 'for its exotic coloration, for the roads, the schools and hospitals that Italians built in Africa' (Labanca 2004: 309). This theme is very much encapsulated with the publication of a series of orientalist illustrations on Italy's presence in Africa in the 1960s popular magazine *Domenica del corriere*. In Labanca's (2005: 36 -37) words, they were 'wholly inspired to apologise for the mildness of the national character [...] it was a '*nazionale-popolare*' formula which (except for the Africans) seemed to suit most people: from the politicians of 'Italy the bridge between Europe and Africa' to the easily absolved veterans, from the left wing parties to the Catholic and right wing parties'. It is such notions of the innate amiability of Italians that is also extant within the Treaty's commitment to completing 'basic infrastructure projects' in Libya. Moreover, as examined shortly, *Brava Gente* also infuses contemporary political rhetoric that accompanied the apology. However, before discussing

¹²⁴ For a wider discussion on this subject, see Walston (1997). While undoubtedly such camps did save the lives of many people, such ideas of 'good' and 'bad' camps are obviously problematic. As Walston shows, such camps as that of Ferramonti in Calabria commenced as being 'repressive', but later played a role in saving Jews. As he further describes, in Rab 'the two types of camp were situated next to each other', as if to emphasise the pitfalls of generalising any political action as either innately 'good' or 'bad'. Moreover, one must be careful in any glorification of good camps, of which themselves surely entailed severe hardship and repression.

this further, it is necessary to first situate the apology within an emerging trend by which recent Italian governments have been grappling with the colonial past.

Timid incursions into the colonial narrative

Historical narratives and perceptions of the past do not remain static, but fluctuate, in part, in accordance to the imperatives and societal conditions of the moment. In this way, there have been oscillations and 'hot spots' where understandings of Italy's colonial history have come under scrutiny. In terms of challenges to the conventional narrative, the most robust challenge has been the field of academia, where scholars starting with Rochat in the 1970s and later Del Boca, Triulzi and Labanca have written authoritatively on diverse issues of both Italian colonialism and the shaping of its historical memory. However, where, in the Belgian and British case studies, developments in academic research spilled over into more mainstream public consciousness, in the Italian case this does not seem to have occurred to such an extent. To recall, government enquiries proceeded from high-selling books that challenged conventional perceptions in both the British and Belgian case studies. In contrast, in Italy such critical self examination has even been actively hindered at official levels.¹²⁵ In this way, despite the increasing and critical academic research, this does not seem to have permeated public perceptions, which, if anything, with the passing of generations seem to have become more remote than ever before.¹²⁶

Over the last decade and a half, perhaps the most illuminative developments in Italian societal dealings with its colonial past can be viewed through some of the clumsy and ill at ease handlings of controversial issues by successive governments. On the one hand, these dealings do speak to at least the beginnings of a more concerted effort at considering the past. On the other hand, the irresolute, awkward and contradictory gestures indicate a political elite that remains more comfortable with euphemisms and platitudes than any serious introspection. Illustrative of this is the government's 1996 admission that Italy did use gas in the war in Abyssinian. That this was widely known before and only emerged under sustained pressure

¹²⁵ This is evidenced by the aforementioned obstruction of documentaries and films that are critical of the past, as well as the previously analysed representation of the colonial past in high school textbooks. Beyond this, as De Michele (2011: 105) reflects, access to historical archives was denied to certain historians up to the beginning of the 1970s, with some restrictions even extending beyond this.

¹²⁶ Commenting on the fading memory with the passing of generations, Labanca (2005: 39) rhetorically asks 'who today would remember who Pietro Toselli is? And yet, in previous generations, there were those who called their children 'Tosello' or 'Tosella'.

illustrates the 'extent of the discomfort' felt by recent Italian governments at the colonial past (Andall and Duncan 2005: 14). Similarly, Giangiacomo Migone, President of the Senate's Foreign Affairs committee joined his Ethiopian counterpart in laying a wreath at the battlefield to commemorate the 1996 centenary of the Battle of Adwa. This gesture, however, was only secured after initial embarrassment when Prime Minister Lamberto Dini refused to send a delegation to partake in the commemoration for fear that this would expose him to right-wing criticism shortly before national elections (Triulzi 2006: 435). Moreover, unlike the German case study where the centenary of the Herero genocide garnered a high degree of media attention, the Adwa centenary passed with minimal media coverage (Triulzi 2006: 435), barring a single late night television programme by a freelance director (Labanca 2005: 40).

Perhaps the best example of such oscillating and contradictory postures is the controversy over the return of the Aksum obelisk. Following the 1947 Peace Treaty, Italy committed itself to returning all materials taken from Ethiopia, including the looted fourth century obelisk. However, this was intermittently obstructed by various Italian governments. Pankhurst (1999: 237), for instance, cites an example of an Ethiopian ambassador being offered the suggestion that, rather than returning the artefact, an inscription should be placed beside it reading 'Presented by the people of Ethiopia to the people of Italy in token of friendship'. In 1995 the Dini government finally set in motion the artefact's return by sending an undersecretary of foreign affairs to arrange logistics with Ethiopian officials (Del Boca 2003: 22). However, as Del Boca explores (2003: 24), this process was substantially halted due to apparent engineering constraints that seemed to mask political concern of right-wing criticism.¹²⁷ The obelisk was only returned in its entirety in 2005.

A similarly awkward gesture in direct relation to Libya was in regards to the 1998 shared communiqué between respective foreign ministers, Umar Mustafa al-Muntasir and Lamberto Dini. Just as in the other case studies where it is recognised that apologies do not occur in rhetorical vacuums, but tend to be proffered amidst an array of similar preceding contrite sentiments, it is clear that this document very much represents a precursor to the 2008 Treaty

¹²⁷ In this regard, Del Boca highlights right-wing criticism of the obelisk's return, including from Maurizio Gasparri, deputy of Alleanza Nazionale, who argued it was 'by now part of the urban landscape of Rome' (quoted in Del Boca 2003: 24). Although the mayor of Rome, Francesco Rutelli, cited his concern that the limestone stele would shatter if returned to Rome, Del Boca (2003:24) recognises that 'it was also insinuated that Rutelli feared being smeared by the right as the 'mayor who lost the stele''.

of Friendship. In their joint statement, Dini committed Italy to 'correcting the errors of the past', and expressed 'regret for the Libyan people's suffering at the hands of the Italian colonialism' (al-Muntasir and Dini 1998). Tellingly, the same document opens with the statement that 'in an effort to boost relations between the two friendly people, Italy calls upon Libya to *forget* the past' (al-Muntasir and Dini 1998), as if to suggest that the thorny relations between the two states could be resolved if only Libya were to adopt the same amnesia achieved in Italy. The reasons for discussing such gestures as explored above are that they resonate clearly with the 2008 apology. This is to say that, as examined in the following passages, the 2008 apology, like other recent gestures by Italian governments, still contains vestiges of the impulses to silence and obfuscation.

