“ONLY THE DEAD WILL BE INNOCENT”: INTERPRETING COLONIALISM AND VIOLENCE THROUGH CONTEMPORARY FRENCH FILMS ON THE ALGERIAN WAR

by

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In recent years, the Algerian War, long a taboo topic in France, has begun to receive attention in public discourse and mainstream media, including several recent films. In my work, I analyze five contemporary French films' portrayals of the war, asking what these films say about the ways in which violent, oppressive colonial relations harm both the colonizer and the colonized. I engage with the theories of Albert Memmi, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus, and argue that these films simultaneously illustrate and complicate these philosophers' theories of the colonizer as a perpetrator of violence. I argue that these films' graphic portrayals of the degrading effects of violence on colonizers and colonized alike challenge Frantz Fanon's theory of the essential, cathartic, and redeeming role of violence in revolutions. My research contributes uniquely to the growing body of scholarship on the Algerian War, by addressing these films philosophically and revealing how the war continues to inform French identity. My research comes at a pivotal moment as France becomes increasingly involved in the growing conflicts in the Middle East and Northern Africa and is reminded of its colonial history. Finally, my research helps shed light on the effects of systematic oppression and violence on people in the world at large.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> "Citoyen français, je me sens impliqué par tout ce qu'elle fait. Et voilà que ces héros de ma jeunesse se salissent les mains de sang, de boue et de merde… Je ne suis pas un naïf. Je sais la saleté de toute guerre. Mais je crois en quelques valeurs. Et je suis persuadé qu'en salissant les mains, ces hommes jouent contre leur camp."
>
> – Jacques Duquesne, *Pour comprendre la guerre d'Algérie*
>
> "As a French citizen, I feel myself implicated in all that France does. And I saw the heroes of my youth who dirtied their hands with blood, with mud, and with shit… I am not naïve. I know the dirtiness of all wars. But I also believe in certain values. And I am persuaded that by dirtying their hands, these men played against their side."[1]

Origins of this Project

I begin my thesis by introducing this topic, the French colonization of Algeria and the Algerian War, in the same way that I was first introduced to it and proceeded to learn more about it over the following few years.

October 2012

On the screen appears the caption, "Algiers, 1959." Soldiers in military fatigues stand around a thin man, mostly naked, who is sitting slouched over in a chair, dark marks visible on his chest. Although the film is in black and white, it's easy to imagine that the marks are bright, bloody red. More soldiers enter the crowded room, curiously, cramming to get a look at the thin man. A soldier tries to give the man coffee, but he is shaking too much to drink it. A commander walks in authoritatively. "Is it true?" he asks in French. The soldiers confirm and provide the man, who it is clear has just confessed important information under torture, with military fatigues. "We are going to the Casbah now," the commander says to the man, "They won't recognize you in that."

[1] My translation.

The man has given away his friends' hideout, and now is being forced to accompany the French soldiers who go to capture his friends. Slow violin music begins as the camera zooms in to the man's face, showing his wide eyes and tears beginning to leak down his face. Thus opens the 1966 film by Gillo Pontecorvo, *The Battle of Algiers*, which was my first introduction to the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962).

The film was made in the Italian neo-realist style and filmed entirely in black in white. Indeed, the film is so convincingly realistic in its depictions of street protests, of torture, of terrorist bombings, that when it was re-released, it had a disclaimer stating that all of the footage was filmed for the movie, none of it was actual war footage, nor newsreel. This has not stopped certain documentary filmmakers, however, from using clips from the film as though it was primary footage, in their historical documentaries.

The film affected me deeply, not because of its graphic, hyper-realistic portrayal of deeply troubling events, but rather because it was so human. Although profoundly partisan with the Algerian nationalist cause, the film also showed the French soldiers in a human light, and even humanized the French commander Massu, who presided over the incredible horrors of torture and killings of suspected Algerian rebels. The film remained in my thoughts for far longer than most other films I have seen, as I questioned how soldiers could do such terrible things, and whether the equally violent measures of the Algerians were justified by the century of colonization they had endured under the French. It seemed to me that the violence committed only brought about more violence, and that the French soldiers and colonizers, by their presence in Algeria and their maltreatment of the native Algerians, were harming and damaging themselves along with their colonized subjects. I reached no conclusions in my

thoughts, but was convinced, after watching and discussing the film in the context of a Philosophy of Film class which I took fall term of my freshman year of college, that films have the power to raise important philosophical questions, and perhaps to offer answers more convincing than those provided by traditional philosophical texts.

