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## Rhodes Historical Review

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IDENTITY AND CRISIS: RACISM AND FRENCH COLONIZATION  
IN TUNISIA

*Camilla Morrison*

DEFINING DIXIE: COUNTRY MUSIC'S EVOLUTION OF IDENTITY

*Phoebe Strom*

VICTORY BY ANY MEANS: FRENCH TORTURE IN COLONIAL  
ALGERIA

*Harrison Donahoe*



# Rhodes Historical Review



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This year's publication of the Rhodes Historical Review is dedicated to Professor Gail Murray for her unwavering commitment to her students and to the department of history, and to Professor Charles Hughes for the intellect and enthusiasm he has brought to our campus community.

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# Rhodes Historical Review

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## Identity in Crisis: Racism and French Colonization in Tunisia

Camilla Morrison

*“I was a sort of half-breed of colonization,  
understanding everyone because I belonged to no one.”<sup>1</sup>*  
– Albert Memmi

The life of Albert Memmi is one worth taking notice of. A Tunisian Jew who grew up under French colonialism and eventually settled in Paris, his experiences are substantial and his perspective unique. Over the course of his life Memmi has authored so far over a dozen works that range from autobiographical to theoretical and engage forcefully with the issues surrounding the colonial system he knows too well. A thorough engagement with his work provides a profoundly insightful picture of the nature of the French colonial system as well as how this system impacted the identity of colonized Tunisians. Using the work of Albert Memmi to investigate these matters, my argument is two-fold: First, I argue that racism was both the fuel and the glue of the French colonial system in Tunisia. The agents of the colonial regime, the French colonizers, constantly employed a racist ideology not only to sustain the system but also to legitimize their own personal positions as usurpers. Second, the imposition of the system permeated every aspect of Tunisian’s lives and created for them their

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), xvi.

## Identity in Crisis

identity as the colonized. The French colonial system further warped this identity through the simultaneous destruction and reformation of its fundamental elements—primarily language, history, and education. The violence inflicted on identity necessarily elicits a reaction and decision from the colonized, forcing them to choose either consciously or subconsciously the manner in which they will exist in relation to colonialism and the colonizers.

Although Memmi's experiences are based in North Africa, his thought reaches far beyond. The dynamics he discusses apply to any colonial system as well as any situation of oppression. His analysis does not only help us to understand the specific situation of Tunisia and France but it serves as a model to examine other instances of colonialism and oppression. Memmi's work provided guidance to Tunisia as it was moving toward and struggling with independence; a proper understanding of the newly autonomous population was essential so they could know how to collectively move forward. It is necessary to understand how colonial practices and years of colonization can impact and change individual as well as national identity because only by knowing yourself properly as a collective entity can you determine how to properly overcome, govern and progress. Memmi facilitates understanding of all other colonized people both in the throes of colonization and emerging from it; lessons can be drawn from his work that help to comprehend past colonial relationships and their roles in forming the world we know today. Additionally, as colonial systems and similarly oppressive relationships are still in existence, currently developing, and will continue to do so in the future it is essential to understand them and how they affect those involved.

### *Historical Context*

The Tunisia into which Memmi was born had been under French colonial rule for several decades. Tunisia has always been one of the world's busiest crossroads where over the centuries countless races and cultures have met, intermingled and learned to coexist. The convenient geographic position on the Mediterranean, facing Europe to the west and Egypt to the east, has furthermore always placed Tunisia at the focus of foreign interest.<sup>2</sup> It was during the late nineteenth century when France, who along with Britain had been keeping a steady interest in Tunisia for decades, turned opportunity into action and in 1881 established the country as a French protectorate. In the following years, France gradually increased its influence through military, governmental, and civilian presence eventually culminating in an established colonial system that assumed full control of the country. This transition unquestionably constituted a turning point of enormous importance in Tunisia's history and development as a nation.<sup>3</sup>

### *Beginnings*

Living in Tunis just outside the Jewish quarter, Memmi's father was an Italian Jew and his mother was of Jewish Berber origins. Under the French colonial system a Jewish family such as theirs was reserved, although very limited, privileges that placed them one small notch above Muslims on the pyramid which is the basis of all colonial societies.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Lorna Hahn, *North Africa: Nationalism to Nationhood* (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1960), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 15.

<sup>4</sup> According to Memmi the distribution of privileges in colonial societies resembles a pyramid with the colonizers at the top and the various groups of colonized at the bottom. Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, xiv.

Growing up, Memmi struggled with his family's poverty; although they could afford to maintain a simple lifestyle, their limited resources became a source of great shame when interacting with children of higher means.<sup>5</sup>

Memmi began formal schooling at age four in a Talmudic, a typical Jewish school, where he learned Hebrew; but by age seven Memmi was already attending a French-sponsored school that offered a Western secular education to Jewish children of humble origins.<sup>6</sup> It was here where he first encountered the immense difficulty of learning French. Language had already been a source of stress for the young Memmi, and it would continue to be for the rest of his life; his native tongue was the traditional Tunisian dialect with a Muslim accent which caused other Jews to suspect him of affectation and Muslims to think he was mimicking them.<sup>7</sup> At the French school he was thrust into the classroom without any knowledge of French yet under the instruction of a French teacher. Consequently, his younger years and adolescence were spent struggling over mastery of the language. His situation was not unique, as "countless other children of the colonies found themselves in a similar predicament, forced to leave behind their 'basic unity' and to seek a new identity in the territory of the other."<sup>8</sup> Later at the age of twelve Memmi received a scholarship to attend the Lycee Carnot, a French-run high school that was "a principal training ground for the Tunisian political elite" usually only afforded by children of the middle and upper classes.<sup>9</sup> It was around this time, as he grew accustomed to such a different environment, that he

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<sup>5</sup> Albert Memmi, *The Pillar of Salt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 17.

<sup>6</sup> Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 160.

<sup>7</sup> Memmi, *The Pillar of Salt*, 30.

<sup>8</sup> Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 160.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

“crossed the threshold from the society of the colonized to that of the colonizer” and began to feel confused and conflicted as to which group in Tunisia he truly belonged.<sup>10</sup>

Soon after completing studies at the lycee, Memmi began writing for several Tunisian newspapers and then continued on to Algiers to begin a degree in philosophy until the Second World War forced him to return to Nazi-occupied Tunis where, as a Jew, he was put into a German work camp from which he subsequently escaped. At the conclusion of WWII he departed North Africa for the first time and enrolled at the Sorbonne in Paris to pursue a graduate degree in philosophy. It was during these years in Paris that Memmi met his wife, a European, who “became the metaphor for his struggle to reconcile the two halves of his soul, the European and the African.”<sup>11</sup> After completing his studies, he returned in 1951 to teach in Tunis and became supportive of and involved with the nationalist struggle that came to fruition five years later. The year independence was finally achieved, 1956 was an obvious turning point for Tunisians. As Dwight L. Ling observes in *Tunisia: From Protectorate to Republic*,

...although not a midpoint in a chronological sense, the year divides the long struggle for independence from the fascinating story of a newborn nation beset with contemporary problems. The division is one between Tunisia’s past and its future.<sup>12</sup>

Memmi was not only living in this tumultuous time, he intellectually engaged with it through his writing, publishing his most well-known and widely circulated novel,

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>12</sup> Dwight L. Ling, *Tunisia: From Protectorate to Republic* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1967), viii.

*The Colonizer and the Colonized*, the year after independence. As a result of his origins as a Jewish, and therefore colonized, individual combined with his French education and adult life spent assimilating to the lifestyle of a colonizer, Memmi considered himself “a sort of half-breed of colonization, understanding everyone because [he] belonged completely to no one.”<sup>13</sup> Although Memmi insists that he wrote simply to understand the colonial relationship to which he was bound, the significance of the time in which he wrote it suggests and demands greater purpose.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in an article written nearly two decades after the publication of his first novel, he wrote, “It is obvious, moreover, that whatever the genius of an author, the success of a work depends even more on the integration of the work into human reality and on its potential to modify that reality.”<sup>15</sup> Without a doubt Memmi hoped to reach wide audiences, particularly those who read the language in which he wrote—French. He knew he was uniquely positioned to not only analyze but also expose the true nature of the French colonial system more effectively than virtually anyone else at the time.

### *Discussion of Racism*

Memmi writes a great deal on the subject of racism but to properly understand a term so nebulous and how it should specifically apply to French colonialism, it is necessary to first look beyond him to voices from contexts outside of France and Tunisia. In his book, *Racism: A Short History*, George M. Fredrickson discusses the development of racist thought throughout history as well as specific

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<sup>13</sup> Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, xvi.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

<sup>15</sup> Albert Memmi, “The Impossible Life of Frantz Fanon” *The Massachusetts Review* (Winter 1973), 33.



contexts such as South Africa, Europe, and the American South. He highlights the “autonomous and conspicuous”<sup>16</sup> existence of racism in Western nations as being curiously “developed in a context that presumed human equality of some kind.”<sup>17</sup> This presumed equality is substantiated by both Christian doctrines that “offered grace to all willing to receive it and made all Christian believers equal before God” and the “more revolutionary concept that all ‘men’ are born free and equal and entitled to equal rights in society and government.”<sup>18</sup> Fredrickson contends that for a hierarchical system such as colonialism to exist in a culture where “equality is the norm in the spiritual and temporal realms,” the group of people denied the prospect of equal status must “allegedly possess some extraordinary deficiency that makes them less than fully human.”<sup>19</sup> He asserts that it is only in Western countries where “we find the dialectical interaction between a premise of equality and an intense prejudice toward certain groups.”<sup>20</sup> The only way that a country imbedded with values of equality can create and benefit from an inherently unequal system, is by employing racism.

Regarding racism in the specifically European context, Fredrickson argues that all white Europeans between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries would have been, whether aware or not, to some degree under the influence of ethnocentrism stemming from white supremacist ideology. In Fredrickson’s book, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African*

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<sup>16</sup> George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.), 145.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

*History*, he explains that white supremacy “refers to the attitudes, ideologies, and policies associated with the rise of blatant forms of white or European dominance over ‘nonwhite’ populations” and “involves making invidious distinctions of a socially crucial kind that are based primarily, if not exclusively, on physical characteristics and ancestry.”<sup>21</sup> Franz Fanon would argue that the degree to which a society is racist is irrelevant; in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* he takes a more critical and decisive stance than Fredrickson, declaring that “a society is racist or it is not.”<sup>22</sup> According to Fanon not only does Europe have a racist structure but France is a racist country.<sup>23</sup>

It is a much different question, however, to consider the individual mindsets of the French colonizers who arrived in Tunisia. On this topic, Fredrickson writes that “Europeans did not generally regard their penetration and dominance of other parts of the globe as the result of their innate biological superiority. They saw it rather as the fruit of acquired cultural and technological advantages.”<sup>24</sup> He argues that, to French colonialists, the colonial endeavor was purely to do with France’s civilizing mission rather than racism. Fanon, when discussing France’s civilizing mission, cites Frenchman Monsieur Mannoni’s thought:

‘Not all peoples can be colonized; only those who experience this need.’ And further on: ‘Wherever Europeans have founded colonies of the type we are considering, it can safely be said that their coming was unconsciously expected—even desired—by the future subject peoples.’<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History* (Oxford University Press, 1982), 66.

<sup>22</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2008), 76.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*, 104.

<sup>25</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 78.

Certainly informed by ethnocentrism and white supremacy, the French colonial mentality, what Fanon refers to as “a complex of authority, a complex of leadership,”<sup>26</sup> was that the imposition of its people, values, and institutions onto the societies it hoped to colonize was a duty and a service to humanity.

### *The Racism of the French Colonial System*

Upon arrival in Tunisia, regardless of their previously held beliefs, French colonizers were confronted with an entirely new reality for which they had to adopt racism, integrating it in into the very fabric of their being as inseparable from and necessary to their existence. This rapid transition is explained by Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. He maintains that, once in the colony, the colonizer becomes immediately aware of his relative privilege and profit, quickly followed by an understanding of its origin and significance.<sup>27</sup> Suddenly the colonized are “no longer a simple component of geographical or historical décor” as the colonizer understands that he must constantly live in relation to them “on one side of a scale, the other side of which bears the colonized man” and “the more freely he breathes, the more the colonized are choked.”<sup>28</sup> Memmi insists that it is impossible for the colonizer to be unaware of the “constant illegitimacy” of this privileged status as a usurper and, once faced with this reality, immediately endeavors to legitimize it. It is here where racism factors in, because racism is the only way for a colonizer to legitimate his nonlegitimate existence, “to transform his usurpation.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>27</sup> Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 7.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 52.

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Memmi elaborates on this process in a passage from *Dominated Man*:

*Guilt feelings constitute one of the most powerful driving forces in the racist mechanism. Why do privilege and oppression arouse such a strong racist reaction? Because racism is undoubtedly one way of combating that inner misery which is remorse. If there is oppression it must be because someone is guilty, and if the oppressor himself does not plead guilty—a situation which would soon become intolerable—then it must be the oppressed man who is guilty. In short, by means of racism, the victim is blamed for the real or imaginary crimes of the racist.*<sup>30</sup>

The colonizer cannot blame himself for the difference in privilege so therefore it must be the fault of the colonized. These faults of the colonized are both created and identified through racism and developed into myths to which the colonizers subsequently adopt and cling.

Racism is not only necessary to the daily existence of the colonizer but also on a larger scale to the colonial system as a whole. Memmi explains that racism is “a consubstantial part of colonialism” and the highest expression of the colonial system because, after legitimizing the fundamental difference between colonizer and colonized, it further serves to maintain “the impossibility of including the colonized in the community”<sup>31</sup> and then “lays the foundation for the immutability of this life.”<sup>32</sup> French sociologist Pierre-Andre Taguieff distinguishes between two distinctive varieties or logics of racism—“le racism d’exploitation” and “le racism d’extermination” which Fredrickson explains as either a racism of inclusion or

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<sup>30</sup> Albert Memmi, *Dominated Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 202.

<sup>31</sup> Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 74.

<sup>32</sup> Memmi, *Dominated Man*, 187.

exclusion.<sup>33</sup> A society with exclusionary racism, often associated with Nazi Germany, does not consider coexistence with the lesser group to be a possibility while inclusionary racism, often associated with the American South, permits incorporation “only on the basis of a rigid hierarchy justified by a belief in permanent, unbridgeable differences.”<sup>34</sup> The French colonizers at times teeter on exclusionary racism but are bound by the fact that their privilege does not exist without the colonized’s lack thereof. Therefore, while some individuals certainly display exclusionary racism, as a whole the group and the system can never move beyond inclusionary racism. Memmi discusses this paradox with what he calls the Nero complex: the colonizers “wish the disappearance of the usurped, whose very existence causes him to take the role of usurper” but at the same time knows that “to eliminate the colonized... would be impossible for him to do without eliminating himself.”<sup>35</sup>

*Impact on Tunisians: Creation of the Colonized*

We move now from constructing the racist nature of the colonial system to exploring how it affected the colonized Tunisians. On this, Memmi writes that as a Tunisian he was therefore colonized, and “discovered that few aspects of [his] life and [his] personality were untouched by this fact. Not only [his] own thoughts, [his] passions and [his] conduct, but also the conduct of others toward [him] was affected.”<sup>36</sup> The imposition of this system not only permeated every aspect of their lives but it also changed their previous existence by creating their identity as the

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<sup>33</sup> Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*, 165.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>35</sup> Memmi, Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 53-54.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

colonized. The first consequence of French racism was its infiltration into the mind of Tunisians. As a result of being constantly confronted with this new image of themselves created by the colonizers and having it set forth and imposed on all institutions and in every human contact, the colonized cannot help but react. The repetitive reinforcement and reminder of their inequality “disturbs and worries”<sup>37</sup> the colonized, slowly making them doubt their previously held conceptions of themselves. “The ideological aggression which tends to dehumanize and then deceive the colonized finally corresponds to concrete situations which lead to the same result.”<sup>38</sup> Once the colonizers created inequality becomes consistent enough, the colonized accept it as reality, thus solidifying a mental victory for the colonial system.