Deconstructing the apology and proximate governmental discourse

In order to situate the apology within both the conventional understandings of the colonial narrative and the evolving ways in which Italian governments enmesh themselves into such historical episodes, it is necessary to partake in a deconstruction of both the apology (and adjacent treaty) itself and the accompanying political discourse that surrounds it. To start with the apology: In comparative analysis, one of the critiques this thesis has identified of colonial apologies is that, rather than disavowing colonialism in its totality, the apologies focus on just one particularly egregious event within colonialism's wider context. In this regard, Britain apologised for Bloody Sunday, Germany the Herero genocide and Belgium the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. The argument that has been advanced is that by disavowing only one particularly egregious misdeed, there is an implicit condoning of wider colonial violence. In contrast, it is interesting to note that this critique cannot be levelled against Berlusconi's apology to Libya where he expressed 'in the name of the Italian people our regret and apologies for the deep wounds that we have caused you' (quoted in Gazzini 2009). Indeed, of all the case studies in this project, this is the only example of an apology for the colonial project in that country *per se*.

Nevertheless, it is clear that this does not in itself constitute a sustained rebuke of Italian colonialism. For one, the apology was offered to Libya – a country in which Italy has an enduring strategic interest – rather than to other countries in which Italy colonised. Secondly, as explored in Chapter 1, sincere apologies invariably entail the transgressor detailing the events for which they are sorry. For instance, a sincere apology demands that one says 'I'm sorry for crashing your car, I was drunk', rather than just 'I'm sorry' – a statement which may even sound obtuse. In this regard, even with their severe limitations, the other case studies do

chronicle the events for which they are apologising for. Britain and Belgium, for instance, created immensely detailed reports of minute by minute developments in the events of Bloody Sunday and Lumumba's assassination.¹²⁸ Germany detailed its transgression saying it was for events that 'would today be termed genocide'.¹²⁹ However, to analyse Berlusconi's apology, there is no detail beyond the 'deep wounds' caused and the 'scar' left. To situate this alongside the conventional colonial narrative, the 'deep wounds' and 'scar', while professing a negative impact, are euphemistic and ambiguous as to the actual events for which he is apologising. To this end, it represents a continued negation of the actual atrocities; people killed, the concentration camps, the use of chemical weapons and so on. It fits with the vague sense that fascist and liberal colonial *endeavours* were unpleasant and distasteful, while nevertheless sustaining the absence of meaningful governmental and societal introspection into the actual violence perpetrated by the state. With its nondescript and ambiguous nature, it leaves a rhetorical space which can continue to be filled, as shall shortly be considered, with the wider and more sustained continuations of *Brava Gente* and historical distortion. Moreover, this ambiguity is codified in the Treaty of Friendship where, in its sole mention of contrition, the Treaty invokes Berlusconi's and Dini's own ambiguous words in reading that 'Italy already expressed regret for the suffering caused to the Libyan people as a result of colonialism' (Camera del Deputati 2008). It seems, in this respect, that the very wording of the Treaty was coordinated so as to enable such vague sentiments.

Given that the content of the apology was ambiguous as to the colonial past, one may turn to accompanying discourse to illuminate how this past is framed in contemporary elite rhetoric in a broader sense. In doing so, it is evident that such discourse continues to gloss over atrocities and suggest a benign brand of colonialism. Representative of this is a 2004 statement by Berlusconi's then Foreign Minister, Gianfranco Fini, in a diplomatic visit to Libya, saying

There is not the slightest doubt that colonialism in the last century was one of the most difficult moments in the relations between Europe and, in this case, North Africa, but, and this is obviously a personal view, in speaking of Italian colonialism I think we should speak of it bearing in mind the fact that it is others in Europe who should be ashamed of certain ugly events. We have our responsibility too, but, to Libya at least, the Italians brought not only roads and employment, but also those values, that

¹²⁸ For a discussion and critique see pages 129-131.

¹²⁹ Again, there are aspects of this that are deeply unsatisfactory as a disavowal of colonialism or even genocide. For a critique see pages 88-90.

civilisation, and those laws that are a lighthouse for a whole culture, not only for Western culture (quoted in Mellino 2006: 470).

Thus, in this one text, Fini conveyed the central pillars of the conventional narrative; that the Italian mode of colonialism was less 'ugly' than that of other colonisers and that Italy's primary role was, in the spirit of *Brava gente*, a benign one of bringing infrastructure and 'civilisation' to the colony. Clearly the Foreign Minister, who once described Mussolini as the 'the greatest statesman of the 20th century' (quoted in Owen 2008), neglected to mention the less savoury aspects of Italian colonialism.

Likewise, to analyse Berlusconi's accompanying discourse, one can also detect a curious admixture of *brava gente*, historical negation and even fascist revivalism. In terms of *brava gente*, it is interesting to note that his manner represents a departure from the mode of politics identified in the other case studies, especially the Belgian and British ones. In these cases, the contrite politicians (Cameron, Blair, Michel, Verhofstradt) cultivated both their apologies and their broader political style as sincere and reflective. In contrast, Berlusconi's infamously boisterous manner is, in this case, expedient to constructing a particular script for the Italian audience. This is to say that his immediate statement that the apology was about more gas and fewer immigrants encapsulates the trivialising nature of Berlusconi's bilateral dialogue. In a succinct sound-bite designed for the Italian audience it undercut the sombre introspection of apology and its negative connotations and exhibits the slightly mischievous charm of *Brave gente*.

Such exhibitions of *Brave gente* have also been used in other moments of historical distortion. Examples of this include Berlusconi's claims that Mussolini's was 'a benign dictatorship', that he 'did not murder anyone' and that, rather than imprisoning or murdering people, 'Mussolini sent people on holiday to confine them' (quoted in Farrell 2003) While there is the impulse, perhaps in the spirit of *brava gente*, to attribute this to mere buffoonery,¹³⁰ this would be to deny the seriousness of the Prime Minister and owner of large parts of the nation's media partaking in the denial of historical atrocity. Likewise, in the same interview, Berlusconi

¹³⁰ In this spirit, Abraham Foxman, director of the New York based Anti-Defamation League and well known campaigner against anti-Semitism, said in response to Berlusconi's comments that the Italian Prime Minister 'is a friend. He is a good friend, but a flawed friend' (Peroni 2003). This is to illustrate the pervasiveness by which serious historical revisionism is dismissed or trivialised as part of Berlusconi's maverick nature.

rejected the 'comparison of my country to another dictator and dictatorship - that of Saddam Hussein - which caused millions of deaths' (quoted in Peroni 2003). Thus, just as the conventional formula of 'Germans bad, Italians good' served a particular post-war societal and political moment, so, too, does the more contemporary juxtaposition of Iraqi and Italian dictators. This is to say that the revivalism of Mussolini in relation to Saddam Hussein is one framed at a particular geopolitical moment that serves to contribute to the script of Italy's role in the War on Terror.

In similar tones, Berlusconi has repeatedly spoken of the 'superiority' of Western civilisation, evoking how 'we' have Michelangelo and Mozart, yet they do not, as well as 'Islam's' inability to be part of 'modernity' (Said 2001: 147). In 2001 he said

We should be conscious of the superiority of our civilisation, which consists of a value system that has given people widespread prosperity in those countries that embrace it, and guarantees respect for human rights and religion. This respect certainly does not exist in the Islamic countries (quoted in Testas 2003: 183).