The Algerian War, too, remained on my mind, as I took French classes, and learned about just how vast and how powerful the French Empire was. Algeria was France's first colony of its second, and most powerful Empire, and also, Algeria was France's last colony. The colonization of Algeria, I discovered, was not like France's other colonial projects. And neither was the Algerian War like France's other decolonial wars.

June 2015

It was my very first afternoon at the apartment of my host family in the charming town of Arles, a decidedly Mediterranean town in the far south of France. My host mother, Nathalie, and I were exchanging pleasantries and surface-level getting-to know-you questions when before I knew it, we were discussing challenging topics that I wouldn't have dreamed of broaching on my first day meeting someone. She described how her 14 year-old son, Léo, had faced bullying and discrimination in school because he is half black. French culture, even in the incredibly diverse Mediterranean south, with its significant population of immigrants from Spain, Italy, Maghreb (Northern Africa), and Sub-Saharan Africa, is not always tolerant of difference, she told me.

The conversation turned toward France's colonial history, arguably the primary reason for France's huge immigrant population. And then, suddenly, we were discussing Algeria and the Algerian War. Nathalie told me how Algeria was still a very

delicate and sensitive topic for all French people, particularly the conclusion to France's colonial project there: the long and brutal seven and a half year war. Her father, like countless other French men of his generation, had been drafted to fight in Algeria. He came back, she said, scarred and traumatized by what he had seen, but with a single point of pride about his experiences: he had not killed a single person. And now, she told me, he has Alzheimer's and is quite a burden on her and her mother. However, she said, the best thing about him losing his memory, is that he is finally free of his terrible memories of the war.

Hearing this powerful firsthand account, and realizing how sensitive yet how familiar the Algerian War was to an average French person, I knew certainly that I wanted to continue to study this. Not just the vague, detached, abstract theories of colonialism applied generally to some of the French colonial projects as case studies, but to specifically zero in on this particularly pivotal and violent moment in French history, in which the real events tore apart and challenged all the theories that had been posited up to that point. The war became for me, through that conversation with my host mother Nathalie, no longer simply a topic of history, but a real presence in current French consciousness, and something that I felt deserved further attention.

November 13, 2015

I had already begun in-depth work on my thesis, planning to concentrate on a theme of colonial relationships and how they operate within a dialectical Master-Slave structure akin to the one proposed by G.W.F. Hegel. I knew I would be using films, for I felt compelled to discuss *The Battle of Algiers*, arguably the most well-known and well-respected film on the subject. I considered drawing upon films made during the

height of the colonial period, such as the gangster film *Pépé le Moko*, which orientalizes and exoticizes the Casbah of Algiers.

Taking a break from researching films online, I checked the news. I was shocked to learn that coordinated terrorist attacks had just taken place across Paris, and that hundreds of people were being held hostage in a concert hall in one of the city's most popular, lively *arrondisements*. In the days that followed, the media intensely scrutinized the Paris terrorist attacks, and the number of people killed was officially tallied at 130, 89 of whom were killed at the Bataclan concert hall alone. The world mourned for this massive tragedy in one of the most visited and most beloved cities on earth. The media widely proclaimed that this was the deadliest attack in Paris since World War II. This international announcement that the November 13th attacks were the deadliest surprised me because, through my research, I learned about an attack that historians assert in general agreement, had a much higher victim toll.

On October 17, 1961, approximately 30,000 Algerian immigrants took to the streets of Paris to march in peaceful protest of the curfew that had been imposed on all Algerians in Paris because of the war. Historical accounts vary, but most agree that French police killed over 200 Algerians, many shot and many others pushed into the Seine to drown. The exact number of dead is difficult to verify, because so many Algerian people that night simply disappeared. Additionally, several thousand of the peaceful marchers were arrested and held in terrible conditions for days. Although the French government has officially acknowledged 40 deaths having occurred that day, historians are almost unanimous in agreement that at least 200 people were killed. That

would make the Paris Massacre of 1961, as it is called, the most deadly attack in France since World War II, followed by the Paris Attacks of November 2015 at a close second.

How, and why, could the media have forgotten about October 17, 1961? In my research in the days following the Paris Attacks, I was able to find only a few articles that discussed the apparently forgotten Paris Massacre of 1961.[2] This is not in any way an attempt to minimize the brutality and the pain of the Paris attacks, but rather to point out what I believe is a significant and problematic lapse in French national memory that obscures the suffering caused by the 1961 massacre.

In 2005, a film was released that alludes to the Paris Massacre, titled *Caché*, which translates in English to "hidden." It seemed, as I searched for news articles that acknowledged the Paris Massacre, that the event still indeed remains hidden. Thus, the tragic Paris attacks reaffirmed my growing conviction in the importance of my thesis topic as something that is too little known, too little discussed – even though it is so definitive in French history. I began to think that perhaps the Algerian War itself demanded attention on its own, an event that remains largely hidden, forcefully forgotten, despite the fact that it is so important, so pivotal in French history.