Once this new colonized identity was created and Tunisians accepted and began living this role, the colonial relationship was established and the French were able to use this to further warp their sense of identity through both destruction and reformation of its fundamental elements. These fundamental elements can be loosely delineated as language, history and education but essential to their discussion is an understanding that they are not mutually exclusive. The nuances and fluidity of the colonial experience make the artificial creation of categories problematic because, as elements of a single identity, they will all necessarily overlap and intermingle.

### *Language*

The attack on Tunisian identity is perhaps most strikingly shown through language. The agents of the colonial system violently dismissed the multiple dialects already established

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 91.

in Tunisia while restructuring society to function only through the use of their native French. Many Tunisians were never able to learn French for lack of access, time or resources, confining them to their native languages not acknowledged by the colonial regime. This exposed certain parts of society to the mercy of an entire bureaucracy, court system, and industry that only listened to and spoke a language they could not understand. Fanon stresses the importance and “extraordinary power in the possession of language” in the colonial setting because of the amount of access it can provide if attained.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, according to Memmi’s experience, “the colonized’s mother tongue, that which is sustained by his feelings, emotions and dreams, that in which his tenderness and wonder are expressed, thus that which holds the greatest emotional impact, is precisely the one which is the least valued.”<sup>40</sup> The intensity with which language is connected to identity caused even deeper self-rejection for the colonized.

For those Tunisians who managed to become bilingual, not only did they still never gain acceptance from the native French speakers but this “linguistic ambiguity [was] the symbol and one of the major causes of [their] cultural ambiguity.”<sup>41</sup> Memmi himself struggled immensely with this as his natural desire for success led him to proficiency in French but simultaneously alienated him from both the French he strived to be like and those still immersed in the culture he was leaving behind. This “hand-to-hand struggle with language”<sup>42</sup> is played out in *The Pillar of Salt* as the young Alexandre grapples with overcoming his language deficiency throughout his years of

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<sup>39</sup> Fanon, *White Skin, Blacks Masks*, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 107.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>42</sup> Memmi, *The Pillar of Salt*, 108.

schooling. In a particularly poignant incident, Alexandre attempts to deliver a speech to his class to “prove that one could do an excellent job while speaking the language of the street” but half way through slips into slang, or as the teacher refers to it, “the language of a street urchin.”<sup>44</sup> Alexandre relates the incident:

I saw that the class was satisfied with the insult; they looked at one another, sneered, and repeated: “the language of a street urchin.” So I chose to be deeply hurt and, besides, the teacher’s reproach had cut deeper than I myself realized. Despite my efforts and my superior airs, I knew that what he said was true and, far worse, that I couldn’t expect to speak anything but the language of an urchin.<sup>44</sup>

This passage is significant in a two ways: first, it illustrates the difficulties faced by colonized youth forced to learn in an educational system that used a language different than their own; secondly, the fact that Alexandre recognizes his teacher’s insult as fact rather than opinion shows how powerfully the colonial system can penetrate to create self-loathing in the colonized.

### *History*

The harm inflicted through language relates to the destruction of identity associated with history, and first occurred teaching of history. Although the education system operated in French, the study of Tunisian history was only possible through Tunisian dialects, therefore resulting in colonized school children completely cut off from knowledge about their historical heritage. Memmi explains:

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 111.



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...the memory which is assigned [the colonized] is certainly not of his people. The history which is taught him is not of his own. He knows who Colbert or Cromwell was, but he learns nothing about Khaznadar; he knows about Joan of Arc, but not about El Kahena. Everything seems to have taken place out of his country. He and his land are nonentities or exist only with reference to the Gauls, the Franks or the Marne.<sup>45</sup>

Tunisian children who attended the French-sponsored schools, the highest quality and therefore most desired, were given a Westernized education. This education resembled and corresponded to that of France and, directly controlled by the French power structure, rewrote history oriented purposefully toward themselves and away from what Tunisian children learned before the establishment of the protectorate.<sup>46</sup> This created an “educational void, a result of social inadequacy” in which “references to the community and nation are always in terms of the colonizing nation.”<sup>47</sup> As the years of the protectorate went on, more and more children were educated in this new way, creating a slow systematic destruction of the Tunisian people’s memory and concept of their own historical legacy and past accomplishments. This process proved most devastating, however, when the French exercised it in the public sphere on Tunisian’s monuments, buildings, and institutions. On this topic Memmi argues that,

...memory is not purely a mental phenomenon. Just as the memory of an individual is the fruit of his history and

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>46</sup> Perkins, *Tunisia*, 70.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 97.

physiology, that of a people rests upon its institutions. Now the colonized's institutions are dead or petrified. He scarcely believes in those which continue to show some signs of life and daily confirms their ineffectiveness. He often becomes ashamed of these institutions, as of a ridiculous and overaged monument.<sup>48</sup>

By destroying and discontinuing Tunisians' previously existing institutional organization and then barring them from a voice in the new organization monopolized by France, Tunisians felt they no longer had a place in history and could not conceive a historical future for themselves. Memmi describes this colonized as one who "has forgotten how to participate actively in history and no longer even asks to do so. No matter how briefly colonization may have lasted, all memory of freedom seems distant; he forgets what it costs or else he no longer dares to pay the price for it."<sup>49</sup>

Included in historical participation is participation in politics which was absolutely forbidden for a Tunisian under the French colonial system. "The fact is that the colonized does not govern. Being kept away from power, he ends up by losing both interest and feeling for control." Of equal tragedy was the absence of economic participation on the part of Tunisians. "Nonindustrialization and the absence of technical development in the country lead to a slow economic collapse of the colonized. This collapse threatens the standard of living of the colonized, keeping the technician from existing and the artisan from perfecting himself and his creations."<sup>50</sup> Memmi, although writing in the moment of independence, foreshadowed the difficulties

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-93.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

that lay ahead for a people, when not able to participate politically or economically for decades, were suddenly in the position to do so again.

### *Education*

The limited access to education resulting from French language instruction and other inhibiting factors created more than Tunisian rejection of mother tongues and disconnection from history. On a grander scale, Tunisian's lack of access to education was one of the most significant factors in creating the relative inadequacy corresponding to the portrait invented by the colonizers. Not only this, but the educational void provided concrete reasoning to back up the colonizer's exclusion and subjugation of Tunisians. As Memmi explains in *Dominated Man*, "the colonized is tagged as unfit to handle anything technical so that colonization can last."<sup>51</sup> These real inadequacies that soon came to back up the initial imaginary ones were extremely jarring to the Tunisians' sense of self and forced them to admit to the truth in the colonizer's accusations, eliciting a certain degree of self-rejection.<sup>52</sup> Through these avenues that have been loosely identified as language, history, and education, the colonial system is successful in, for the most part, destroying Tunisians' previously held concept of their identity. Furthermore, this destruction is compounded as the system simultaneously remolds this shattered sense of self into what the colonizers desire.

### *Reaction and Decision*

This violence inflicted on identity necessarily elicits a reaction from the colonized that begins with self-rejection and conformity to the mold put forth by the colonial system

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<sup>51</sup> Memmi, *Dominated Man*, 194.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-87.

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but does not end there. Such trauma prompts more than reaction, it forces a decision, made either consciously or subconsciously, on the manner in which they will exist in relation to colonization and the colonizers. The mere acknowledgment of another entity's existence automatically creates a relationship and the colonized who understands their place in the colonial system does have a degree of choice as to how they will live in relation to it. The desired choice from the perspective of the colonizer is the one of passive compliance and the majority of colonized conform to this. Albert Memmi is representative of the colonizer which actively engages with the colonial system, at times challenging and pushing against it and at times striving for acceptance and incorporation where he doesn't naturally belong. In *The Pillar of Salt*, Memmi portrays the colonizer who, either by his own choice or that of his circumstances, finds himself imbedded in the colonial system and therefore caught in conflict. The racist nature of the colonial system is set up so that the level of success a colonized individual can achieve is related to the level with which they can abandon their own culture and identity for that of the colonizer. Again language is one of the clearest examples of this as the level of mastery of French directly translates to the level of education and subsequent success able to be achieved. Through the struggles of Alexandre, Memmi illustrates how a colonized in this situation is pulled in two directions as he struggles with which side he strives to identify. When Alexandre arranges for his French-speaking teacher and his Berber mother to meet, he is faced head on with this problem:

I was trying to find some other verbal link between them when I suddenly felt with real anguish how impossible any communication would be. It was like an access of vertigo. When I find myself at the foot of a wall and look up at the

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top and see it rising above me endlessly toward the sky, I feel this same vertigo, as if the sky had suddenly become an abyss. The two parts of my being spoke two different languages and would never understand each other. Thus, I allowed the conversation to die. My mother retired into her kitchen, accustomed to being excluded.<sup>53</sup>

The inability for his mother and the teacher to interact displays how the colonial system created impassable rifts between groups of people, especially between groups that identified with opposite sides of the colonial dichotomy. The fact that Alexandre's mother is accustomed to being excluded reveals the diminished level of importance to which someone is reduced when they lack the proper education and language. Alexandre, the colonized striving to identify with opposite ends of colonial society, is "faced with the impossible problem of joining the two parts."<sup>54</sup> Alexandre eventually comes to the point where he "made up [his] mind to choose one of them. Between the East and the West, between African superstitions and philosophy, between [his] dialect and the French language, [he] now had to choose."<sup>55</sup> Through Alexandre, Memmi further relates the frustrations of such a choice with his explanation that "Just as I sat on the fence between two civilizations, so would I now find myself between two classes; and I realized that, in trying to sit on several chairs, one generally lands on the floor."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Memmi, *The Pillar of Salt*, 229.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

*Conclusion*

Albert Memmi is now ninety-three years old and the first editions of his novels are yellowing, but his initial conclusions about colonialism are still entirely relevant today. The interpretation he put forth regarding the nature of the colonial system and what impacts such a system will have on everyone whom it affects remains invaluable to history. A testament to their universality, his books have been read everywhere from prison cells to government offices and employed in an innumerable amount of situations all across the globe. Memmi's work is essential in helping people in oppressive situations understand why they have been changed, how it was they were changed, and how, with an awareness of that past, to collectively move forward. It is crucial for any people or country emerging from oppression to understand what their limitations will be at the outset.

However, Memmi is also especially relevant to those from the opposite side of the oppression (let's not forget what language he initially published in—French). Through knowing his work, those who oppressed and colonized can understand their role, for they are often equally in need of guidance. Beyond those directly involved in situations of domination and oppression, everyone stands to benefit from understanding such influential historical forces. Moving away from his thought, I repeat my opening statement: the life of Albert Memmi is one worth taking notice of. His *life*, separate from his books, is something significant in itself. Memmi is a strong testament to the power of education. Quite literally everything he has achieved can be traced back to the chance day he was chosen to receive a scholarship. He proves that success can be achieved by a colonized individual, in the country of his colonizers no less. Here, Memmi's life reveals the nuances of colonization. Not just in what he has accomplished as a

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formerly colonized individual, but in whom he *is*. From him we are to understand that the concept of the colonial dichotomy is not necessarily incorrect but it is certainly not absolute. Earlier, my argument necessarily identified three fundamental elements of identity for the purpose of discussion before the subsequent discussion revealed the relatively inaccurate and ineffective nature of those elements—Memmi does the same. He writes ad nauseam about the colonizers and the colonized but it is essential to realize the not incorrect, but inaccurate and ineffective nature of those categorical distinctions. He is not purely colonized, not purely colonizer, neither is he directly between. The most profound piece of knowledge to be gained from Memmi is the essential existence of these nuances and how they should alter and enhance our understanding and to accomplish this, his books and his life must be taken together. Truly, Memmi provides us with this way to think about the nature of colonialism, but more so the nature of history, experience, and undoubtedly much more.





## Defining Dixie: Country Music's Evolution of Identity

Phoebe Strom

*"The country in 'country music' is America."  
—President Jimmy Carter, October 1979<sup>1</sup>*

Country music has become uniquely associated with very specific and polarizing politics: racist, right-wing, backwards, and perhaps most importantly, Southern. While these stereotypes are not new by any means, they have only gained momentum in recent years with the surge of interest in country music politics generated by the Dixie Chicks' scandal in 2003 and the recent release of Brad Paisley's "Accidental Racist." By ignoring more liberal or progressive moments, songs, and artists, this narrative overlooks the complexities of country's love affair with the South and assumes that neo-Confederate sympathies are and have always been an integral part of the genre. In reality, country music's preoccupation with Southern pride, and thus to some extent the Confederacy, could not have become as omnipresent as it is today without a confluence of developments from both sides of the aisle and both halves of the nation. Moreover, the use of Confederate symbolism and references in country music was not the inevitable product of the genre's Southern origins or the result of a static musical tradition, but rather was

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<sup>1</sup> Jimmy Carter, "Country Music Gala Remarks at the Fundraising Performance for Ford's Theatre," October 2, 1979. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=31467>.

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influenced by and influential in larger political, economic, and social changes in the nation as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

Often cited as evidence for neo-Confederate ideology's consistent presence in country music, the earliest iterations of country, promoted in sharply-defined racial terms as "hillbilly" music (in opposition to "race" music e.g. gospel, jazz, blues), designed for a primarily regional audience, and emerging from a South still scarred by the Civil War, demonstrate an unsurprising fascination with the Confederacy. Many early country musicians had close family connections to the fighting. Furthermore, opportunities for success as a musician in the South following the Civil War necessitated involvement on some level with Confederate veterans' associations and the Klu Klux Klan, who were the primary force behind the fiddlers' conventions and barn dances that were so crucial for early country artists. For example, Fiddlin' John Carson, one of the first well-known hillbilly musicians, leveraged his performances at Confederate reunions and Klan rallies into the sales that caused the music industry to recognize the market potential of hillbilly music, a potential implicitly tied to the genre's Southern roots. Thus, Civil War songs like "Dixie," "Just Before the Battle Mother," and "Lorena"

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<sup>2</sup> While few discuss Confederate sympathies extensively or specifically, other important works that have addressed the racial and political history of country music include: *Hidden in the Mix: The African American Presence in Country Music*, ed. Diane Pecknold (Duke University Press, 2013); David Cantwell & Bill Friskics-Warren, *Heartaches by the Number: Country Music's 500 Greatest Singles* (Vanderbilt University Press & the Country Music Foundation Press, 2003); Charles Hughes, "'Country-Soul': Race and the Recording Industry in the U.S. South, 1960-1980." (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012); Peter La Chapelle, *Proud to Be an Okie: Cultural Politics, Country Music, and Migration to Southern California* (University of California Press, 2007); Bill C. Malone, *Don't Get above Your Raisin': Country Music and the Southern Working Class* (University of Illinois Press, 2002); Bill C. Malone, *Country Music U.S.A.: A Fifty-Year History* (American Folklore Society, 1968); Diane Pecknold, *The Selling Sound: The Rise of the Country Music Industry* (Duke University Press, 2007); Chris Willman, *Rednecks & Bluenecks: The Politics of Country Music* (New York: The New Press, 2005).