He conveyed similar sentiments in another speech, saying:

Consider that the attacks on New York and Washington are attacks not only on the United States but on our civilisation, of which we are proud bearers, conscious of the supremacy of our civilisation, of its discoveries and inventions, which have brought us democratic institutions, respect for the human, civil, religious and political rights of our citizens, openness to diversity and tolerance of everything (quoted in Hooper and Connolly 2001).

It is by such rhetorical turns that Berlusconi draws on some of the central tenets of Huntington's (1993) Clash of Civilisations thesis, evoking the sweeping generality of a civilisation in terms of its purported respect for human rights, representative institutions and separation of church and state (Huntington 1996). It is, of course, such ill founded notions of civilisation and superiority by which Western powers formerly justified colonialism. Moreover, in explicitly linking the superiority of Western civilisation to Islam and contextualising such statements within the 9/11 attacks, Berlusconi is again scripting a particular contemporary violence on the 'other' in the form of the War on Terror. Thus, while the specificities of the apology are vague and ambiguous, an analysis of a surrounding discourse outside of the apology illuminates a discourse that retains many of the features of colonial language. It is by this token that the surrounding discourse continues to juxtapose the 'other' with homage to the notions of civilisation, progress and superiority. Moreover, the revisionism and

rehabilitation of Mussolini's rule is to negate the violence for which Berlusconi supposedly apologised; it is to provide a discourse that, even in apologising, is reminiscent of the conventional narrative of obfuscating the brutalities of colonialism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, like other case studies in this thesis, this chapter has contended that Berlusconi's *Grande Gesto* to Libya has a multiplicity of meanings that serve to advance particular politically expedient scripts. Firstly, as a fractious episode in Italy and Libya's relations, public contrition serves as a device by which to mend and strengthen bilateral relations. This was especially significant in terms of the two states' timely and converging pre-Arab Spring interest in Libya's reintegration into the 'International Community'. In this way, the apology is a speech act whereby Italy endorsed Libya and, more particularly, Gaddafi as responsible partners of the West. Married with this reintegration is the nakedly economic and migratory components of the treaty. In analysing the ways in which such factors are inscribed, it is contended that the phraseology within the Treaty resembles conventional colonial dogmas. This is most evident in respect to the \$5bn compensation being managed by Italy so as to complete 'basic infrastructure projects' (Camera dei Deputati 2008), such as a highway and health care facility. Such arrangements reproduce the perceptions of a paternal and benign Italy, intent on providing the modern infrastructure that the periphery cannot provide itself. Moreover, such arrangements, as Berlusconi himself boasted, are coupled with facilitating advantageous access to Libya's raw materials as well as lucrative business contracts for Italian companies operating in the former colony. In regards to the immigration component of the treaty, this chapter has situated rhetoric on the issue within elite political discourse that draws on dual notions of ethnicity and threat. In this respect, this section highlighted particular statements by cabinet ministers that illustrated vitriolic and violent intentions towards 'illegal' immigration. It is only within such discourse that one can situate the draconian 'security' and deportation measures explored previously in the chapter.

The final section located the apology within the parameters of the conventional perceptions of Italian colonialism as articulated since the inception of the First Republic. It is contended that there are broadly two dimensions within this narrative, termed here as 'silence' and 'obfuscation'. Such narratives shift societal memories of colonialism to the margins of Italian society and, where they do exist, emphasise an essentially benign and progressive character of Italian colonialism, certainly in comparison to other colonial powers. In one sense, clearly

there is a certain rupture to this conventional narrative, where an apology unavoidably connotes a negative perception of Italian colonialism. However, in deconstructing the apology, it has been suggested that such contrition offers vague and unarticulated platitudes such as the 'wounds' and 'scars' of colonialism, without showing any introspection or recognition of actual atrocities committed by the liberal and fascist governments. Such ambiguity sits comfortably within the broader process of marginalisation and sanitisation that took place within the First Republic. Moreover, an analysis of the wider discourse of political elites reflects an endurance of colonial like concepts, such as notions of European cultural superiority, the progressive and civilising role of Italy within Libya and a perceptible trivialisation of Mussolini's rule. Thus, in affirming the central tenets of this thesis, this chapter has pointed to important ways in which the apology, together with its surrounding political and rhetorical context, scripts a renewed narrative that, in significant respects, resembles orthodox colonial perceptions.

CONCLUSION

I only like confessions nowadays, and the authors of confessions write chiefly in order not to confess, saying nothing of what they know. When they pretend to be owning up, that's the moment to beware; they're putting make-up on the corpse.

Albert Camus (2006: 76) *The Fall*

This thesis has identified colonial apologies as crucial sites where contemporary European elites wrestle with the colonial past and its meaning in the present. They are rituals that are informed and shaped in a melting pot of contradictory and ambivalent landscapes and sentiments. They are forged in imperatives of liberal legitimization, the normative ascendancy of human rights, simultaneous assumptions of colonial guilt and nostalgia, enduring geopolitical inequalities and the preservation of notions of the state's apparently benign past. Although seemingly a narrow phenomenon, the study of these multifaceted textual and symbolic rituals gleans valuable insights into larger processes whereby latter day (post-) colonial relations are illuminated, deliberated over, renegotiated and recirculated.

In unpacking this significance, the thesis has undertaken an empirical case study based analysis of apologies from four European states for transgressions committed against former colonies. These case studies pertained to the German apology for the genocide of the Herero people of modern day Namibia; the Belgian apology for involvement in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the first post-independence Prime Minister of the DRC; the British apology for the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry in 1972 and the Italian apology for colonialism in Libya. Utilising the concept of collective memory, the thesis sought to explore and map the processes by which apologising politicians draw on these undesirable pasts and how, in turn, such mnemonic elaborations have been employed in identity formation and political expediency. In undertaking this research agenda, the project principally contributes to the understanding of the ways in which contemporary discourses frame, negotiate and reproduce present day colonial/postcolonial relationships.

Clearly colonial apologies do, to some extent, offer altered perceptions of the past to those that once prevailed at the height of empire: They offer remorse for certain events and reflect a more measured and tempered tone towards the past. Nevertheless, the thesis has argued that colonial apologies are not acts that significantly renounce, disavow or radically destabilise the mentalities and ideological complacencies of the colonial project. Instead, the apologies

serve to discursively recycle complexions that are reminiscent of the unequal patterns forged in the colonial period. This, it has been argued, is cemented in two ways: 1.) The apologies advance particular interests of states (or certain people within the states) that historically practiced colonialism. 2.) The apologies and adjacent elite discourses are laden with tropes and narratives that are remarkably reminiscent of the core legitimising tenets of the colonial enterprise. In elaborating on these postulations, the conclusion first unpacks and explores these arguments in more detail and with more complexity. The second section proceeds to discuss the limitations of the thesis and areas for further research. The final section details the academic implications and contributions of the thesis' findings. In particular, this final section frames the core contributions of the thesis as a challenge to some of the core ideological assumptions of the European liberal polity.