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remained staples of hillbilly repertoires despite the intervening years and were recorded over and over by hillbilly bands in the 1920s and 30s.<sup>3</sup>

However, the preeminence of these songs in the beginnings of commercialized country is less evidence of tradition and more evidence of outside manipulation. While songs idealizing Southern values and independence were undeniably included in most hillbilly repertoires, their ascendance over other songs like altered English folk ballads and co-opted Negro spirituals reflected marketing choices by music industry executives who saw Confederate battle songs as a credential that affirmed the authenticity and, even more importantly, the whiteness of the music they promoted. With advertising copy that glorified the prewar South and painted hillbilly music as authentic Americana, the music industry created an “idyllic white rural Mountain South that existed outside of modern urban America, a closely knit, socially homogeneous and harmonious world free from flappers, foreigners, and African Americans,” an image of what America should be to many cultural conservatives.<sup>4</sup>

Accepting this manufactured image at face value supports the idea that country’s later embrace of neo-Confederate symbolism was the natural conclusion of a trajectory that harkens back to the genre’s very beginnings. The Southern identity of hillbilly music was much more complex than its promoters let on, and therefore, the songs about the antebellum South and the Civil War in the 20s

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew K. Smith & James E. Akenson, “The Civil War in Country Music Tradition,” in *Country Music Goes to War*, ed. Charles K. Wolfe & James E. Akenson (University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 5-7. James Charles Cobb, “From Muskogee to Luckenbach: Country Music and the ‘Southernization’ of America,” in *Redefining Southern Culture: Mind and Identity in the Modern South* (University of Georgia Press, 1999), 79-80.

<sup>4</sup> Patrick Huber, “Black Hillbillies: African American Musicians on Old-Time Records, 1924-1932,” in *Hidden in the Mix*, 24-27.

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and 30s were hardly a coherent collection.<sup>5</sup> The true extent of this diversity is most evident in the racial attitudes of hillbilly music. While the music industry attempted to split Southern music along racial lines, they could not undo years of black-white interaction and the development of a certain amount of shared musical heritage. Indeed, many of the hillbilly songs that seem the most racist at first glance originated in slave songs.<sup>6</sup> Others, like “Those Cruel Slavery Days,” “Darling Nelly Gray,” and “Old Master’s Runaway,” were blatantly sympathetic to slaves.<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that hillbilly music was a haven of progressive racial thought, as any number of ‘coon songs’ and songs glorifying the plantation lifestyle can disprove, but it nonetheless undermines the belief that hillbilly and country were inevitably linked to neo-Confederate values and the particular brand of racism that necessarily accompanies.

Regional affiliations further complicate the issue of hillbilly music and the Confederacy. While the sheer amount of Civil War songs recorded by hillbilly artists suggests lingering Confederate sympathies, the origins and content of these songs defy such convenient categorization. Many of the most popular Civil War songs said little about specific loyalties, but instead addressed the hardships of war, the sadness of families fighting each other, the difficulties of being far from home, and the longing to reunite with a lover. While few were blatantly pro-Union,

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<sup>5</sup> Malone, *Don't Get above Your Raisin'*, 19-20.

<sup>6</sup>Henry Parker Eastman, *The Negro, his origin, history and destiny* (University of Michigan Press, 1905), 394. Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs* (Harvard University Press, 1925), 23-25.

<sup>7</sup> Lyle Lofgren, “Remembering the Old Songs: Those Cruel Slavery Days,” *Inside Bluegrass*, May 2008. Benjamin Hanby, “Darling Nelly Gray Sheet Music” (Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1882) in Ohio Civil War 150 Collections & Exhibits, Item #1942, <http://www.ohiocivilwar150.org/omeka/items/show/1942>. “Kingdom Coming,” *Traditional Tune Archive*, last modified February 2, 2013, [http://tunearch.org/wiki/Kingdom\\_Coming](http://tunearch.org/wiki/Kingdom_Coming). Annotation: Kingdom Coming. Lyle Lofgren, “Remembering the Old Songs: The Faded Coat of Blue,” *Inside Bluegrass*, August 1998.

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many were written in the North or were popular primarily with Union soldiers. It is also worth noting that border states like Kentucky, Missouri, and West Virginia inherited and amalgamated conflicting musical traditions, producing songs like “Faded Coat of Blue;” familiar in style, but diverging in message, this song and others like it problematize the assumed set of values underlying early country music.<sup>8</sup> In actuality, then, hillbilly music was far less overtly pro-Southern than the mainstream music of the time. Beginning with the “plantation songs” of those like Stephen Foster in the mid-1800s, the music of vaudeville and blackface minstrelsy idealized the antebellum South; the spread of these songs to the rural south via traveling shows and the appropriation of many, including the quintessential Southern anthem “Dixie,” to rally Confederate troops explains their presence in early hillbilly music.<sup>9</sup> That this “obsession with the South in American popular culture” gained momentum in the post-war period is counterintuitive, but by painting a romanticized picture of the South, Northern composers and lyricists attempted to mediate deep societal rifts along economic, racial, and regional lines.<sup>10</sup> Popular music idealizing the prewar South aligned neatly with renewed American sentiments of racism and nativism. In the most literal sense, the longing to return to Dixie evident in so many of these songs likely expresses a wish for the first Southern migrants, especially black migrants, to leave the North. Moreover, portraying the South as a veritable paradise--prosperous, beautiful, peaceful, wholesome, and racially harmonious yet under white control--enforced a narrative that located black

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<sup>8</sup> Smith & Akenson, “The Civil War in Country Music Tradition,” 2-6.

<sup>9</sup> Karen L. Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie: How the South Was Created in American Popular Culture* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 10-13.

<sup>10</sup> Malone, *Don't Get above Your Raisin'*, 57.

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activism firmly in the radical and justified a paternalistic style of racism. The songs' stereotypes of "coons" and "mammies" also functioned to build common ground between Northern and Southern whites through their assertion of "Anglo-Saxon supremacy."<sup>11</sup> This theme of sectional reconciliation manifested itself explicitly in songs like "Wedding of the Blue and Gray" and "The Dixie Volunteers," in which the icons and imagery of Dixie (most notably Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee) are deployed for American ends.<sup>12</sup> By obfuscating the devastation, economic decay, and social upheaval of the South following the Civil War, these popular tunes symbolically absolved the North of responsibility for the conflict and affirmed American domination of Dixie; the reconciliation depicted in this music was not an equal exchange, but a way of channeling Southern fervor in a patriotic direction and reaffirming the superiority of white culture.

The emphasis on Southern identity in hillbilly music derives from the way that hillbilly's first promoters tried to shoehorn it into this pre-established and widely popular conception of tradition. Emboldened by the way hillbilly musicians had incorporated earlier vaudeville and minstrelsy favorites into their repertoires, record companies and radio stations invoked the same self-conscious rhetoric of antebellum nostalgia and Civil War pride that accompanied popular music to overemphasize both the extent and the political stance of such themes in hillbilly songs.<sup>13</sup> In fact, hillbilly music challenged such means of

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<sup>11</sup> Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie*, 13-25.

<sup>12</sup> Harry Ruby & Edgar Leslie, "The Dixie Volunteers," (New York: Waterson, Berlin, and Snyder, Co., 1917) in University of Mississippi Libraries Digital Collections, <http://clio.lib.olemiss.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/sharris/id/1458/rec/15>. George M. Cohan, "The Wedding of the Blue and the Gray," (New York: E.A. Mills, 1906) in Historic American Sheet Music, Duke University Digital Collections, [http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/hasm\\_b0165/](http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/hasm_b0165/).

<sup>13</sup> Huber, "Black Hillbillies," 24-25.

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promotion. Associated with a poor white underclass, hillbilly music spoke with a voice purposefully absent from popular music's caricatured discourse on Southernness and whiteness. The diversity of sound, subject, and message within hillbilly music also served to undercut the romantic uniformity of popular music's monolithic South.<sup>14</sup> That hillbilly music circumvented the traditional economic structures of the music industry, offered a relatively cheap and plentiful alternative to popular music, and attracted, not just Southerners, but those seeking a simpler, more wholesome music than that offered by the urban-based popular music industry solidified it as a threat deserving of exclusion and vilification.<sup>15</sup>

Music professionals "mobilized cultural condescension" in response to the emergence of commercialized hillbilly music.<sup>16</sup> Building off a long history of derision towards Southern "plain folk," this type of criticism was predicated on a fundamentally classist framework that became particularly relevant in the postwar period. As popular music and other cultural forms fetishized the antebellum South, they created an unstable dual conception of Southern identity. In this conception, the postwar South, supposedly controlled by "white trash" and rife with poverty, bigotry, ignorance, and violence, acted as an unspoken and subversive other to the 'true' South populated by happy slaves and benevolent planters.<sup>17</sup> When hillbilly music disrupted this paradigm and bucked popular music's narrow definition of Southernness, it became a site of cultural controversy. The mainstream music industry strove to delegitimize hillbilly music as a

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<sup>14</sup> Malone, *Don't Get above Your Raisin'*, 18-20, 22-24, 57-58.

<sup>15</sup> Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 25-28. Malone, *Don't Get above Your Raisin'*, 27, 61-62.

<sup>16</sup> Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 24.

<sup>17</sup> Malone, *Don't Get above Your Raisin'*, 17, 26-27.

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valid art form and especially as a valid Southern art form. Article after article questioned the quality and respectability of hillbilly music and thus implicitly the genre's ability to represent the South.<sup>18</sup> This criticism pervaded American thought to such an extent that the Klu Klux Klan began to strategically eschew hillbilly music. Given the longstanding connections between early hillbilly artists and the Klan, this represents a conscious, tactical move intended to aid the organization's "quest for national respectability."<sup>19</sup>

Southern migration in the 30s and 40s ushered in new trends in hillbilly music. Scattering the genre's primary fan base across the nation, migration out of the South only increased hillbilly music's importance to its transplanted Southern listeners. As the displaced Southern rural working class moved, they brought their musical traditions with them, exposing hillbilly music to more non-Southern and urban audiences. While this process indubitably facilitated the spread of country music in the long run, it initially exacerbated negative perceptions of the hillbilly genre. The mass influx of poor Southern whites and their cultural products strengthened the pre-established belief systems characterizing hillbillies as inferior, degenerate, and backwards by placing the communities they entered on the defensive.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, given the economic uncertainty of the time and their own fears about falling into poverty, members of the new middle class did everything they could to distance themselves from the migrants by accentuating differences that supposedly linked Okies to "depravity and a racialized Otherness."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Arthur Smith, "Hillbilly Folk Music," *Etude* 51, no. 3 (March 1933): 154, 208. "Hill-Billy Music," *Variety*, December 29, 1926, 1. Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 24-25. Don Cusic, *Discovering Country Music* (New York: Praeger, 2008), 103-110.

<sup>19</sup> Malone, *Don't Get above Your Raisin'*, 121.

<sup>20</sup> Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 45-52.

<sup>21</sup> La Chapelle, *Proud to Be an Okie*, 23-29, 33-38. Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 48.



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As a result of such exclusion, seemingly contradictory impulses towards distinctiveness and assimilation surfaced in migrant communities and the hillbilly music they liked. While migrants strove towards middle class respectability, they wanted their music to do the same, but they also wanted to hear the familiar sounds from home. Reconciling these two impulses in hillbilly music caused a move away from traditional Southern tropes and a move towards the West. Although the romantic image of the West had long been a part of American thought, its lack of a lengthy musical tradition meant that it was necessarily less caught up in the type of conflicts over identity that characterized musical depictions of the South. The relatively sophisticated presentation of the “singing cowboys” also subtly distinguished them from the poor Southern white milieu, shielding them from accusations of backwardness and making them more palatable to cosmopolitan consumers.<sup>22</sup>

As World War II loomed on the horizon, then, hillbilly music had just begun to move away from its Southern roots, but had not yet emerged in any significant way as a national phenomenon. The war and concurrent changes in the music industry worked together to disprove the claim that—in one writer’s words—people “from the cotton lands...have never understood what America means.”<sup>23</sup> In 1941, the broadcasting boycott and eventual breakdown of ASCAP’s (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers) essential monopoly on music licensing granted the largely unlicensed hillbilly music more airplay in the short term and the protections it had previously been denied in the long term. The musicians’

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<sup>22</sup> Malone, *Country Music U.S.A.*, 145-154. La Chapelle, *Proud to Be an Okie*, 81. Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 44-49.

<sup>23</sup> Alice Reichard, “California’s Adult Children,” *Country Gentleman* 110, no. 2 (February 1940): 35.

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strike less than a year later and the early acquiescence of the smaller, independent record companies specializing in race and hillbilly music to the musicians' demands again catapulted hillbilly recordings to national heights due to the shortage of popular music. This chaos in the popular music industry gave hillbilly music the foothold it needed. As its traditional Southern audience migrated across the U.S. in even greater numbers than before and went overseas to fight, hillbilly music was perfectly placed to reposition itself as the genre of America.<sup>24</sup>

From 1941 to 1946 hillbilly music removed itself from expressions of Southern sentiment and instead adopted an unwavering and entirely American patriotism. In message, these songs diverged little from wartime popular music, expressing a wide range of emotions, but little Southern pride.<sup>25</sup> The effectiveness of this strategy is exemplified by the most successful WWII-themed song in any genre, "There's a Star Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere." Transcending the bounds of musical genre, the first recorded version of this song sold almost two million copies and inspired numerous other artists to record it in both

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<sup>24</sup> Malone, *Country Music U.S.A.*, 184-190. Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 54-57.

<sup>25</sup> Fred Rose, "Cowards Over Pearl Harbor," Decca 6008, Denver Darling, 1942. Zeke Clements & Earl Nunn, "Smoke on the Water," Decca 6102, Red Foley, 1944. Carson Robison, "1942 Turkey in the Straw," Bluebird 11460, 1942. Bob Miller, "We're Gonna Have to Slap the Dirty Little Jap (and Uncle Sam's the Guy Who Can Do It)," Bluebird B-11414, Carson Robison, 1941. Fred Kirby, "The Devil and Mr. Hitler," Decca 6043, Denver Darling, 1942. Syd Nathan & Roy Starkey, "When Mussolini Laid His Pistol Down," King 501, Bob McCarthy, 1943. Roy Acuff & Jim Anglin, "Searching for a Soldier's Grave," Columbia 20016, Bailes Brothers, 1945. Frank Harford & Tex Ritter, "There's a Gold Star in Her Window," Capitol Records 147, Tex Ritter & His Texans, 1944. Nelson Colgane, Lee David, & Dick Robertson, "Send This Purple Heart to My Sweetheart," National 5004, Dick Thomas, 1944. Cliff Johnsen & Bob Wills, "Stars and Stripes on Iwo Jima," Columbia 6742, Bob Wills & His Texas Playboys, 1945. Cliff Johnsen, Cliff Sundin, & Bob Wills, "White Cross on Okinawa," Columbia 36881, Bob Wills & His Texas Playboys, 1945. Redd Stewart & Ernest Tubb, "The Soldier's Last Letter," Decca 6098, Ernest Tubb, 1944. Ernest Tubb, "Are You Waiting Just For Me?," Decca 6110, 1945.

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popular and hillbilly styles.<sup>26</sup> By the end of the war, the genre once regarded as a “specialty product marketed in the Deep South” enjoyed national attention and sales.<sup>27</sup>

However, as the genre gained more national popularity and acceptance, it also attracted new levels of derision. While national publications covered and recognized the spread of hillbilly music across the nation, their reporting was typically tinged, if not rife, with surprise and scorn.<sup>28</sup> In fact to many writers, hillbilly music’s growing popularity seemed only worth comment because it made the “naïve,” “folksy,” “raucous,” and “obnoxious” sounds of the genre “a national earache.”<sup>29</sup> In 1946 *Collier’s* described the genre’s growing popularity as an “epidemic of corn” and its musicians as “barefoot fiddlers who couldn’t read a note but could raise a voice on endless tunes, especially with the aid of corn liquor.”<sup>30</sup> Most offensive perhaps was the article “Hillbilly Heaven” published in *American Magazine* in 1952, which described “funny little men chasing each other with pitchforks and banjos,” “mournful sounds such as never were before on land or sea,” and “an epidemic called hillbillyitis.”<sup>31</sup> While these writers tried to play into the anti-hillbilly sentiment that was resurging after the war as Southern migration again became a point of contention, they failed to sway most Americans’ musical tastes even as they gained traction with their social commentary. Nevertheless, the constant

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<sup>26</sup> Shelby Darnell & Paul Roberts, “There’s a Star Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere,” Bluebird B-9000, Elton Britt, 1942. Malone, *Country Music U.S.A.*, 198-200. Willman, *Rednecks & Bluenecks*, 148-149. *The Billboard Music Year Book* (1944), 46.

<sup>27</sup> “Corn of Plenty,” *Newsweek*, June 13, 1949.

<sup>28</sup> Cusic, *Discovering Country Music*, 103-110. Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 59-60.

<sup>29</sup> “Pistol Packin’ Mama,” *Life* 15, no. 11 (October 11, 1943).

<sup>30</sup> Doron K. Antrim, “Whoop-and-Holler Opera,” *Collier’s* 117, no. 4 (January 26, 1946): 18, 85.

<sup>31</sup> Don Eddy, “Hillbilly Heaven,” *American Magazine* 153, no. 3 (March 1952).

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reinforcement of negative (and usually Southern) stereotypes introduced elements of defensiveness into the genre that do much to explain its consistent drive to distance itself from its Southern roots, a drive that only intensified in the postwar years.<sup>32</sup>

Building upon the patriotic momentum it had accumulated during the war, hillbilly music tried to solidify its position as a “national desire” not just a “regional manifestation.”<sup>33</sup> Simultaneously affirmed and challenged by rock and roll’s emergence and separation from its hillbilly roots, the Nashville-centered industry worked to promote itself as a bastion of ‘traditional’ values. Integral to this conception was the supplantation of hillbilly musical styles by what became known as country-pop; as the industry became more and more interested and successful in crossing over to the pop charts, it abandoned many distinctive Southern stylistic traits and instruments, producing the famous (or infamous) “Nashville Sound.”<sup>34</sup> As *Newsweek* wrote in 1966, the Nashville Sound became an “all-American sound” because of its rejection of “the raw, nasal ‘hillbilly’ sound alien to urban ears.”<sup>35</sup> While this musical transformation was underway, the songs of the 50s and early 60s were just as blatant in their patriotism as the songs produced during World War II. Espousing anti-Communism, pro-war attitudes, and traditional Christian values, these songs resounded with the voice of the nation,

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<sup>32</sup> Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 100-103, 158.

<sup>33</sup> “Country Music is Big Business and Nashville is Its Detroit,” *Newsweek*, August 11, 1952.

<sup>34</sup> Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 91-94. Malone, *Country Music U.S.A.*, 231-270.

<sup>35</sup> “The Gold Guitars,” *Newsweek*, April 4, 1966, 96-97.

not the South.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps most symbolic of the genre's all-out Americanism was Tex Ritter's release of "The Pledge of Allegiance/The Gettysburg Address" at the beginning of the post-war period.<sup>37</sup>

Hillbilly music's renunciation of Southern heritage and wholehearted embrace of Americana paved the way for its reframing as the more respectable country or country-western. Musicians, songwriters, and record executives initiated an all-out campaign for the abandonment of the denigrating hillbilly label.<sup>38</sup> As Ernest Tubb explained, "a lot of people don't understand what hillbilly means; they think of somebody...out there in the hills, barefooted, with a long beard, and making moonshine...then they think of our music as inferior music."<sup>39</sup> Music publisher and songwriter Fred Rose agreed with this perspective in his 1946 letter to *Billboard* arguing that calling country music hillbilly was a dismissal of it as music at all, something which was commercially foolish given the "75 percent of all the people in the United States" to whom the genre appealed.<sup>40</sup> As historian Diane Pecknold suggests, "this wrangling over terminology"

<sup>36</sup> Fred Rose, "No, No, Joe," MGM 10 806, Hank Williams, 1950. Roy Acuff & Earl Nunn, "Advice to Joe," Columbia 20 858-4, Roy Acuff, 1951. Scotty Wiseman, "I'm No Communist," MGM K 11 293, Carson Robison, 1952. Jimmy Kennedy & Birkley Reichner, "The Red We Want Is the Red We've Got (In the Old Red, White, and Blue)," RCA Victor 21-0381, Elton Britt, 1950. Jimmie Osborne, "Thank God for Victory in Korea," King 843, 1950. Roy Acuff, "Douglas Macarthur," Columbia 20822, 1951. Tom Glazer, "Old Soldiers Never Die," Columbia 39405, Gene Autry, 1951. Harry Choates, "Korea Here We Come," Macy's 141, 1951. T. Texas Tyler, "Deck of Cards," 4 Star Records 1228, 1948. B. Crandall & E. Ellis, "They Locked God Outside the Iron Curtain," Decca 9-46 403, Jim Eanes, 1952. George Bennett, Paul Cunningham, & Leonard Whitcup, "The Bible on the Table and the Flag upon the Wall," Columbia 2-935, Little Jimmy Dickens, 1951.

<sup>37</sup> "The Pledge of Allegiance/The Gettysburg Address." BCD 16356. Tex Ritter. 1949.

<sup>38</sup> Malone, *Country Music U.S.A.*, 216. La Chapelle, *Proud to Be an Okie*, 126. Ronnie Pugh, "Country Music Is Here to Stay?," *Journal of Country Music* 19, no. 1 (1997): 32-38.

<sup>39</sup> Ernest Tubb qtd. in Anthony Harkins, *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 99-100.

<sup>40</sup> Fred Rose, *Billboard*, August 3, 1946, 123.

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represented both a “battle for respect” and “the music industry’s struggle to grasp the meaning and magnitude of country’s potential popularity.” Forced to pay attention to the genre they had so long maligned, the mainstream music industry’s obvious confusion over country music’s cultural transition is exemplified in the pages of *Billboard*. *Billboard*’s first coverage of hillbilly music in 1941 relegated it to sharing a column with foreign hits. By 1942, however, *Billboard* was granting the genre greater respect as music popular across the nation and moving gradually away from the hillbilly moniker, cycling through various names and groupings of musical styles including “Western and Race,” “Western, Race, Polkas,” “American Folk Records: Cowboy Songs, Hillbilly Tunes, Spirituals, Etc.,” and “Folk Talent and Tunes.” In 1944, in a move that symbolically marked country as truly worthy of notice, *Billboard* incorporated popularity charts into their coverage of the genre, and by 1949, they boasted a whole “Country & Western” section, including retail sales and radio airplay charts.<sup>41</sup>

Although the transition was in no way smooth, hillbilly music had become country. Record labels almost universally adopted the label of country and pressured stores and radio stations to do the same.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, as *Country Music Life* put it, the term hillbilly had become “as obsolete...as the term ‘flying machine’ is to the aircraft industry.”<sup>43</sup> The few who still used the phrase justified their choice within the context of historicity or tradition. For example, Tex Ritter utilized the term (reportedly after much debate) to pay homage to past icons in “I Dreamed

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<sup>41</sup> Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 58-59. Malone, *Country Music U.S.A.*, 191, 216.

<sup>42</sup> Rachel Rubin, “Sing Me Back Home: Nostalgia, Bakersfield, and Modern Country Music,” in *American Popular Music: New Approaches to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Rachel Rubin & Jeffrey Paul Melnick (University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 104-109. Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 114-116. Harkins, *Hillbilly*, 100.

<sup>43</sup> *Country Music Life* qtd. in La Chapelle, *Proud to Be an Okie*, 127.

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of a Hillbilly Heaven.”<sup>44</sup> Likewise, a 1962 *Broadside* article discussed hillbilly music as part of the evolution of folk with a sidenote clarifying that hillbilly was “not a pejorative term.”<sup>45</sup> By and large, however, the country music industry had successfully distanced itself from the label that tethered it inexorably to a poor, unsophisticated, and, equally damaging, Southern image. Publications devoted to the genre did not hesitate to reaffirm its newfound respectability, claiming that those who enjoyed country were “home-owning, tax-paying, Cadillac-driving, sartorially splendid citizens with the highest ideals and morals” and that the music was integral to “the American way of life.”<sup>46</sup>

The first signs of trouble with country’s new position as American music emerged in the early to mid-60s outside the major record labels in underground segregationist music. Arising from the proliferation of independent regional record companies that had sprung up during and immediately after the war, this music represented white Southern backlash to the Civil Rights Movement among other political developments deemed detrimental to the Southern lifestyle.<sup>47</sup> The liner notes of the most prominent segregationist label Reb Rebel’s album *For Segregationists Only* spell out their political views as follows:

These selections express the feeling, anxiety, confusion and problems during the political transformation of our way of life... Transformations that have changed peace and tranquility to riots and demonstrations which have produced

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<sup>44</sup> Johnny Bond, *Reflections: The Autobiography of Johnny Bond* (Los Angeles: John Edwards Memorial Foundation, 1976), 13-14.

<sup>45</sup> Walter Camp, “Folking in Los Angeles,” *Broadside* 1, no. 3 (May 1962), 3.

<sup>46</sup> “An Open Letter to the U.S. Congress,” *Pickin’ and Singin’ News*, February 26, 1954, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Nick Pittman, “Johnny Rebel Speaks,” *Gambit Weekly*, June 10, 2003, <http://www.bestofneworleans.com/gambit/johnny-rebel-speaks/Content?oid=1241588>.

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mass destruction, confusion, bloodshed, and even loss of life...For those who take a conservative position on integration, this 'Great Society' program, the controversial war in Viet Nam and the numerous so-called 'Civil Rights' organizations, this record is a must!<sup>48</sup>

While the South is not mentioned explicitly in these notes, the name Reb Rebel and the Confederate flags that served as a logo for the label made it clear that "our way of life" meant a Southern way of life, something that held true for all the underground country labels responsible for the segregationist sound.

This is borne out in the music itself, which consistently promotes Southern pride as the natural corollary to racist and conservative messages. While some songs like Hatennanny Records' "Ship Those Niggers Back" ("America for whites, Africa for blacks") focus almost solely on race and others like "Here I Follow Johnny Reb" only on themes of Southern pride, the majority combine the two in no-holds-barred attacks on Civil Rights politics.<sup>4</sup> The song "Segregation Wagon" by Colonel Sharecropper on Reb-Time Records expresses some of the most overtly pro-Southern, Confederate-sympathizing lyrics inviting "all sons of freedom" to join a "Southern band" and "rally round the stars and bars" to protect the "Southern way of life." The song also links segregation explicitly with the Confederacy—"Segregation is our watchword/States rights we demand."—and invokes other traditional Southern tropes such as "carpetbaggers" and "the quiet life." With its complementary A-side "Move Them Niggers North," this

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<sup>48</sup> Liner notes to *For Segregationists' Only*; Reb Rebel Records 1000, 1971, qtd. in "Label History: The Story about Jay Miller and his Reb Rebel label," *Reb Rebel*, last modified 2001, <http://www.aryan88.com/whiterider/reb rebel/homepage.html>.

<sup>49</sup> G. L. Rockwell, "Ship Those Niggers Back/We Is Nonviolent Niggers," Hatennanny Records H 1, Odis Cochran & the Three Bigots, 1964. "Here I Follow Johnny Reb," Confederate Records C 129, Haven Haley.



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record propagates unabashed regional and racial pride<sup>5</sup> Similarly Johnny Rebel's "Stay Away from Dixie" suggests that if the "jigaboos" and the NAACP do not leave "Dixieland" alone, the region will rise up again and win by virtue of a somewhat confusing alliance with "Yankee-land."<sup>51</sup> Other Johnny Rebel songs like "Kajun Klu Klux Klan," "Nigger Nigger," and "Nigger Hatin' Me" blame the North and the federal government for supporting uppity black agitators through welfare and paint Southern whites as long-suffering guardians of racial purity.<sup>52</sup> Big-K Records and The White Riders pair the quintessential KKK song "Stand Up and Be Counted" with a recording of "Dixie."<sup>53</sup> A violent racist and Southern tone pervades these recordings so much so that one of the least militant, Conservative Records' release of "Old Uncle Joe" by The Dixie Greys, seems positively soothing in its softer form of racism and Southernness that calls to mind (and in fact uses snippets of) the plantation songs of Stephen Foster to reinforce its 'Uncle Tom' message of black love and respect for their white superiors and hatred of Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>54</sup>

While it remains unclear exactly how and to what extent this music circulated, the voices of segregationist country singers were not ignored, and a musical underground developed to distribute such records "covertly through mail-order or 'under the counter' purchases."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> "Move Them Niggers North/Segregation Wagon," Reb-Time Records 1861, Colonel Sharecropper.

<sup>51</sup> "Stay Away From Dixie," Reb Rebel Records 518, Johnny Rebel.

<sup>52</sup> "Kajun Klu Klux Klan," Reb Rebel Records 504, Johnny Rebel. "Nigger, Nigger," Reb Rebel Records 514, Johnny Rebel. "Nigger Hatin' Me," Reb Rebel Records 508, Johnny Rebel.

<sup>53</sup> "Stand Up and Be Counted/Dixie," Big-K Records 1915, The White Riders.