The expediencies of apology

To restate: The empirical chapters demonstrated that contrite politicians do draw certain dividends in their *mea culpa*. Before cataloguing these in more detail, it is necessary to reiterate that, while emphasising the gratuity of apology, the thesis has sought to curtail and add nuance to the notion that these contrite recollections of the past are harnessed with instant efficacy and immaculate Machiavellian cunning by political elites of the day. To this extent, the thesis drew on and critiqued an overly 'presentist' or 'top-down' model of collective memory. In other words, the thesis challenged the idea that elites, facing minimal resistance, stridently manipulate the past as they see fit, instead capturing a political elite that are somewhat more cowed than this picture. In particular, it speaks of political leaders that, to use Zerubavel's (1996: 283) phrase, enter into 'mnemonic battles' over the past. Rather than monopolising the past, politicians must, over an elongated period of time, vie and compromise with alternative memories, including those of the previously colonised. This is to paint a process by which, in order to maintain credibility, metropolitan elites must cede ground and tacitly negotiate with competing memories. In this respect, the very act of apologising represents a more moderated discourse that jars with states' and politicians' reflexive inclinations towards self-aggrandisement.

While sketching the portrait of the compromised politician, this is certainly not to suggest that the metropolitan leaders are rendered impotent. Indeed, elite narratives of the past remain unequally voluble; privileged as they are by the trappings of office - access to the media, the perceived gravity and formality of state institutions and so on. To this degree, even where

apologies represent uncomfortable climb-downs from the orthodox glorification or denial of the past, the metropole's politicians may still garner certain rewards. Notwithstanding similarities between the case studies, there are, nevertheless, variances in the forms by which such self interest manifests itself. Thus, in comparing the case studies, one may decipher four key forms by which the thesis has identified expediency:

1. **The electoral and presentational expediency of apology**

In domestic party political terms, the Belgian and British case studies traced the processes by which, following widespread public perception of endemic elite 'sleaze' and corruption, the use of *mea culpa* signposted to a domestic audience an apparent culture of transparency, integrity and flexibility among the new governments (cf. Cunningham 2004a; Kerstens 2008). Characteristic of a more 'open collar' style of politics, it signalled governments that are more at ease with employing an idiomatic discourse that contrasted favourably, at least in electoral and presentational terms, with the previous administrations. In analysis, it would be misguided to suggest that pursuit of this aesthetic is *the reason* that governments apologise; clearly there are any number of other less arduous platforms by which modern politicians could broadcast this style. However, unlike their preceding administrations, the Blair, Cameron and Verhofstadt governments' propensities for such apparently humble discourses facilitated the establishment of Truth Commissions and subsequent apologies for particular thorny issues of the past. In other words, where the previous administrations were less reflexive and more orthodox in their responses to deeply contested pasts, the new administrations' cultivated political styles were more conducive to reflective and contrite stances. As such, it is not that the new administrations actively sought out past state transgressions for which to apologise. Rather, in environments of contestation and rupture of official narratives, it was these governments' manner that accorded with introspective stances. Moreover, following the findings of the relevant Truth Commissions, the governments in question could opportunistically utilise the visual and discursive aspects of apology to presentational effect.

2. **Strategic economic self-gain**

Shifting from the domestic, one can also point to *realpolitik* economic imperatives that intersect with apology. Such sentiments are most evident in the Italian and German case studies. To this end, in deconstructing the German apology for the Herero genocide, Chapter 3 contended that the apology can be understood as a response to recent claims for reparations by the Herero community, particularly the Chief Hosea Kutako Foundation's legal claim in a US

court in 2001 for reparations from the German government and businesses amounting to US\$4billion. This negation of reparations, it was argued, is interlinked with an objective in resisting land reform that would adversely affect the privileged position of German descendants' land ownership in Namibia (Jamfa 2008: 207). In this regard, the chapter explored how Wieczorek-Zeul's apology employed legally savvy grammar and language so as to evade and disarm such demands. Also pertaining to economic self-interest, the Italian case study explored how Berlusconi's 2008 apology was adjoined with *The Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya*. Chapter 6 traced how this treaty, at least before the Arab Spring, accompanied lucrative long term deals for Libyan oil and gas firms, while gleaning Italian strategic access to Libyan natural resources. Indeed, Berlusconi was himself rather candid about this, reportedly proclaiming that the treaty would lead to fewer immigrants and more oil and gas for Italy (Dinmore and Saleh 2008).

3. Underscoring a foreign/diplomatic policy agenda

While all apology, including the interpersonal, is an exercise in relationship management, the Belgian, British and Italian case studies have placed particular emphasis on the diplomatic significance of its utility in bolstering relationships with key strategic partners. For instance, Chapter 4 traced how the Belgian apology was an exercise in building relations with Democratic Republic of Congo President L.D Kabila – a man who cultivated himself as a political descendant of Lumumba (Kerstens 2008: 194). Likewise, as the President of the Lumumba Commission recognised, it was considered that reflecting on the past would assist in initiating the Verohstadt government's more pro-active diplomacy in the region 'on a good foundation' (Versnick 2002: 44). In a similar regard, the Italian apology may be understood as a strategic overture to Colonel Gaddafi. Contextualised within Italy's pre-2011 geopolitical strategic interest of building relations within North Africa, the apology chimed with Gaddafi's long held coveting of Italian apology and, as such, implicitly endorsed an ideological pillar of his regime. This served to temporarily facilitate more cordial relations between the two leaders and states. Not dissimilarly, in the British case study, Chapter 5 pointed to the conjuncture of the Saville Inquiry (including the subsequent apology) and the Northern Ireland Peace Process. To this end, it was contended that the Saville Inquiry/apology constituted a symbolic overture to the 'nationalist community' of Northern Ireland, thereby further building bridges and enticing the community's participation into the consociational logic of the Peace Process.

4. Reaffirming a liberal normative complexion

Finally, in one sense, apology for episodes of egregious violence serves to discursively reaffirm the states' liberal normative complexion. Since the 1990s and the end of the Cold War, it has been increasingly important for states to, at least at a symbolic level, adhere to cosmopolitan discourses of human rights. To this extent, there has emerged what Levy and Sznajder (2010: 4) call a 'memory imperative', 'which finds its expression in a set of political and normative expectations to engage with past injustices'. While a critique of this supposed liberal discourse is offered later within this conclusion, it is, for the moment, sufficient to recognise that where episodes of historical human rights violations are placed under the intensity of the public microscope, there are pressures exerted on governments to address them. This can be seen in all the case studies, but it is perhaps illustrated most prominently in the German case. Given the particularities of German remembrance of the Third Reich and the Holocaust, it was contended that, following renewed public scrutiny, the apology for the Herero genocide correlates with the normative imperative of the state's anti-genocidal legitimising stance.

In itemising the above expediencies of *mea culpa*, it is interesting to note that this plurality and diversity of self interest – even within a single case study – illuminates the multiple audiences and imperatives to which the contrite politicians speak. In regards to colonial relationships, it is pertinent to recognise that some of these expediencies accompany treaties and policies that directly recodify and entrench unequal relations between the formerly colonial and colonised. For instance, the enduring Italian interest in Libyan natural resources and German interest in European settlers in Namibia quite clearly resemble orthodox geopolitical interests. In other cases, for instance the electoral presentation of particular politicians or the exhibiting of states' liberal credentials, it is not immediately evident that this is impacting on the contemporary relationship in concrete policy making terms. Nevertheless, such presentational pitches constitute indulgent acts of speaking about, exhibiting, congratulating and venerating the European. It renders the violence committed against the colonised as merely a conduit for the presentational aspects of the metropole. In this respect, the apologies serve to advance the interests of the states that historically practiced colonialism while rendering, to a significant degree, those who suffered the violence as passive backdrops in a European story.