<sup>54</sup> "Old Uncle Joe," Conservative Records 139, The Dixie Greys.

<sup>55</sup> Malone, *Don't Get above Your Raisin'*, 236.

Journalist Nick Pittman quotes Floyd Soileau, a contemporary and competitor of Reb Rebel founder J.D. Miller, to prove that radio stations rarely played such music and that most sales came from an “underground trade” involving “certain juke joints” that played the music and bought copies to resell.<sup>56</sup> Reb Rebel’s website contradicts this, claiming that their music enjoyed airtime on radio stations throughout the South, including black radio stations.<sup>57</sup>

Either way, the influence of this music extended beyond the prejudiced few. The fact that Reb Rebel’s initial releases were more moderate and satirical gained the label many fans. Leroy “Happy Fats” LeBlanc’s “Dear Mr. President” sets up a less hostile and more amusing presentation of racism. Playing a confused farmer addressing Lyndon Johnson, Happy Fats asks patently absurd questions such as “I’d like to know if I’ll be permitted to plant white and black peas in separate rows of equal length or will I have to mix them together?” and “My white coon dog won’t hunt with my black bird dog. Could I get an injunction to make them hunt together?...Do you suppose the judge could use legal persuasion on them or will you send troops to make them hunt together?”<sup>58</sup> Poking fun at the Civil Rights Movement paid off; the song sold somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000 copies. Another early release, “Flight NAACP 105,” a highly racist version of an Amos n’ Andy skit, also used comedy and became an even bigger hit than “Dear Mr. President.”<sup>59</sup> With little or poor documentation of segregationist sales, it is difficult to assess their reach, but statistics like these give a sense of

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<sup>56</sup> Qtd. in Pittman, “Johnny Rebel Speaks.”

<sup>57</sup> Label History,” *Reb Rebel*.

<sup>58</sup> “Dear Mr. President,” Reb Rebel 501, Happy Fats.

<sup>59</sup> “Flight NAACP 105,” Reb Rebel 500, Son of Mississippi.

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fairly widespread appeal. If anything they probably underestimate the popularity of these underground hits in a white South unready to integrate. The fact that this music attracted attention from several national news sources further speaks to its importance as a cultural phenomenon.<sup>60</sup>

While segregationist country is all too easily dismissed from larger studies of the genre (indeed few scholars seem to include it and then only in passing), its importance in understanding country as a whole cannot be overlooked. Although segregationist labels were outside the purview of the mainstream Nashville-based country industry, many of the individuals involved were not. J.D. Miller, founder of Reb Rebel, for example, signed with influential Nashville music publishers Acuff-Rose after Kitty Wells made his song “It Wasn’t God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels” a hit and achieved moderate success as a country writer and producer.<sup>61</sup> He was also connected to the famous “singing governor” Jimmie Davis, serving as his campaign manager in Acadia Parish, a position which likely gave him unique insight into the intersection of country music and Southern politics. In addition to his own involvement in Jimmie Davis’ campaigning, Leroy “Happy Fats” LeBlanc possessed strong ties to Nashville as well, having recorded on major country labels like RCA Victor and Decca, worked with country greats like Hank Williams and Ernest Tubb, and made appearances on both *The Grand Ole Opry* and its competitor *Louisiana Hayride*.<sup>62</sup> Reb Rebel and other

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<sup>60</sup> Neil Maxwell, “The Bigotry Business: Racist Records, Books Are Hits in the South,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 26, 1967. “Crowley Today,” *Blues Unlimited* 47 (October 1967): 4-7.

<sup>61</sup> Shane Bernard, “J.D. Miller and Floyd Soileau: A Comparison of Two Small Town Recordmen of Acadiana,” *Louisiana Folklife Journal* (December 1991).

<sup>62</sup> “Label History,” *Reb Rebel*. Ryan Andre Brasseaux, *Cajun Breakdown: The Emergence of an American-Made Music* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 150, 201-203.

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labels like it further claim that some of their performers were well-known country stars performing anonymously to avoid controversy; the extensive use of pseudonyms makes this impossible to prove or disprove.<sup>63</sup> Regardless, the segregationist form of country was not as removed from the mainstream as it would appear.

In fact, a renewed sense of Southern heritage and interest in the Confederacy first began around the same time as the segregationist hits, likely sparked by the same white backlash to Civil Rights advances that produced these more extreme records. The beginnings of this shift were fairly mild. Country music artists began to again record Civil War favorites like “Just Before the Battle Mother,” “My Pretty Quadroon,” “Lorena,” and “Darling Nellie Grey.” However, none of these songs truly glorified the Confederacy or the antebellum South. While they embraced the Civil War as a thematic framework, the country singers recording such songs in the early to mid-60s seemed much more focused on the destructive power of the war. “The Ballad of the Blue and Grey” tells the story of brother fighting brother, calling the war “a war that both sides had to lose, no matter which side won.”<sup>64</sup> While “Johnny Reb” is more pro-Southern in the way it honors the Confederate soldiers and their bravery (and has been adopted in recent years by white power and neo-Confederate groups), it too advocates a poignant sense of reconciliation and mutual respect in its account of “honest Abe” playing Dixie at the end of the war to heal the nation.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> “Label History,” *Reb Rebel*.

<sup>64</sup> Harlan Howard, “Ballad of the Blue and Grey,” Columbia 4-41455, Lefty Frizzell, 1959.

<sup>65</sup> Merle Kilgore, “Johnny Reb,” Columbia 4-41437, Johnny Horton, 1959.

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Several factors played into country's renewed interest in the war. For one, these initial songs seem to have functioned on a symbolic level. In a country ever more deeply split over issues like the war in Vietnam and Civil Rights, songs about the Civil War were truly topical. The visceral and emotional way in which these conflicts wracked the nation found its natural musical accompaniment in songs about the last time the nation split in two. The tragedy in these musical accounts of the Civil War offers a critique of dissension that avoids vilification but still upholds the ideal of a united American people. A more simplistic, but probably equally important explanation is the arrival of the war's centennial, which generated a spate of Civil War-themed concept albums by country artists like Jimmie Driftwood, Don Reno, Red Smiley, and Tennessee Ernie Ford.<sup>66</sup>

As the 60s progressed, a number of trends coalesced to pave the way for the South's reemergence as a dominant feature of country music. During the Vietnam War, the patriotism that had characterized country music since WWII remained strong, but songs about the Vietnam War tended to avoid talking about the war itself. Instead of taking the complicated and messy route of "defending American policy in Southeast Asia," these songs chose the easier and more familiar task of representing 'traditional' values like "service to one's country, deference to authority, unquestioning patriotism, or, better yet, loyalty to a policy even if one questions it."<sup>67</sup> With the rise of the New Left and increasing protest over the war, country music, as the

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<sup>66</sup> Jimmie Driftwood, *Songs of Billy Yank and Johnny Reb*, RCA Victor LPM-2316, 1961. *New Folk Songs of the American Civil War*, King KLP-756, Don Reno & Red Smiley, 1961. *Tennessee Ernie Ford Sings Civil War Songs of the North*, Capitol Records T-1539, Tennessee Ernie Ford, 1961. *Tennessee Ernie Ford Sings Civil War Songs of the South*, Capitol Records T-1540, Tennessee Ernie Ford, 1961.

<sup>67</sup> Malone, 'Don't Get above Your Raisin', 240.

self-determined voice of middle America, did not so much align itself with the war as against the new, radical elements of American society.<sup>68</sup> While a diverse group of country singers expressed the sadness, cruelty, and seeming futility of the war, or any war, that was as far as they went. Indeed, the moments of ambivalence (for outright criticism of the war in country music was essentially nil) and the moments of patriotism seem borne from the same impulse, that is the desire to preserve a proud American heritage based on self-reliance, family, democracy, and Christian morals—in other words God, kin, and country.<sup>69</sup>

Interestingly, this profoundly American ideology laid the basis for the emergence of the South as an American ideal. The implicit critiques of modern America embedded in country music's condemnation of war protesters and counterculture created a need for an alternative. The stereotypical South, once lambasted for its backwardness, offered the perfect image to counteract the turmoil of America during the Vietnam War. By reappropriating the South, country music brought it in to the genre's patriotic thought and made it a representation of all the things missing from 1960s America. Using the idealized South in

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<sup>68</sup> Allen Peltier, "Day For Decision," *Day For Decision*, Warner Bros Records WS-1659, Johnny Sea, 1966. Tom T. Hall, "What We're Fighting For," Mercury 72500, Dave Dudley, 1965. Harlan Howard, "The Minute Men (Are Turning in Their Graves)," Columbia 4-43552, Stonewall Jackson, 1966. James M. Smith & Julian Wilson, "The Battle Hymn of Lt. Calley," Plantation Records PL-73, C Company, 1971. Merle Haggard, "The Fightin' Side of Me," *The Fightin' Side of Me*, Capital Records/EMI ST-451, 1970. Jimmie Helms, "It's America (Love It or Leave It)," *A Good Year for the Wine*, Decca DL-75222, Ernest Tubbs, 1970. B. Smith, "Must We Fight Two Wars," *Ballad of Two Brothers*, Aury Inman, Epic 5-10389, 1968. Kris Kristofferson, "Vietnam Blues," Mercury 72550, Dave Dudley, 1965. Bill Anderson & Bob Talbert, "Where Have All Our Heroes Gone?," Decca 32744, Bill Anderson, 1970. Guy Drake, "The Marching Hippies," Mallard Records, Inc. MR-1, 1971. Harlan Howard, *To The Silent Majority With Love*, Nugget Records NR LP-105, 1971.

<sup>69</sup> Bobby Bare & Billy Joe Shaver, "Christian Soldier," *I Need Some Good News Bad*, Mercury SR 61342, Bobby Bare, 1971. Bobby Bare & Billy Joe Shaver, "Good Christian Soldier," *The Silver Tongued Devil and I*, Monument ZQ 30679, Kris Kristofferson, 1971. Doyle Wilburn & Teddy Wilburn, "Little Johnny From Down the Street," *Little Johnny From Down the Street*, Decca CL 75173, The Wilburn Brothers, 1970.

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this way offered a chance of redemption, a way for the entire nation to reclaim its Americanness through Southernness. This idea is at its most potent in Merle Haggard's "Okie from Muskogee," which elevated rural Muskogee as a haven of American values.<sup>70</sup> Marty Robbins' "Ain't I Right" echoes the same theme, placing a "southern town" in direct opposition to "a bearded bathless bunch," "two-faced politicians," and "tramps that march out in our streets" in an effort to ensure that "Communitistic boots will never trod/Across the fields of freedom that were given to us/With the blessings of our great almighty God."<sup>71</sup> Harlan Howard took a more unusual tack in "A Little More Time," lamenting the passing of an unlikely trinity of JFK, Jesus, and Stephen Foster; by linking Foster, the most famous of the songwriters elevating the South in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the other two, Howard weaves Southern nostalgia into his patriotic, Christian, and tradition-based worldview.<sup>72</sup>

Presenting the South as more American than America troubled the regional dichotomy that had long plagued country music. Surrendering one's Southern roots was no longer necessary to be recognized nationally or to indicate national pride; in fact, Southern pride and American pride now seemed capable of existing side by side. Arguably, this approach only gained strength after the war's conclusion, as the United States collectively engaged in a struggle for meaning. Country music, and the South it began to espouse, had fought for high moral and patriotic concepts throughout the war, and their refusal to relinquish these in its aftermath provided a soothing counterpoint to what

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<sup>70</sup> Merle Haggard, "Okie from Muskogee," Capitol 2626, 1969.

<sup>71</sup> Marty Robbins, "Ain't I Right," Sims Records 296, Johnny Freedom, 1966.

<sup>72</sup> Harlan Howard, "A Little More Time," *To The Silent Majority With Love*, Nugget Records NR LP-105, 1971.

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James Charles Cobb refers to as “the self-flagellation that had become almost a national pastime as the United States backed out of Southeast Asia.”<sup>73</sup>

At the same time, the negative racial associations that had long been used to malign the South were largely disappearing. The Civil Rights Movement was moving out of the South, riots were happening in Northern ghettos, and radical black politics were challenging white hegemony in new uncomfortable ways. Northern whites could no longer treat racism as a problem endemic to and indicative of Southern backwardness. The increasing national popularity of segregationist politician George Wallace in the 60s and 70s speaks to the way Southern identity had become a nostalgic touchstone of whiteness. Key to Wallace’s campaigning was his evocation of a Southern good old boy image, bolstered through his use of country acts.<sup>74</sup> This link is not as intangible as it might at first seem; when an unnamed worker in Detroit said, “We’re all hillbillies. What Wallace says goes,” he spoke for many Americans, who found in the Southern stereotypes they had so long reviled an affirmation of their racial beliefs.<sup>75</sup> Mainstream country’s studious avoidance of explicit discussion of racial issues (minus a few oblique recordings like “Irma Jackson” and “Skip a Rope”) and the widespread popularity of a select few black artists (most notably Charley Pride) actually strengthened its appeal in this regard by playing into white feelings that they were not bigoted but just wanted things the way they used to be. Country’s assertions of Southernness disguised and justified prejudice as nostalgia, upholding central myths of white

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<sup>73</sup> Cobb, “From Muskogee to Luckenbach,” 83.

<sup>74</sup> Cobb, “From Muskogee to Luckenbach,” 82. Malone, *Don’t Get above Your Raisin*, 238-239.

<sup>75</sup> Qtd. in Joseph Kraft, “Michigan Apathy,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, October 20, 1972.



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backlash to the Civil Rights Movement (i.e. the idea of outside agitators or the beneficial nature of traditional hierarchies). “Resoundingly white without being expressly anti-black,” country’s expressions of Southern pride offered a kind of “white escapism” to those across the United States.<sup>76</sup>

Country music and its reconnection with its Southern identity, then, became a convenient low-commitment political statement. After George Wallace, this was first taken advantage of by Nixon as a key component of his ‘Southern strategy.’ This brand of cultural populism is evidenced by Nixon’s invitation of Merle Haggard and Johnny Cash to the White House and his designation of October as Country Music Month. In his mobilization of country music, Nixon emphasized the patriotic, down-to-earth, and thus, Southern ideals the music depicted, rather than the fairly diverse beliefs of the artists themselves.<sup>77</sup> Nixon strategist Kevin Phillips summed up this process when he wrote about how country music spoke to “the forgotten Americans...who drive the trucks, plow the farms, man the factories, and police the streets” and provided a way to “use the emotional issues of culture and race” to polarize without alienating.<sup>78</sup> When he became the first President to appear on *The Grand Ole Opry*, Nixon elaborated further:

What country music is, is that first it comes from the heart of America...Second, it relates to those experiences that mean so much to America. It talks about family, it talks about religion, the faith in God that is so important to our country

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<sup>76</sup> Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 225-226. Henson Cargill, “Skip A Rope,” *Skip A Rope*, Monument SLP18094, 1968. Merle Haggard, “Irma Jackson,” *Let Me Tell You About a Song*, Capitol Records SW-8-0882, 1972.

<sup>77</sup> Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*, 219-226. Malone, *Don't Get above Your Raisin'*, 243.

<sup>78</sup> Kevin Phillips, “Revolutionary Music,” *Washington Post*, May 6, 1971.

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and particularly to our family life. And as we all know, country music radiates a love of this Nation, patriotism.<sup>79</sup>

As is evident in this quote, the Southern values of country music became an easy way for politicians, particularly on the right, to make a statement of their beliefs and attract support without actually saying much at all. Conservatives' wholehearted embrace of Southernness as an emblem of Americanness marked a turning point in country music; Southern identity was no longer something to divest but something to celebrate.

Ironically, it was this reaction against the staid Southern values responsible for rendering Southern pride acceptable again that produced the most extreme displays of Southern heritage. The two musical movements in country music that were particularly responsible for making increasingly radical assertions of Southernness palatable to the mainstream were both breakaway movements, trying to differentiate themselves from the uniformity of sound and message coming out of the country music establishment. Country 'outlaws' and Southern rockers took the gentler Southern pride evident in the recordings of the 60s and early 70s and transformed it into a rebellious statement.

Confederate references and symbolism offered an obvious way for 'outlaw' performers to build up their rebel reputations while not taking them too far away from the Southern pride that was proving so lucrative to their more mainstream peers. Willie Nelson frequently wore a Confederate cap during his performances. Alongside various Confederate war anthems, Waylon Jennings recorded "The Ghost of General Lee" and was involved with the Civil War concept album *White Mansions*, both of

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<sup>79</sup> Richard Nixon, "Remarks at the Grand Ole Opry House, Nashville, Tennessee," March 16, 1974. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4389>.

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which presented a superficial balance but a true Southern bias.<sup>80</sup> Johnny Cash also recorded Confederate songs old and new including “God Bless Robert E. Lee” and “The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down.”<sup>81</sup> The renewal of Confederate themes in ‘outlaw’ country, however, is most apparent and abrasive in the personas cultivated by Hank Williams, Jr. and David Allan Coe.<sup>82</sup> William’s publicity materials often featured the Confederate flag prominently.<sup>8</sup> This even went so far as the distribution of Williams-themed Confederate flag boxer shorts at Nashville’s annual Fan Fair. The music matched the promotion as he recorded songs like “The South’s Gonna Rattle Again,” “If Heaven Ain’t A Lot Like Dixie,” and “If the South Woulda Won.”<sup>8</sup> David Allan Coe also used Confederate imagery extensively, often in his clothing or sets.<sup>85</sup> In “I Still Sing the Old Songs,” Coe’s narrator boasted that he had “never crossed the Mason-Dixon line” and longed “to see the day the South will rise again.”<sup>86</sup> Still, this song could not possibly compare with those Coe released and self-promoted through his own label D.A.C. Records. Later consolidated into *18 X-Rated Hits* (with crossed Confederate

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<sup>80</sup> Waylon Jennings, “The Ghost of General Lee,” *The Journey: Six Strings Away*, Bear Family BCD-16370, 1999. Paul Kennerley, *White Mansions: A Tale From The American Civil War 1861-1865*, A&M Records SP-6004, 1978.

<sup>81</sup> Bobby Borchers & Mack Vickery, “God Bless Robert E. Lee,” *Johnny 99*, Columbia FC 38696, Johnny Cash, 1983. Robbie Robertson, “The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down,” *John R. Cash*, Columbia KC 33370, Johnny Cash, 1975.

<sup>82</sup> Cecil Kirk Hutson, “More Smoke Than Fire,” *America Under Construction: Boundaries and Identities in American Popular Culture*, ed. Kristi S. Long & Matthew Nadelhaft (Routledge, 1997), 99.

<sup>83</sup> Jim Bessman, Personal Interview, July 2013.

<sup>84</sup> Billy Maddox & David Moore, “If Heaven Ain’t A Lot Like Dixie,” Elektra/ Curb Records 7-69960, Hank Williams, Jr., 1982. Hank Williams, Jr., “If the South Woulda Won,” Warner Bros Records/Curb Records 7-27862, 1988. Hank Williams, Jr., “The South’s Gonna Rattle Again,” *High Notes*, Elektra E1-60100, 1982.

<sup>85</sup> Rick Sanjek, Personal Interview, July 2013.

<sup>86</sup> David Allan Coe, “I Still Sing the Old Songs,” *The Mysterious Rhinestone Cowboy*, Columbia KC 32942, 1974.

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flags on the cover), the *Underground* and *Nothing Sacred* albums contain racist and neo-Confederate content so extreme that David Allan Coe and segregationist singer Johnny Rebel are often confused and their songs misattributed to each other. Coe's song "Rails" discusses how "niggers made me vote for segregation" and concludes "take the sheets off of your bed, and let's go hang a nigger."<sup>87</sup> Even worse is the graphic "Nigger Fucker," a song dedicated to "nigger lovin' whores" that asserts "there's nothing quite as worthless as a white girl with a nigger."<sup>88</sup> While not mainstream Coe hits, these songs were inextricably tied to his 'outlaw' image, an image that for all of the self-proclaimed 'outlaws' included, on some level, support for the South's Confederate past.

Southern rockers continued in this same vein. While not precisely country, this genre was undeniably borne out of and overlapped with country both stylistically and lyrically. Like the 'outlaw' movement, it represents an important disavowal of mainstream country sounds, in this case through the integration of them with rock and roll. Although Lynyrd Skynyrd has become most associated with Confederate references in song and imagery, they were hardly unusual among Southern rock groups. Lynyrd Skynyrd's use of the Confederate flag on almost all their album covers and at most of their concerts is simply a more pronounced version of the same actions taken by their peers. Molly Hatchet and the supposedly progressive Allman Brothers both featured Confederate costuming in publicity photos and album art. Black Oak Arkansas's lead guitarist Stanley Knight played a guitar emblazoned with the stars and bars, and the flag also hung from the drum riser during concerts.<sup>89</sup> Several of the bands also featured

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<sup>87</sup> David Allan Coe, "Rails," *Nothing Sacred*, D.A.C. Records LP-0002, 1978.

<sup>88</sup> David Allan Coe, "Nigger Fucker," *Underground Album*, D.A.C. Records LP-0003, 1982.

<sup>89</sup> Hutson, "More Smoke Than Fire," 96-99.

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“Dixie” in their regular concert repertoire.<sup>90</sup> The Charlie Daniels Band’s “The South’s Gonna Do It Again” exhorted its listeners to “be proud you’re a rebel,” Wet Willie’s “Dixie Rock” affirmed the way white Southerners coopted black music, and Lynyrd Skynyrd’s “Sweet Home Alabama” offered a sanitized picture of the South and what was interpreted by many as support of George Wallace.<sup>9</sup> Clearly, the Southern rockers embraced, if not the full political implications of Southern symbolism, the symbolism itself.

The significance of these two musical movements is found in the way they made the South the possession of a younger generation and a broader political base. Both had connections to progressive politics and even to counterculture, which in a way softened the stridency of their Confederate pride. While this feeling was largely intangible, some artists actively tried to musically reconstruct the South as more tolerant version of itself. Forefather of the ‘outlaw’ movement Mickey Newbury’s efforts to reclaim “Dixie” produced “An American Trilogy,” a combination of “Dixie,” “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” and the spiritual “All My Trials.” One of the rare female ‘outlaws’ Tanya Tucker recorded the most famous version of “I Believe the South is Gonna Rise Again;” urging listeners to “forget the bad and keep the good,” the song depicts an idyllic post-racial South with “everybody hand in hand” achieving ascendancy but “not the way we thought it

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<sup>90</sup> J. Michael Butler, “‘Luther King was a Good Ole’ Boy’: The Southern Rock Movement and White Male Identity in the Post-Civil Rights South,” *Popular Music and Society* (Summer 2003): 46.

<sup>91</sup> Charlie Daniels, “The South’s Gonna Do It Again,” Epic 15-2393, The Charlie Daniels Band, 1975. Jimmy Hall, Jack Hall, & Ricky Hirsch, “Dixie Rock,” Capricorn Records CP 0149, Wet Willie, 1975. Ed King, Gary Rossington, & Ronnie Van Zant, “Sweet Home Alabama,” MCA-40258, Lynyrd Skynyrd, 1974.

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would back then.”<sup>92</sup> Similarly, Black Oak Arkansas’ “You Can’t Keep a Good Man Down,” praises Martin Luther King, Jr. in stereotypically Southern terms as “a good ole boy.”<sup>93</sup> In reality, these songs can hardly be held up as beacons of liberalization and tolerance; the inclusion they advocate is premised on a basis of white Southern ideology and ratified by white Southern supremacy. By normalizing the borderline neo-Confederate tone emerging in country music, songs like this attempted to distance Southern pride from its racial overtones, a move that in and of itself had profound racial overtones.

The election of Jimmy Carter (coupled with his extensive use of Southern rock bands during his campaign) and the rise of the Sunbelt economy initiated further blurring of boundaries between North and South. This loss of regional distinctiveness functioned on one level to make Southern pride and culture seem safe to outsiders and on the other to push Southerners more towards strong claims of a unique culture even as their uniqueness was vanishing. These political developments sparked greater Northern fascination with the South and catalyzed the growing strains of Southern pride in country music.<sup>94</sup> With headlines exulting “We Ain’t Trash No More” or seriously suggesting “The South as The New America,” the resultant surge of aggressively pro-Southern music somehow

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<sup>92</sup> Bobby Braddock, “I Believe the South is Gonna Rise Again,” CBS 3134, Tanya Tucker, 1974. Mickey Newbury, “An American Trilogy,” Elektra EKS-45750, 1971.

<sup>93</sup> Black Oak Arkansas, “You Can’t Keep a Good Man Down,” *10yr Overnight Success*, MCA-2224, 1976.

<sup>94</sup> Hutson, “More Smoke Than Fire,” 104-107. Melton A. McLaurin, “Songs of the South,” in *You Wrote My Life: Lyrical Themes in Country Music*, ed. Melton A. McLaurin & Richard A. Peterson (Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1992), 26. Malone, *Don’t Get above Your Raisin’*, 46, 245.

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couched in the trappings of respectability is unsurprising.<sup>9</sup> It was this period that produced the marriage of the 'outlaw'/Southern rock conception of the South and the earlier more nostalgic South that defines much of country music today.

The evolution of country music as a distinctly pro-Southern genre destabilizes the predominant and simplistic narratives favored by those vilifying country. This is not, however, any kind of excuse for Confederate references in country music. By tracing country's Southern pride or lack thereof from commercialization onward, it becomes all too evident that such symbolism cannot be separated from its racial implications, that, while the music of Hank Williams, Jr. may be different in degree from that of Johnny Rebel, they are borne out of the same feelings and justified in the same way, and most importantly, that 'heritage not hate' is little more than a mask for hatred in another form.

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<sup>95</sup> Larry L. King, "We Ain't Trash No More: How Jimmy Carter Led the Rednecks from the Wilderness," *Esquire*, November 1976. Reg Murphy, "The South as The New America," *Saturday Review* 4, September 1976.





## Victory by Any Means

### Victory by Any Means: French Torture in Colonial Algeria

Harrison Donahoe

*Am I a criminal? An assassin? A monster? No. I'm but a soldier who did his job and who did it for France because the country demanded it.*<sup>1</sup>  
– Paul Aussaresses

The French-Algerian War has long been noted for the particularly brutal tactics employed by its participants. The war, while seen by the supporters of Algerian independence as a battle for the freedom of a united people, was seen by the occupying French forces as a bloody and senseless insurrection that was to be put down immediately by any and all means necessary. With Algerian forces resorting to bombings and mass attacks on innocent civilians, the French paratroopers designated with bringing peace to Algeria decided to implement their own set of drastic measures. Torture and summary execution became staples of the war in Algeria. The men who implemented them were forced to find justification for the need of such actions. The desperation for victory in Algeria, shared by government officials and members of the French army alike, required the creation of justifications for the actions that were implemented during the war.

This paper will explore how the French military sought to justify their sustained use of extreme measures, such as torture and summary executions, both during and

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<sup>1</sup> "Algeria Torture: French General Paul Aussaresses Dies," December 4, 2013, accessed December 4, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25214025>.

after the French-Algerian War, as well as addressing how the practices of these extreme measures impacted the army. Pointing to the necessity of such measures in a wartime environment, the governmental complicity in the use of such measures, and the desire to recover the lost honor of the army itself, many members of the French military vehemently defended the use of torture and summary executions both during the conflict and in the years following its conclusion as being an integral part of the war effort in Algeria. In actuality, the double-edged sword of torture cut both ways and succeeded in internally fractionalizing the army, destabilizing the relationship between the French government and army, and irreparably tarnishing the honor of the army and the men who fought in it. Though the paratroopers won the Battle of Algiers through torture and summary execution, they ultimately lost the war in Algeria due to the impact that these actions had on the army, both internally and externally.

The controversial use of torture during the French-Algerian War, and especially during the Battle of Algiers, serves as one of the many enduring examples of the constant struggle to comprehend and justify its practice in warfare. The morality, practicality and rationality of performing such a polarizing act is still thought provoking today due to the persistence of its use even in modern wars such as Iraq and Afghanistan. The justifications for the use of torture made by French military officials are not unlike many justifications that are still given today by military authorities seeking to legitimize the practice of these same extreme acts of brutality during a conflict. The ramifications of these acts, while difficult to directly correlate to contemporary conflicts, still speak to the potential, and in some cases realized, dangers incurred through the practice of these extreme measures. Extreme measures used in warfare often lead to extreme reactions

from not only the targeted population, but from the home front as well.

### *Historical Context*

On November 1, 1954, the Front de Liberation National (FLN) became the newest organized incarnation of a small but resilient native resistance sentiment that continued to struggle for independence.<sup>2</sup> The FLN, however, adopted radically different tactics than preceding resistance movements, relying heavily on terror and coercion to attempt to unite the Algerian population against the occupying French forces and forcing their permanent exit from Algeria.<sup>3</sup> Violent attacks against the French army suddenly became commonplace across the *bled*, the Algerian countryside. The French, however, never saw the FLN as a serious threat to their power in Algeria, viewing it as merely another distant countryside movement that the army would eventually suppress entirely. This assumption was held until the Battle of Philippeville and the massacre at El-Halia shattered any notion that the FLN were a conventional resistance movement. On August 20, 1955, mobs of Muslims, who had been spurred into frenzy by FLN operatives, attacked Philippeville, an important port town, with the intention of capturing it. Still more FLN

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<sup>2</sup> There were several intermittent resistance movements that occurred after Algeria was declared an integral part of France. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, notable resistance leaders, such as Ahmed Bey and Abd al-Qadir, attempted to combat increasing French subjugation. The French, however, due to their overwhelming military superiority, systematically crushed all rebel movements who were poorly prepared to participate in prolonged combat against battle-hardened soldiers of a world power. The continued utilization of total war tactics by the French including the destruction of crops and dozens of villages, also dealt significant blows to these movements. The use of these tactics had the unintended side effect of further cementing the indigenous population's hatred of the French for their brutality and allowed for the survival of resistance sentiment well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

operatives roused other Muslims into an attack on the peaceful mining village of El-Halia where dozens of  *pied-noirs*, mostly women and children, were viciously murdered and their corpses mutilated. With French forces occupied in the defense of Philippeville, the FLN was able to send a lasting message to the French in El-Halia. These events showed the French that the FLN was willing to do anything and risk everything to achieve independence from colonialism even if it meant having to resort to ruthless violence, not just against the French military, but also against civilians.