Reformulating a colonial-like discourse

In itemising the above expediencies of apology, there is one omission that feeds into the second point of the thesis' argument: That is, states and politicians, it seems, draw on *mea culpa* in a manner that, at least in the immediate term,¹³¹ advances scripts that recycle orthodox colonial tenets and defend, reaffirm or sustain grandiose notions of the state's benign or glorious past. The modes by which states conventionally narrate their pasts are replete with extravagant narratives of chivalry, daring and triumph over adversity. Indeed, Empire has typically provided fertile ground for such plotlines; the legitimising tenets being fantasies of superiority, destiny, adventure, savagery, civilisation and so forth. In this sense, one might assume that apology signposts a renunciation of these very complacencies; that there is an incompatibility between apology and the orthodox aggrandising postures that states reflexively take in relation to their past. On the contrary, the case studies here have posited that, even in apology, many of these colonial mentalities persist. This does not mean that contemporary rhetoric exactly replicates the discourses that prevailed at the zenith of Empire; certainly apology does inescapably endow certain events with negative connotations and does represent a certain humility and introspection regarding the past. However, as meticulously illuminated in the case studies, there are lingering modes by which the aggrandising postures endure. It is these modes that are discussed in more detail below:

Revering and sanitising the colonial past

The key way in which apologies sanitise the wider colonial project is in the scope of their contrition. In comparative analysis, three of the four case studies – Germany, Belgium and Britain – point to apologies where the politicians have renounced only a narrow egregious incident, rather than disavowing the wider processes and landscapes in which the incidents took place. To this end, the states in question demonstrate *mea culpa* for limited incidents – the Herero genocide, the assassination of Lumumba, the massacre of civil rights protestors in Derry. It is these episodes, dramatic and emotive as they are, that, as detailed in the empirical chapters, had become subject to intense public scrutiny and contestation. In other words, in experiencing strong societal examination, there was a certain *rupture* in official state narratives, whereby these episodes could no longer be credibly incorporated into the familiar plotlines of the states' supposedly progressive and benevolent pasts. It is in the context of this rupture that *mea culpa* seeks, perhaps to little avail, to amputate these events from the wider

¹³¹ Beyond the immediate term, it is argued that apologies cannot retain the credibility of colonial narratives indefinitely. Instead, apologies will only lead to further contestations and demands for further apologies. This is explored in more detail in the final passages of this conclusion.

plotline of the colonial endeavour. Though unavoidably opening the narrative to further contestation, the apology functions to suggest that these particular egregious acts were somehow anomalous to the otherwise favourable colonial endeavours (cf. Gibney 2002: 281). Given that the apologies pertained to either very narrow incidents or, as in the Italian case, remain rather vague and euphemistic expressions (see pages 172-173), there is a sense by which both a wider elite rhetoric and the apologising text itself fills this vacuum. It is this parallel discourse that demonstrably infuses the colonial past with glorifying and/or sanitising sentiments. To take just examples from the apologising politicians themselves: Belgian foreign minister, Louis Michel, spoke of 'a set of positive contributions' that Belgium made to the Congo (Persdienst Buitenlandse Zaken 2004). Likewise, he also described Leopold II as a 'visionary' and a 'hero' (quoted in Flandersnews.be 2010). Despite the apology to Libya, Berlusconi described Mussolini's rule as 'a benign dictatorship' (quoted in Farrell 2003). In the apology for the Derry massacre, Cameron (2010) simultaneously spoke of the British armed forces displaying 'enormous courage and professionalism in upholding democracy and the rule of law in Northern Ireland', while declaring the army, in his opinion, to be 'the best in the world'. Indeed, these are just limited examples and the empirical chapters are replete with similar discursive interventions as offered within the apology text and by adjacent political elites.

Beyond the rhetoric of political elites, the empirical chapters have also pointed to alternative mnemonic sites that propagate enduring glorifying or sanitising sentiments in regards to colonialism. For instance, while Chapter 3 suggested that while the German state was less prone to glorifying the colonial past than the other cases, the chapter nevertheless pointed to the current vogue for films and televised melodramas set in German administered territories that recirculate colonial fantasies of exoticism, racial stereotype and frontier ruggedness (Struck 2010; 2011). Likewise, the Belgium case study examined the Royal Museum of Central Africa as a prominent mnemonic site that, beyond the apology, put forth exhibitions regarding the Belgium role in Africa that are imbued with civilising, paternalistic and orientalist overtones (see Rahier 2003; Hochschild 2005; Hasian and Wood 2010). It is in underscoring such representations throughout the case studies that this thesis has located a curious and seemingly contradictory process, whereby the comparatively novel expressions of regret and remorse are conjoined with the more typical impulse towards colonial veneration.

Exalting contemporary paternalistic policies

There is a sense by which the apologies function as less of a platform of self flagellation, than one of self congratulation. In particular, it is evident that, in apologising, politicians take care to meticulously exhibit apparently altruistic and benevolent policies towards the former colony. The Bloody Sunday apology, for instance, venerates the British government's role in working towards peace in Northern Ireland. On its part, the commitments undertaken in the *Treaty of Friendship* commit Italy to undertaking the very activities that the state once exalted as the benevolent gifts of Italian colonialism, such as building infrastructure, roads and hospitals. The German apology states the willingness to 'help Namibia tackle the challenges of development' and assist 'the necessary process of land reform' (Wieczorek-Zeul 2004). With similar condescension, the Belgian apology committed the Lumumba Fund to 'democratic development', 'strengthening the rule of law and training of youth' (Michel 2002: 52). Laden with such sentiments, it appears that apologies redraft the paternalistic and belittling postures of the colonial era. In the process they project the apologising state as one which fosters benign and compassionate foreign policies towards the formerly colonised.

Beyond infantilising evocations, it is interesting to note that such gestures are loaded with an unspoken irony: that the European state now congratulating itself for supporting democratic governance in the Congo is the one that oversaw fundamentally undemocratic colonial rule in the region, before then assisting in the assassination of its first democratic leader and offering long term complicity in regards to General Mobutu's rule. Equally, the very state that engaged in the dispossession of Africans from their land in South West Africa is now the one offering assistance in land reform. It is Britain that is emphasising its role in facilitating peace in Northern Ireland, rather than its colonial role in instigating conflict. There is something reminiscent of the colonial in this: in colonial discourses of providing salvation to famished and impoverished subalterns, it was frequently disregarded that it was colonialism itself that fuelled the famine and impoverishment. Here, there is a similar scenario: in the process of apology, the European state is projected as a contemporary solution to problems that it played a large part in creating.

Speaking for the colonised

In her seminal work, Spivak (1988) ponders the question as to whether the subaltern can speak. In her complex essay, Spivak considers the dilemma of Western intellectuals speaking on behalf of the colonised. In turning to apologies, this thesis has located a similar dilemma, whereby, even if one (problematically) assumes the best intentions, metropolitan apology for colonial transgression entails the Western official speaking and narrating a violence bestowed

upon the subaltern. In other words, just as the orthodox colonial powers denied and bestowed 'history' upon the subaltern, so too can this process be seen in apologies. This dilemma pertains to all the case studies, but is most forcibly embodied in the Belgian and British cases, whereby it is the metropolitan state institutions that undertake 'Truth Commissions' into the past. It is by this format that institutions of the metropole assign themselves to adjudicate and pronounce 'truth', almost as if these atrocities only have authenticity if they are verified by European officialdom. It is not that the formerly colonised literally cannot speak. In fact, the thesis has demonstrated that subaltern contestation plays a central role in the rupturing of European states' 'official' narratives. Nevertheless, in apologising, it is European politicians and states that capture the media coverage and get acclaim for making grand and noble gestures of reconciliation.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

The significances of the above mentioned enduring colonial assumptions are turned to imminently. However, as with any research project, it is first necessary to recognise both avenues for further research and certain limitations that are inherent to this thesis.

Case study selection

First, to explore issues of method, there are unavoidable limitations here regarding the question of case study selection. As considered in the Introduction, the thesis opted for case studies where there had been positive occurrences of the empirical phenomena in question. That is, the thesis undertook in-depth textual analysis of empirical examples where apologies have been realised. The thesis has thereby neglected potentially illuminative case studies where *mea culpa* has not been offered. For example, there have been recent high profile rebuffed calls for France to apologise to Algeria, Turkey to address the Armenian genocide and the UK to apologise in light of detentions and torture committed at the time of the Mau Mau rebellion. Equally, there are innumerable colonial projects where apologies have not been offered and there have not yet been discernible high profile demands for apology. Thus, where this thesis examined the mnemonic constructs of the colonial past through the offering of apology, one could alternatively gain insights into states' awkward relationships with their colonial past through their refusals to apologise. In particular, there is room for further research as to why some polities are reticent in offering apology, even in the face of considerable international and domestic contestation at official narratives.

Likewise, the thesis undertook a conscious decision to focus on examples of European apology. Certainly, there have been examples of non-European apology (albeit from European settler states) for historical wrongs committed against indigenous peoples, in Canada and Australia, for example. Beyond these domestic cases, this thesis omitted non-European empirical examples of apology for aspects of overseas colonialism, Japanese *mea culpa* being the most prominent example of this. Interestingly, a cursory study of the Japanese post-war apologies sheds light on several similar dynamics to those of this thesis. For instance, there has been a tendency to use 'vague and nonspecific' language (Yamazaki 2006: 36), conjoined with accompanying and enduring sanitising or glorifying discourses from both governmental politicians (Lind 2008) and other officialised mnemonic sites, especially school textbooks. Finally, like the case studies of this thesis, there has been a trend to apologise for narrow issues that have become of high public profile, such as the, euphemistically phrased, use of 'comfort women'.¹³² While this thesis is a study of mnemonic representations of European colonialism, there is certainly scope for further research regarding comparative analysis between European and non-European forms of political apology.¹³³

The capacity to generalise findings

In focussing on four European case studies, there remain prominent questions as to how far the findings of this thesis can be generalised to apply to other European states. The thesis has pointed to remarkably similar contradictions throughout the case studies; that the states in question are torn between a disavowal of egregious episodes of violence and their reflexive inclination towards veneration of the past. Such contradictions, one could suggest, are inherent in colonial projects *per se*; that is, colonialism has long been riddled with the dilemma of 'civilising' through violence and tackling 'savagery' through oppression. It seems, moreover, that, even where apology has not been realised, that other former European colonial powers are beset with similar discursive anxieties and contradictions. Nevertheless, just as Sartre (1956) advanced that 'Le colonialisme est un système', it remains to be seen if the postcolonial anxieties and ambivalences of apologetic states described in the case studies constitute a system. In other words, there is further mileage available in regards to whether the findings of

¹³² Expressing 'apologies and contrition', in 1992 spokesman for the Japanese government, Koichi Kato, said that 'We cannot deny that the former Japanese army played a role' in the abuse of 'comfort girls' (quoted in Associated Press 1992). Comfort women refer to women used as sex slaves by Japanese Forces during World War II.

¹³³ For an example of an excellent analysis of both German and Japanese WWII apologies, see Lind (2008).

these narrow case studies may be accorded more systematically to other former European colonial powers.

Methodological nationalism

In regards to questions of the format of the project, this thesis couches its assumptions based upon an implicit methodological nationalism. This is applicable to what Chernilo (2006: 5-6) describes as ‘the all-pervasive assumption that the nation-state is the natural and necessary form of society in modernity; the nation-state is taken as the organizing principle of modernity’. Indeed, the very approach of this thesis having four case studies - each pertaining to the mnemonic representations of an apologising state - does reflect an organising principle that gravitates around the nation-state. Such a method, perhaps problematically, reproduces the idea that it is at state level where perceptions of the past are primarily articulated and disseminated. While the thesis has demonstrated that there are certain international imperatives to apology, perhaps the inbuilt case study format has obstructed the deciphering of spaces where memories are negotiated and articulated that transcend the state. To this end, in recent years there has been an emergence of academic literature that emphasises the increasingly cosmopolitan and globalised dynamics of memory (for instance, Levy and Sznajder 2002; Levy and Sznajder 2010; Amine and Beschea-Fache 2012; Gavriely-Nuri and Lachover 2012). As such, there is scope for further research to more closely examine the cosmopolitan mnemonic dynamics and implications of political apology.

The Eurocentric scope of the thesis

The most prominent limitation wrestled with through the course of this project is that of the scope of the thesis, which has been consciously focused towards European elites. One of the key arguments of this thesis is that political *mea culpa* provides yet another platform for the European state to narrate the colonial past; that there is a form of ventriloquism where, even in elaborating contritely on the violence committed against the colonised, it is the European elite that is given a stage. In other words, even in apology, there is a sense in which the colonised are spoken about, rather than given voice. In this regard, there is a question as to whether this thesis further fuels this exact dilemma. Firstly, the thesis is by a white European and emanates from a European academic institution. More pressingly, the thesis is an examination of European polities, European politicians and European mnemonic representations. In undertaking this, the work has attempted to demonstrate that European elites must interact with, vie and negotiate with disparate representations from their former

colonies. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which this very work has retrodden the Eurocentric path that it disparages.

To offer a defence: this thesis does not claim to speak *for* the colonised and has, from its inception, not claimed to be even primarily *about* the colonised (although undoubtedly there have been places where the empirical case studies have demonstrated competing representations from the formerly colonised). The focus of this thesis has been European states and the ways in which European elites construct, negotiate and grapple with the colonial past. In this respect, the animating dilemma that pervades and drives this thesis is predisposed to researching these European discourses from the (former) *coloniser*. Nevertheless, the pre-set parameters of the thesis leave a space for wider research – from a different perspective – that could build on or compliment this thesis. That is, there is certainly room for a wider study of how demands for apology are formulated, articulated and responded to by the (formerly) colonised and how, by extension, these demands inform group identities, circulating within uneven power configurations – privileging certain ‘victims’ while marginalising others.