The shock of El-Halia and Philippeville also signaled the beginning of the transition of the overall resistance effort from the countryside to an urban setting. The FLN in 1956, now led by Larbi Ben M'Hidi and Yacef Saâdi, saw the move into the city of Algiers as the next step in publicizing the struggle of the Algerians against the French to the world. Algiers also provided more numerous and concentrated  *pieds-noirs* to target as well as a convenient place for FLN operatives to hide in order to plan and execute their missions. This safe haven, the Casbah, was the center of FLN activity in Algiers due to its predominantly Muslim population that was sympathetic to the fighters for Algerian independence. From here M'Hidi and Saâdi along with Ali La Pointe, Saâdi's lieutenant, began to create a network of independent and sophisticated cells that would carry out coordinated operations that would terrorize the native Muslim population as well as the French through bombings, targeted assassinations, and the random murders of French civilians.<sup>4</sup> The practice of this asymmetrical warfare between the powerful French army and the resilient forces of the FLN culminated with the beginning of the

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<sup>4</sup> John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 168.

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Battle of Algiers on September 30, 1956 when three women, Zhora Drif, Djamila Bouhired, and Samia Lakhdari, under the direct supervision of Saâdi placed bombs in three separate locations in European Algiers.<sup>5</sup> Despite one bomb failing to go off, the remaining pair of explosions left widespread carnage in their wake. These bombings in conjunction with the ever-rising tide of FLN-induced violence in Algiers forced Robert Lacoste, the Governor-General of Algeria, to finally recognize that the FLN was a legitimate threat to French Algeria and that the standard police forces in Algeria were not capable of addressing such a threat properly.

Faced with this rapidly deteriorating situation, Lacoste brought in General Jacques Massu and his 10<sup>th</sup> Parachute division to restore order in the city.<sup>6</sup> Lacoste granted Massu *carte blanche*, telling him, “With your division, you will get this city under control.”<sup>7</sup> Massu’s paratroopers then set out to methodically destroy the FLN using any and all means necessary and available to them. These paratroopers were fresh out of the failed conflict in Indochina and had been exposed to the guerilla warfare and counterinsurgency techniques that would be necessary in order to exterminate the FLN presence in Algiers. The paratroopers partitioned the Casbah into four sections that had checkpoints at each entrance and instituted a curfew to control the potentially subversive movements of its inhabitants. The paratroopers then began to systematically monitor, arrest, and interrogate any person within the Casbah that could be connected to the FLN in any possible way. The paratroopers’ use of extreme methods including torture and

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<sup>5</sup> Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954-1962* (New York: New York Review Of Books, 2006), 185.

<sup>6</sup> Alf Andrew Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 233.

<sup>7</sup> Ted Morgan, *My Battle of Algiers* (New York, NY: Smithsonian, 2006), 115.

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execution without trial were widespread, and many residents of the Casbah would go missing for extended periods of time, some returning and some not. Within three months of arriving in Algiers, the paratroopers had completely dismantled every FLN cell in Algiers, killed Ali La Pointe, and captured Yacef and M'Hidi. M'Hidi later died in French custody supposedly by his own hand according to his captors.<sup>8</sup> France decisively won the Battle of Algiers, but the brutality of its colonialist tendencies were exposed to its domestic population and the world.<sup>9</sup> By 1962, Algeria was finally able to rid itself of French occupiers and had gained independence by gradually wearing the French military down until public opinion forced their exodus. The French colonial empire collapsed and the French government along with it at the realization of the horrors committed by their soldiers during the war.

In his memoir *The Battle of the Casbah: Terrorism and Counterterrorism in Algeria 1955-1957*, Paul Aussaresses offers the insights of a paratrooper who was deeply committed to defending French civilians and a French Algeria. A veteran of both the French Resistance in World War II and the war in Indochina, Aussaresses was an expert in guerilla tactics and counter-espionage methods including the potential benefits of using torture as a means of information gathering. As a member of the Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionnage, the French equivalent of the CIA, Aussaresses was deployed to Algeria in 1955 as a part of Massu's 10<sup>th</sup> Parachute Division. He served as General Massu's senior intelligence officer in Algiers and was personally involved in the battles of Philippeville and Algiers. He was charged with the creation and development

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<sup>8</sup> Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 195.

<sup>9</sup> Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, 235.

of the information networks in both Philippeville and Algiers as well as heading an unofficial execution squad that operated outside of the bounds of the official French military. Another participant in the war, Sanche de Gramont provides his own account of the French army's incursion into Algeria, with his memoir *My Battle of Algiers*. As a member of the French aristocracy, de Gramont had responded to the conscription notice that had reached him in the United States of America and set out to return to France for training in officer's school. During his deployment to Algeria, de Gramont transitioned from his position as an acting officer in a colonial troop of Senegalese troops into a propaganda officer personally recruited by General Massu himself. Both of these men provide varying and detailed accounts of their experiences in the "peace keeping operation" in Algeria, with each offering his own views and explanations on the repercussions of the French army's actions.

These views are further complemented through the inclusion of the personal account of Henri Alleg who provides a rare non-military personal account of French torture during the war. Alleg, a French communist, was captured and tortured by French paratroopers under the accusations that he was an FLN sympathizer. The account of his incarceration, *The Question*, was quickly banned in France due to its blunt and uncompromising descriptions of torture methods and their effects on the tortured and torturer alike.

### *Justifying A Necessary Evil*

The practicality of using torture to combat asymmetrical warfare was, according to Aussaresses and many of his compatriots, a main reason for its continued practice throughout the French-Algerian War. Information was key in a war of this extreme nature, but due to the

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structure of the FLN network in Algiers and its operatives' resilience, reliable information on their activities was difficult to obtain through traditional methods of intelligence gathering. Torture was viewed as the best solution to the problem. Gillo Pontecorvo's film *The Battle of Algiers*, which documents the struggles of both the FLN and French forces during the battle, portrays the importance of information gathering to the success of the French war effort in a scene depicting the instruction of a group of paratroopers by their commander, Lieutenant Colonel Mathieu. Mathieu informs the men under his command that, "The basis of our job is intelligence. The method: interrogation. Conducted in such a way as to ensure we always get an answer."<sup>10</sup> The interrogation method vaguely referred to by Mathieu is clearly torture. Torture provided information that could be acted upon in a timely manner, which could potentially lead to the capture of other FLN operatives, who in turn could be "put to the question" in order to obtain even more information. Contrary to the maxim that torture is an ineffective method of obtaining actionable intelligence, torture during the Battle of Algiers was in fact highly effective according to Morgan.<sup>11</sup> Acting quickly on these newly acquired pieces of information was the main method employed by the paratroopers in combatting the FLN in Algiers. Aussaresses confirms this by stating that "Time was of the essence and I was looking at someone who was directly implicated in a terrorist act: any methods were good enough to force him to talk. That was

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<sup>10</sup> Gillo Pontecorvo and Franco Solinas, *The Battle of Algiers*, directed by Gillo Pontecorvo (New York, NY: Rialto Pictures, 1966), [http://moodle.rhodes.edu/file.php/9643/Battle\\_of\\_Algers\\_/player.html](http://moodle.rhodes.edu/file.php/9643/Battle_of_Algers_/player.html) (accessed April 14, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Ted Morgan, "My Battle of Algiers Lecture" (National Press Club, Washington, D.C., March 14, 2006).



what the circumstances demanded.”<sup>12</sup> These men were faced with the daily realities of an ugly war and they jumped at the opportunity to hasten the defeat of their enemy by using any tactics that were deemed necessary and were readily available to them. Summary executions were also seen by the paratroopers to be a necessary wartime measure due to the massive influx of Algerians that were captured and proven to be a part of an FLN operation. Aussaresses points out that “the justice system would have been paralyzed had it not been for our [use of summary execution].”<sup>13</sup> These executions steadily became “an inseparable part of the tasks associated with keeping law and order” amongst the population of the Casbah.<sup>14</sup> In order to undermine the FLN and to establish absolute control over the Casbah, the paratroopers had to create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation that was far greater than that of the FLN. This was done because, as Aussaresses asserts, “[In order to] acquire credibility the paratroopers had to be even more extreme than the FLN.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, torture was not only useful for gathering actionable intelligence in a highly fluid wartime environment, but also created the image of the paratroopers as a ruthless and unforgiving force in Algiers.

The establishment of this merciless image, according to Aussaresses, would also detrimentally impact the FLN’s ability to unite the native population against the French, with many natives not wanting to risk attracting the unwanted attention of the occupying French paratroopers. These same French forces had been known for their cruelty

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah: Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Algeria 1955-1957*, trans. Robert L. Miller (New York: Enigma Books, 2004), 29.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

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over their century of occupation in Algeria, but this new level of brutality served to further reinforce their image as an unstoppable force that was not to be challenged. Aussaresses realized this and saw the advantage in perpetuating this image, establishing several makeshift prisons such as the villa des Tourelles, for the purpose of torturing the most dangerous FLN prisoners.<sup>16</sup> These torture centers steadily gained notorious reputations amongst the population of the Casbah with each acquiring its own terrifying tales of pain and death. The fear of being transported to one of these prisons was a great deterrent to any potential FLN sympathizer in the Casbah. The French hope was that this tactic would cause many to stop supporting the FLN and that this lack of unity against the French would with time allow the French forces to completely dismantle the organization.

Like Aussaresses, many of the senior paratroopers of the 10<sup>th</sup> Parachute Division had been exposed to the use of torture during the unsuccessful French incursion into Indochina and others had received first-hand experience in subversive warfare as part of the French Resistance during World War II.<sup>17</sup> The use of these methods in previous conflicts had proven effective for the French, and their commanders did not see the continued usage of such methods in this new conflict as an unusual development. To defeat the FLN, the paratroopers had to become unrestrained, unpredictable, and ruthless in order to achieve victory.<sup>18</sup> Torture was perceived as the only way to achieve all of these goals, establishing the paratroopers as a threatening and intimidating presence in Algiers to the FLN. Even if the paratroopers could not control the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>17</sup> Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 189.

<sup>18</sup> Evans, *Algeria*, 205.

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entirety of the Casbah in actuality, they could still rule it through fear, and their practice of extreme wartime measures permitted them to do so quickly and fully.

The French government's granting of unrestricted police powers to the paratroopers in Algeria provided another seemingly legitimate justification for the use of torture during the conflict. Many paratroopers saw the right to torture as just one of the many rights that had been granted to them by the government in order to reestablish order in the country. The ambiguity inherent in the granting of *carte blanche* to these men allowed them to justify even the most brutal assassinations and tortures under the broad umbrella of governmental sanction. Even if the government had not explicitly permitted the army's use of torture in Algeria, it had bestowed essentially unlimited power upon the army to resolve the crisis as quickly and completely as possible. Actions deemed appropriate by the army were now by association deemed appropriate by the government as well. The men of the army saw their use of torture and summary executions as having been permitted by the government due to the lack of concern that government officials had with the methods being employed by the army, just as long as the rebellion in Algeria was repressed.

The drastic decision by the government to grant the army these powers finds its origins in the events that immediately preceded the conflict in Algeria. Since its reestablishment after World War II, the government had instantly come face-to-face with the rebelling colonial population in Indochina. After their failure in Indochina, this same government was almost immediately met with the new insurrection in Algeria. With the loss of Indochina still fresh in the minds of French politicians, such as Max Lejeune and Francois Mitterrand, and the still-felt need to fulfill the *mission civilisatrice* that had brought France to

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Algeria initially, these men began to resort to more radical and potentially detrimental solutions to the problems besetting the faltering French colonial empire. The desperation to maintain their presence in Algeria coupled with the persistence of the FLN and its violent attacks drove these politicians to endorse the use of more extreme methods, such as torture, to quell the rebellion and reestablish control in Algeria.<sup>19</sup> Aouissousses plainly states,

Regarding the use of torture, it was tolerated if not actually recommended. François Mitterrand, as Minister of Justice, had a de facto representative with General Massu in Judge Jean Bérard, who covered our actions and knew exactly what was going on during the night.<sup>20</sup>

The active participation of the government in the concealment of the paratroopers' actions fostered the image of torture as a normal and acceptable course of action in Algeria. The government and its officials, through passive and active participation alike, were extending the oppressive colonialist impression that had been made upon the natives of Algeria since the first French troop arrivals in 1830.<sup>21</sup> The lack of limits placed on the army also allowed it to function in whatever means its commanders saw fit. One of de Gramont's fellow soldiers reiterates this shared feeling on the government's complicity, stating that "the civilian authorities refuse to clearly define what is permitted and what is prohibited, leaving the paras to act without

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<sup>19</sup> James D. Le Sueur, *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonization of Algeria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 184.

<sup>20</sup> Aouissousses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 120.

<sup>21</sup> Lahouari Addi, "Colonial Mythologies: Algeria in the French Imagination," in *Franco-Arab Encounters: Studies in Memory of David C. Gordon*, eds. L. Carl Brown and Matthew S. Gordon (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 95.

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directives.”<sup>22</sup> For the paratroopers, the government’s lack of defined boundaries for the army’s power in Algeria facilitated their use of extreme measures in order to accomplish their objectives. Aussaresses and his fellow paratroopers saw themselves as the “enforcers” of a “government [that] was fully determined to prevail.”<sup>23</sup> Every morally questionable action that these men participated in was justified by the assumption that “when [they] killed those prisoners . . . [they] were following the direct orders of Max Lejeune . . . and acting in the name of the French Republic.”<sup>24</sup> Being merely the instrument of the government’s colonialist will, in the eyes of the paratroopers, cleansed them of any guilt that they might have felt. The government had charged the paratroopers with restoring order in Algeria in any way necessary, and the paratroopers were simply attempting to accomplish the mission that the government had given to them.

The honor of the army was also at stake in the retention of the final colonial holding of the French Empire. Having endured widespread warfare on the mainland in World War I, outright occupation and division in World War II, and the embarrassing defeat at the hands of the Việt Minh in Indochina, the army was in desperate need of a victory to restore itself to its former glory. Still bitter over their defeat in Indochina, many paratroopers liberally referred to the indigenous population of Algeria as “Viets,” verbalizing their disgust at their own defeat at the

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<sup>22</sup> Morgan, *My Battle of Algiers*, 144.