The thesis’ contribution

Notwithstanding these limitations, it may be suggested that this thesis makes an important academic contribution. The key contribution of the thesis is in identifying and dissecting an unexplored site of analysis that significantly enriches the study of discourses that are embedded within and sustain contemporary patterns of (post-)colonial relations. *Mea culpa* has been shown to be a multifaceted process that is delicately poised to encapsulate and shed light on a plethora of dimensions that inform and shape the contemporary articulations of European elites. For instance, it seems that the process of apology is fashioned through such disparate and ambivalent features as enduring fantasies of empire, colonial guilt, persisting geopolitical hierarchies, self-interest, human rights imperatives, axiomatic impulses towards state valorisation and so on. To this end, the project is situated within, and adds value to, an array of postcolonial literature that locates discourse and representation as mediums that are integral to the processes of colonial domination. In this respect, the study of colonial apology provides for an examination of a particular novel phenomenon that stands at the intersection of sentiments of humanitarianism, liberalism and also contemporary colonial hierarchy. The study of this seemingly narrow issue of apology speaks to wider debates within International

Relations and adjacent disciplines regarding the significance of the colonial past and European states' uneasy relationship with the legacy of Empire.

Collective memory

In addition, the project adds value in terms of the study of collective memory. In many senses, beyond complimenting it with postcolonial analysis (discussed below), this thesis has used the concept of collective memory more as a lens through which to grapple with representations of the past, rather than seeking to substantially reshape the theoretical grounding of the concept. In this way, the objective was not to destabilise or significantly alter the concept, but to draw on its starting assertion that the way in which societies recall the past is mediated socially through multiple sites and discursive exchanges. Nevertheless, the project makes a contribution to the study of the emerging new 'grammar' (Assmann 2006: 219) by which states represent the past. In this regard, there has been recognition of a trend whereby certain states are developing a discourse which is discernibly more self-disparaging than the conventional glorifying grammar. Indeed, Schwartz (2008) goes so far as to speak of a 'post-heroic' mode of representing the past. Such a 'post-heroic' memory, he writes, entails a scenario in which 'epic undertakings are replaced by limited conflicts; democracy is expanded by repudiating inequality and valorizing victimhood above greatness, weakness over strength' (Schwartz 2008: 8). This thesis contributes by further problematising and complicating the question of such a 'post-heroic' grammar.¹³⁴ In this respect, the thesis shows that there is a certain endurance of 'heroic' narratives that valorise aspects of colonial endeavours. However, the thesis does more than simply show that alongside contrite recollections there are also heroic postulations. Instead, the thesis serves to blur the lines between heroic and contrite mnemonic postulations; it unravels the structures by which the very act of offering contrite stances of the past is at once bounded with preserving, defending and perpetuating conventional aggrandising narratives. Moreover, as shown throughout the thesis, the very texts and persons that offer such contrition equally espouse conventional platitudes in the next breath. It is recognition of the merging of these dual and seemingly incompatible sentiments – contrition and glorification – that marks the contribution of this work to the understanding of the operation of this new manner of representing the past.

¹³⁴ This is not to create a straw-man out of Schwartz. In fact, in his excellent book, *Abraham Lincoln in the post-heroic era: history and memory in late twentieth-century America*, Schwartz (2008: 187) recognises that, even in the post-heroic age, we continue 'to recognise many heroes in our time: military, civic (including police and firemen) and sports heroes stand out in the public mind'.

Contribution to International Relations

In regards to the discipline of IR, the focus on these rituals positions this work within an array of literature that, in recent years, has moved the discipline slowly away from some of its more positivist inclinations and its preoccupation with such narrow issues as anarchy, balance of power and the security dilemma. To this end, the theoretical developments in regards to constructivism, poststructuralism and the discipline's belated recognition of postcolonial analysis since the 1990s have left welcome spaces where discourse is recognised as a key aspect of enacting and fostering particular power relations. Most pressingly, the thesis continues in this vein and, drawing on postcolonial analysis, has located an empirical phenomenon that powerfully and subtly captures not only the character of enduring colonial and hierarchical power relations, but also sheds light on the frailties and the anxieties that are extant within these unequal relationships. Moreover, in theoretical terms, the thesis takes unprecedented steps in IR in marrying key tenets of both postcolonial analysis and sociological work on collective memory. It has been suggested that postcolonial analysis and collective memory share an overlooked appreciation for the central role of text and representations of the past in shaping contemporary social, economic and political landscapes. Likewise, they both recognise the uneven – yet perpetually fluxed – power struggles over the capacity to inscribe perceptions of the past in ways that resonate with current day power configurations. It is hoped – moving beyond the issue of political apologies – that this work will encourage and facilitate further empirical and theoretical research in IR and kindred disciplines that builds on this marriage.

The key contribution, however, of the thesis to the discipline of IR is through expanding understandings of the performative and ritualistic processes by which liberalism reproduces itself in the international system.¹³⁵ In particular, the thesis identifies a series of contradictions, incongruities and even hypocrisies in the very processes through which elites

¹³⁵ As previously discussed, while liberalism is a broad theory with a rich intellectual history, the significance to this thesis are the modes by which contemporary elites symbolically, ritualistically and very publically exhibit their liberal credentials. In this sense, their *mea culpa* for past atrocity intuitively constitutes proclamations of moral aversion to such violence as well as commitments to norms of human rights. Moreover, the apologies sit with liberal imperatives that advocate inter-state/community reconciliation, harmony and – in the post-cold war world – renewed commitments to international justice and fairness.

enact and ritualistically both frame their liberal credentials and engage in 21st century forms of power politics. Certainly, this is not the first work to locate internal contradictions in liberalism: there are, for instance, multiple works that point to the inequalities forged by institutions and polities promoting neo-liberal economic agendas (for example Van der Pijl 1998; Peet 2003), as well as works critiquing the imperialist overtones of liberal orchestrated humanitarian interventions (Gregory 2004; Bricmont 2006). Equally, there is an array of research that, pointing to such eminent figures as Kant, Locke and Mill, traces the philosophical roots of liberalism and captures its illiberal genealogy and its uncomfortably close and frequently problematic relationship with imperialism (Sullivan 1983; Jahn 2005). While these works are undoubtedly valuable, this thesis affirms that an understanding of the operational dynamics of liberalism necessitates moving beyond the philosophical and intellectual lineage of the tradition and requires critical interrogation of a portfolio of contemporary liberal performative practices, of which apology is a key site. It is through this very contemporary practical aspect of *doing* international politics that one can garner a heightened comprehension of the dilemmas and conundrums facing both the theoretical doctrine of liberalism and its current disciples amongst today's political elite. It is in the thesis' concluding remarks that these conundrums are now brought into sharp focus.

Concluding remarks: conundrums for the liberal European polity

A central theme running through this thesis is that colonial apologies simultaneously exhibit both the liberal credentials of the apologising state and their lingering colonial mentalities; it is to show an uneasy and complex relationship that straddles an unresolved past and a troubled present. Thus, the final passages of the thesis highlight some of the dilemmas that the thesis has educed in this regard and frames them as challenges to the ideological underpinnings of the, once colonial, European liberal polity. This is not to suggest that the thesis holds glib answers to these conundrums. Nor is it to offer anything as grandiose as to suggest that these challenges radically destabilise the hegemonic ascendancy of liberal ideology. It is, however, to relicit some of the dilemmas contributed by this thesis and capture the ways in which they sit awkwardly with liberal polities' contemporary projected identities.