<sup>23</sup> Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 83.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

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hands of an “inferior power.”<sup>25</sup> The quick secession of the colonial holdings of Syria and Lebanon as well as the failure of French efforts in the Suez war led to widespread disillusionment with the French Fourth Republic but also caused paratroopers to become even more loyal to their own men and to no one else.<sup>26</sup> According to these men, the honor of the army had been severely damaged by the cowards in Paris who had colluded with their enemies despite their favorable military positions. Highly discouraged with the seemingly never-ending series of defeats and setbacks, the men of the French army saw the honor of their proud army steadily eroding before them. With the revolt occurring in Algeria, the members of the army saw the opportunity to stem this erosion and finally reestablish themselves as a respected military force in order to create new and lasting legacies for the proud French army. Even the less patriotic members of the army, as de Gramont notes, desired to “win to avoid any further deterioration in the army, particularly after Indochina.”<sup>27</sup> The paratroopers, while a highly effective military force that was very successful and effective in their operation, operated under very harsh and unforgiving conditions. They were famed for their valiant exploits in previous military conflicts and also for their intense commitment to one another. This commitment to one’s immediate brothers in arms was further reinforced by the habit of most paratrooper commanders to lead their men on the ground

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<sup>25</sup> While not appearing in many translated first hand sources, the use of the term “Viets” to describe members of the FLN is well documented in the fictional account of Jean Jaques Servan-Schreiber’s time in Algeria. While fictional, the work is based directly on Servan-Schreiber’s personal experiences in Algeria and on the typically observed practices of the paratroopers stationed in Algeria. For more information on the use of “Viet” and other derogatory terms see Jean Jacques Servan-Schreiber, *Lieutenant in Algeria* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1957), 8.

<sup>26</sup> Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 164.

<sup>27</sup> Morgan, *My Battle of Algiers*, 169.

as opposed to directing them at a command post many miles from actual danger. These commanders, notably Colonel Marcel Bigeard, were highly respected by the men that fell under their command, who were willing to follow them anywhere.<sup>28</sup>

These paratroopers also had a strong legacy to live up to in the fact that many members of their families had participated in past military campaigns for France and had been successful in honoring their country through victory. The majority of these paratroopers had yet to live up to the high standards of their ancestors and were eager to prove themselves in any way possible in Algeria. De Gramont begrudgingly joined the army despite the opportunity to simply ignore his conscription notice and remain in America. He chose to do so due to the debt of honor that he felt that he owed to his father who had died fighting for France during World War II.<sup>29</sup> Aussaresses himself mentions a relative who served in the military named Captain Soual that he held as a personal hero. He was so proud of this one particular ancestor's military service that he used Soual as his own personal pseudonym whenever the utmost secrecy was required in certain operations.<sup>30</sup> These strong personal ties with the past military might of the French Empire and the desire to emulate these ancestors who had participated in its military exploits pushed the paratroopers now embroiled in a new type of war in Algeria to extreme practices in order to achieve their much wanted victory. These men were not going to be denied the opportunity to further the proud tradition of French victory in warfare, even if it meant utilizing torture or summary execution.

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<sup>28</sup> Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 168.

<sup>29</sup> Morgan, *My Battle of Algiers*, 39.

<sup>30</sup> Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 10.

*The Consequences of a Justified Victory*

While the practice of these counter-insurgency techniques did indeed prove to be quite effective in combatting and neutralizing the threat of the FLN as well as creating an deep-seated feeling of fear in the Casbah, those same developments also had the unintended side effect of helping to create a new enemy that the paratroopers were not prepared to face, a unified Algerian people. Although the people of Algeria were by no means completely unified politically or ideologically, no member of this intensely oppressed society was prepared to tolerate the continued presence of the French in Algeria. The cruelty of the French had reached such a frequency that it forced the Algerians to unite in an ongoing struggle against the French for their freedom. De Gramont's question of whether the paratroopers were making a difference is met with a similar realization when his American friend, Davies, responds:

[The paratroopers] may help stop the terrorism . . . but [they are] also digging the ditch that separates the two communities a little deeper by acting on the theory that every Arab is guilty until proven innocent. For every terrorist he catches, he makes two more Arab enemies.<sup>31</sup>

The question of torture's utility is complicated by the fact that while tactically beneficial, it provided the FLN with a seemingly endless supply of supporters as well as a stable platform to justify their resistance against French persecution. Even if a person tortured by the paratroopers had no affiliation with the FLN, he or she would be treated no differently than definitive members of the FLN in French custody. In the minds of men like Aussaresses and

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<sup>31</sup> Morgan, *My Battle of Algiers*, 81



Massu nobody was innocent, French citizen or Muslim; if they came to be in French custody, they were instantly ruled guilty and an “accomplice” to FLN activities.<sup>32</sup> De Gramont notes a similar instance in which a fellow soldier declared that everyone was “either for [the French] or against [them]” and that those who chose to not be with the French were all a part of “the same outfit” even if there was no direct evidence of their collusion with the FLN.<sup>33</sup>

The liberal use of torture and its justification as a practical element during the war against the Muslim population was one thing, but the torture and summary execution of men like Maurice Audin, a prominent French citizen and FLN sympathizer, was something else entirely. The torture of French citizens caused internal divisions to appear within the ranks of the army itself, with some declaring it as a travesty against the ideals that the French army was supposedly fighting for and others judging sympathizers as no different than FLN members regardless of their nationality. Aussaresses falls into the latter category, noting his disgust with French sympathizers, who he labels “suitcase carriers” and recounting his plans to carry out targeted assassinations against several of these sympathizers in mainland France itself.<sup>34</sup> De Gramont even attributes the disappearance of Maurice Audin himself to Aussaresses and his independent torture squad.<sup>35</sup> The disappearance and torture of the native population of Algeria could easily be swept away by the occupying French forces, but equivalent experiences by French citizens were harder to keep hidden from a public already uneasy about the practice of torture in Algeria. Further dissensions over

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<sup>32</sup> Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 121.

<sup>33</sup> Morgan, *My Battle of Algiers*, 81.

<sup>34</sup> Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 147.

<sup>35</sup> Morgan, *My Battle of Algiers*, 207.

Massu's tactics were revealed when Jacques Pâris de Bollardière, a prominent general of the paratroopers, refused to utilize torture and execution in his operations in Algeria. Bollardière's experience with torture during World War II at the hands of the Gestapo had led him to dismiss the tactic as cowardly, and he asked for a transfer from his assignment in Algeria. His request was cautiously granted with the understanding that Bollardière would not expose the use of extreme tactics to the French public. Bollardière, however, had no intention of passively letting the army of which he had been a part be completely destroyed by its practice of torture and summary execution. He published a letter exposing and condemning the practice of torture in Algeria and was later sentenced to sixty days in a military prison for his actions.<sup>36</sup> Though Bollardière was an outlier in the French army for his unwavering stance on the use of torture during the war, he was not alone in his condemnation of torture in the conflict as being detrimental to the war effort and to those who were fighting it; several other members of the French army including de Gramont shared this view as well.<sup>37</sup> An acquaintance of de Gramont's, a young Foreign Legion officer, openly discussed his disdain for such practices proclaiming that, "I couldn't continue . . . I'd come to Algeria to fight, not to torture. I'm obedient by nature, but even I have limits."<sup>38</sup>

The government, however, later came to regret the granting of *carte blanche* to General Massu and his paratroopers. Citizens in the metropole began to become aware of the atrocities being committed via leaked information from the front and popular opinion began to turn towards an anti-war and anti-torture stance. Members

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>37</sup> Morgan, "My Battle of Algiers Lecture."

<sup>38</sup> Morgan, *My Battle of Algiers*, 169.

of the French government began to see their constituencies hold them directly accountable for these offenses, with Robert Lacoste himself writing Premier Guy Mollet of his concerns about “the conduct of [Massu’s] troops.”<sup>39</sup> The government was now beginning to bend under the pressure of public opinion, and the army took careful notice, as General Massu noted, that “up there [in Paris] everyone is holding back.”<sup>40</sup> The paratroopers still harbored the feeling that they had been abandoned in their efforts to retain Indochina by government officials who did not wish to compromise their positions in the government solely to keep possession of a single colonial holding. They felt that the government had deserted them in their most pressing hour of need before and they began to sense the shift in allegiances quickly when the public started to hear whispers of torture in Algeria. The government’s lack of commitment to the army’s tactics, especially given the massive progress that the army had made since its arrival, deeply insulted the paratroopers who came to see French politicians as spineless bureaucrats willing to stab others in the back at any moment in order to save themselves.<sup>41</sup> If the government wished to stay in Algeria, then they would have to permit the army to operate without restriction in order to maintain control of the area. The fictional Colonel Mathieu even pointed out that if the French government desired to remain in Algeria, “then you must accept all the necessary consequences [of that decision].”<sup>42</sup>

This incredibly tense relationship erupted towards the end of the war in an open revolt by several notable paratrooper generals against the government as it became

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>40</sup> Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 142.

<sup>41</sup> Morgan, *My Battle of Algiers*, 127.

<sup>42</sup> Pontecorvo, *The Battle of Algiers*.

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clear that France was going to leave Algeria. This revolt, known as the Generals' Putsch, united the remaining members of the army that were still completely committed to the preservation of a French Algeria, even over the protestations of the French government itself.<sup>43</sup> The open insubordination of these generals and, after the failure of the putsch, the creation of the terrorist organization known as the Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS) represented the final efforts by these paratroopers to hold onto their dreams of a truly French Algeria. These men had fought for the ideal of a French Algeria for almost six years and had lost many men in the fight against the FLN. Now when faced with the fact that if the government left Algeria all of their sacrifices would have been for nothing, they chose to openly rebel against a government that they believed was once again turning its back on them. The forces of these rebellious sections of the French army were quickly suppressed, and many of them were arrested, but the relationship between the French army and the government was only repaired many years later with the granting of amnesty to all leaders of the OAS and the putsch in 1968.<sup>44</sup> The political pressures incurred by the use of torture proved to be too much for the French Fourth Republic to sustain. With the government's subsequent collapse and the French army's open insurrection against the new Fifth Republic's decision to remove itself from Algeria, the usage of torture and summary execution had done catastrophic damage to the already tenuous relationship between the government and the military.

In their overzealous efforts to recover the glory and honor of the French army, however, the paratroopers

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<sup>43</sup> Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 189.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 552.

irreparably tarnished the reputation of not just the army, but of themselves as well. Henri Alleg's *The Question* intimately describes his treatment during his incarceration in the Barberousse military prison and provides a chilling example of the paratroopers' liberal practice of torture and summary execution. During his own graphic torture session, one of the paratroopers stops and screams into Alleg's face, "We fought the war in Indo-China – that was enough to know your type. This is the Gestapo here!"<sup>45</sup> The self-comparison of the paratroopers to the Gestapo, a force that only fifteen years earlier were persecuting and murdering Frenchmen in their own country, speaks to how low these men had sunk. Alleg laments that the "'Centre de Tri' was not only a place of torture for Algerians, but a school of perversion for young Frenchmen."<sup>46</sup> This deformation of character even affected de Gramont as he accidentally killed a man that he was interrogating for information. He characterizes the experience as a "form of inner disfigurement" that would forever be a part of his character and would haunt him for the rest of his life.<sup>47</sup> The honor that these men had set out to regain for the glory of France would now be forever tainted by the choice to use torture in order to complete their mission in Algeria at any cost.

The unbreakable bonds of brotherhood forged in the prisons of Indochina and in the failure of the Suez operation also showed the degradation of these men's concept of honor and how much these failures had shaped them. Unquestioned commitment from one paratrooper to another had created a feeling of an isolated entity that was

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<sup>45</sup> Henri Alleg, *The Question*, trans. John Calder (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 47.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 82

<sup>47</sup> Morgan, *My Battle of Algiers*, 92.

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independent of the government itself and from any potentially damaging outside influences. The paratroopers were now soldiers not in regular armies entirely loyal to the French government, but instead they were hardened, self-sustaining private armies that were intensely loyal to their commanding officers and willing to sacrifice anything for their brothers in arms and the cause for which many men before them had died.

The justification of the use of torture and summary execution by Paul Aussaresses and men like him caused an intense public controversy in France at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The account of Louissette Igilahriz, a former member of the FLN, of her capture, torture, and rape at the hands of the French paratroopers during the Battle of Algiers was published by *Le Monde* and created a firestorm of controversy when she held General Massu personally responsible for her suffering.<sup>48</sup> Aussaresses's memoir appeared a year later attempting to vindicate the use of extreme measures during the war, but the attempted vindication ended only with Aussaresses being fined and stripped of his rank in the Legion of Honor.<sup>49</sup> The entire ordeal highlighted the struggle of the French public to come to terms with the actions perpetrated in their name by the paratroopers during the French-Algerian War. It continues to be a dark period in the nation's history and is seldom debated or spoken of publically, preventing a true understanding of the effect that the decision to employ these measures had on the French government and the

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<sup>48</sup> Patricia M. E. Lorcin, ed., *Algeria and France, 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), x.

<sup>49</sup> Keith B. Richburg, "France Faces Its Demons For Algerian War Brutality," *Washington Post*, May 10, 2001.

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army itself. War heroes such as Germaine Tillion<sup>50</sup>, the aforementioned General Bollardière, and Henri Alleg himself, have struggled to bring the use of torture to the forefront of the debate in France about what place it has in the writing and teaching of French history.

When facing the necessities of a wartime atmosphere, a government that has ordered its soldiers to accomplish its mission at any cost, as well as an individual soldier's personal motivations for achieving victory, the practice of torture, according to Aussaresses, was an inevitable and justifiable course of action in order to defend France and its citizens. As the French government and its soldiers tried to maintain their grip on a colonial empire that was steadily falling into rebellion, these men began to employ more extreme and ruthless tactics in order to halt the spread of this instability. The paratroopers in Algeria had to live up to the grand traditions of the powerful and respected French army of years passed. These young men in their desperation to emulate the successes of their ancestors turned to these extreme measures out of necessity and out of fear of what might become of France should they lose all colonial ties. Extreme measures were justified and deemed necessary not because they were one of many options made available by the government to these men, but because these men saw the extreme wartime measures of torture and execution as the only way to accomplish their mission in Algeria and bring honor back to France.

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<sup>50</sup> Tillion had experienced torture firsthand from the Nazis having been a part of the French Resistance during World War II. A noted ethnologist, she met secretly with Yacef Saâdi during the Battle of Algiers at his request in order to discuss the cessation of indiscriminate hostilities by both sides. She was able to come to an agreement with Saâdi, but when it was proposed to the French government it was rejected. After this Tillion became one of the first people to openly speak out against the use of torture during the war. For more information about Germaine Tillion and her activities during the war see Germaine Tillion, *France and Algeria: Complementary Enemies* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1961) and Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954-1962* (New York: New York Review Of Books, 2006).

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The attempt to justify their actions, however, did not stop the inevitable repercussions that would follow from the usage of such tactics. Germaine Tillion describes the unending circle of violence that extended from the French army's tactics stating that, "Terrorism is the justification of the tortures in some people's eyes. To others, the tortures and executions are the justification of terrorism. It is a vicious circle."<sup>51</sup> The army had not only strengthened and unified their divided enemy through the use of these tactics, but the rifts created between the army and the government and for that matter within the army itself further facilitated the downfall of both institutions and caused panic and chaos in the metropole. Any honor that these men once had was instantly and irreparably tarnished by the use of torture. The French army became not only the harbinger of its own destruction through its use of these ruthless measures, but the destroyer of the France for whom they had fought for so long.

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<sup>51</sup> Germaine Tillion, *France and Algeria: Complementary Enemies*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), 35.