1. Collective guilt and the supremacy of the individual

Perhaps the most immediate quandary regarding liberal polities' *mea culpa* is the fissure created with liberal concepts of justice. This raises the common objection, most forcibly articulated by former Australian Prime Minister John Howard (2008), that guilt cannot

somehow be inherited from one generation to the next. In other words, liberalism emphasises the idea that individuals can only be held responsible for the actions that they themselves have undertaken. Yet, the intergenerational apologies of this thesis accept responsibility for the actions of the polities' predecessors. Additionally, the apologies seem to accept degrees of guilt for the political community at large. This, it must be recognised, is not a novel observation and, as well as being discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, is also considered in the works of Trouillot (2000) and Celermajer (2009), among others. Moreover, unlike the following analysis, this observation is not one that permeates and sets apart this work. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to note that state apologies mark a curious break from the otherwise radically atomised and individualistic ontology of the (neo) liberal capitalist order.

2. The universality of human rights

One of the cornerstones of democratic liberalism is the apparent universality of human rights. From one perspective, apologies can be seen to endorse such an approach, insofar as they recognise and condemn human rights infringements committed against people whom they once overtly or tacitly assumed to be less worthy of such dignities. In this manner, there is, at least at first sight, a sense in which apology may function so as to accord a moral dignity to one who has been transgressed against (see pages 34-35). However, as shown throughout this thesis, apologies are discernibly not universal. Instead, the colonial apologies address specific human rights violations, while leaving others untouched. As traced in each chapter, the apologies apply to isolated incidents where there have risen societal contestations at the events and where there is expediency to be gleaned from contrition. Even the Italian case study, which offered an apology for colonialism in Libya, is notable for the absence of contrition to other former colonies that are now deemed of less geopolitical strategic importance. This, a critical soul may suggest, indicates that the universal doctrines of human rights are, at least in apology, somewhat less than universal. Instead, they are only applicable where there are particular circumstances in which it is advantageous for them to be so. As Gibney (2002: 281) writes in relation to this, 'the approach to apologizing taken by the former colonial powers has been eerily reminiscent of the way colonialism itself was carried out: divide and conquer'. It is in this observation that one can locate a break or contradiction from the idea of universal human rights which liberal polities rhetorically advance and apologies intuitively endorse.

3. Preserving myths that sit awkwardly with liberal discourse

Related to the onset of supposedly universal human rights, it seems that apologies correlate with the liberal imperative to renounce arbitrary and egregious violence. As such, apologising for such acts may be seen as an act of liberal affirmation and legitimisation. To return to Goffmann's (1971: 113) concept of splitting (see page 32), the apology may be understood as a face-saving rhetorical act of divorcing the liberal polity from the transgression in question. In this vein, the liberal polity establishes its identity and, indeed, its legitimacy in opposition to such a transgression. Certainly this thesis has demonstrated that contrite discourses do feed into states' projections of their liberal values. However, in equal measure, this thesis has also demonstrated that, enmeshed with such liberal proclamations, states maintain many of the 'heroic' and expansionist discourses of identity. In such a manner, there is a certain schizophrenia at play, where states seemingly renounce egregious violence on one hand, yet simultaneously revere many of the processes that facilitate this violence. While examples of this have been detailed throughout the thesis, this duality is perhaps most vividly captured in the Belgian contrition for involvement in the assassination of Lumumba and the parallel mythologisation of Leopold II. The thesis has thereby recognised a tension in the ways that states use the past to trumpet their contemporary identities. On the one hand, states increasingly renounce past violence in bolstering their liberal credentials, on the other hand states have not set aside the more embedded and orthodox 'heroic' narratives that are complicit in such violence. Carrying the implicit weight of colonial expansion, violence and dispossession – such dualities make for an uneasy ideological marriage.

4. The progressive and reconciled relations with former colonies

In an era of both formal independence and the decline of bipolar geopolitical tensions, there has been an increasing imperative for former colonial powers to reconcile and forge more amenable relations with their erstwhile colonies. In such a way, Western liberal states have become more adept in the parlance of attesting to formal equality among nations. Notably, in the very text of their apologies, there is a tendency for liberal polities to emphasise new and more egalitarian relations with their former colonies; endorsing progressive and apparently reconciled interstate relations. *The Treaty of Friendship*, for instance, speaks of 'the construction of a new phase of Italian-Libyan relations based on mutual respect, equal dignity and equal and balanced relationship' (Camera del Deputati 2008). Likewise, the German apology talks of a vision of 'equal access' to resources, 'friendship' and 'mutual respect' (Wieczorek-Zeul 2004). Yet alongside such proclamations of apparent equality, this thesis has pointed to the endurance of policies and discourses that, even in apology, belie such sentiments. As traced in the empirical chapters, paternalistic and infantilising sentiments

linger within the apologising texts themselves. Moreover, there are persisting policies attached to the *mea culpa* that serve to entrench and reproduce inequalities. Should one opt to term such discourses and policies as 'neo-colonial', then, once more, it is possible to observe – in the Petri-dish that is apology - a certain incongruity with supposedly liberal sentiments. This is to say that there is an espousal of equality couched within dynamics that resemble (though do not entirely replicate) colonial complexions of inequity.

5. The dripping effect

Finally - the most severe dilemma for the contrite liberal polity: This thesis has posited that *mea culpa* may be understood as a defensive posture in the face of severe societal contestation at 'official' narratives of the past. That is, the Herero genocide, the Lumumba assassination, Bloody Sunday, could no longer be credibly reconciled with the states' characterisations of their benevolent pasts and, by extension, their contemporary identities.¹³⁶ Apology, in this sense, disavows these episodes in an attempt to preserve or shield the wider narrative of the past. In *mea culpa*, politicians draw on these events in the process of rhetorically enouncing that such acts were historical anomalies and that these transgressions are not indicative of the states' supposed benign character. The apologies, in this sense, are transformative utterances that proffer new historical constructions. In the face of challenge, these contrite narratives offer negotiated and seemingly more credible, stable and mutually agreeable narratives of the past.

It is, then, that in offering apologies, politicians speak of closing chapters, moving on, drawing a line under the event. British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, (prior to Cameron's Bloody Sunday apology) sought to plug this leak, saying that 'the days of Britain having to apologise for its colonial history are over' (quoted in Kearney 2005). Yet these new narratives can be no more than temporary holding positions; they will inescapably face further challenge and contestation, both from the formerly colonised and within the metropole itself. Rather than preserving an authorised official narrative, apologies make the state vulnerable to demands for other apologies. Beyond the short term, they beget further critical examination and inadvertently shed light on wider structures of violence. There can only be a dripping effect,

¹³⁶ As already discussed, Chapter 6 details how the issue of Italian colonialism experienced less intensive domestic contestation than in the other case studies. Nevertheless, the chapter does trace an increasing level of introspection within Italian society.

where domestic and international audiences enquire as to whether these isolated crimes really were so anomalous to these states' colonial projects.

It is, of course, well known that Europe is now lurching from economic crisis to political crisis. But this thesis has also pointed to a mnemonic and discursive dilemma; one that speaks to the heart of liberal polities' self identity. The states, at least of this thesis, are increasingly suffering a deficiency in the credibility of their constructions of their past and, in turn, their contemporary projected sense of 'self'. To return to Sartre (2001: 84): This may not yet be the end, but 'Europe is taking in water everywhere'.

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