Contemporary Relevance

In recent years, France seems to have overcome the 40 years of silence that followed the end of the war. However, the media reaction to the Paris Attacks of November 13, 2015 reveals that much work remains to be done on remembering and

[2] One such article that offered a compelling analysis of how remembering France's colonial history can help inform the understanding of the what happened in November 2015 was: "The 1961 Massacre that Could Help Us Understand the Paris Attacks" by Manu Saadia for *Fusion.*

discussing the Algerian War. My thesis comes at a pivotal moment, then, as France is in the midst of uncovering and reinterpreting its past.

The scholarly work done on the Algerian War has largely paralleled the way that initial years of work were done on France's Vichy Period during World War II. Namely, it has been largely foreign scholars who have taken up the initial historical work. For example, Robert Paxton, an American historian, was one of the first to shed light on the realities of what occurred in France under the Vichy regime. Later, more French historians began to engage with their past, including scholars such as Henry Rousso who published his seminal work, *The Vichy Syndrome*, in 1987. In this work he coined the phrase "un passé qui ne passe pas" ("a past that doesn't pass"), which could indeed also be aptly applied to describe the Algerian War.

In recent years, French historians, the French government, and the French public as a whole, have increasingly begun to study and publicly remember their past. This arguably began with the high-profile trial of Maurice Papon, which concluded in 1998. At the age of 88, Papon, who was a police prefect in Paris from the 1940s through the 1960s, was brought to trial for having committed crimes against humanity through his involvement with the deportation of Parisian Jews during World War II. Over the course of the trial, news came out that Papon had also been the police prefect in Paris on October 17, 1961. Indeed, it was Papon who gave free reign to his officers to violently suppress the peaceful Algerian protestors. In the end, however, Papon was only convicted of having committed crimes against humanity in his role in the Vichy Government. While he served a few years in jail, he died in 2007 before his sentence

ended. Despite having received no conviction for his involvement in the Paris Massacre of 1961, his trial was a catalyst for bringing the Algerian War back into the public eye.

After Papon's trial, which provoked much public debate, the French government was forced to acknowledge the Algerian War. In 1999, the French government officially recognized for the first time that a "war" had actually taken place in Algeria from 1954 to 1962. Up until then, for nearly forty years, what occurred in Algeria had simply been referred to as "the events" or "the peace-keeping mission."

In the early 2000s, a series of books and articles were published and interviews were given by people who had been involved in the war on both sides, spurring a flurry of heated discussion and debate. For example, past French General Paul Aussaresses (1918-2013) provoked controversy when he began giving interviews in 2000 attesting to his involvement in the war, including his overseeing of torture, for which he expressed no regret. In 2001, he published *The Battle of the Casbah*, in which he again defended the use of torture during the war, receiving much criticism.

Benjamin Stora, born in Algeria in 1950 to a Jewish family who fled to France in 1962, is considered the world's preeminent historian on the Algerian War. Since the 1980s, he has published over 30 books on the French colonial presence in Algeria and the war. As the war has come more into public discussion, he has been widely consulted and interviewed in all matters surrounding it. He has been an advisor to museum curators and a historical consultant for numerous films, in addition to producing his own historical documentary films. In *Gangrene et l'oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (*Gangrene and Oblivion: Memories of the Algerian War*) published in 1992, he provides a definitive history of the events of the war itself and the ways in which it

became the hidden war, “the war without a name” (“La guerre sans nom”), in France. As recently as 2014, Stora has continued to assert in interviews and in articles that the French people have not yet come to terms with the Algerian War, and that much work remains to be done on remembering and acknowledging what happened.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the war, the film *The Battle of Algiers* was screened on national French television for the first time on November 5, 2004. However, Stora notes in his article, “The Battle of Algiers, Censorship, and the Memory Wars,” that the film showing received low audience views and ratings, so that this symbolic event may have had little real impact.

In 2005, a law was passed mandating that French schools teach the “positive effects of colonization” in France’s former colonies, particularly in the Maghreb region of Northern Africa, including Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. This law was heavily lobbied by *pied-noirs*, European settlers who had lived in Algeria and fled to France upon the conclusion of the war, where they were treated largely with indifference. But due to widespread outcry and criticism among the French people and internationally, the law was repealed in 2006. But by that time, apparently still sensitive, not fully healed wounds had been reopened for the *pied-noirs* and their descendants.

More recently, in 2011, France passed its so-called “veil laws” that ban full-face coverings in public places. While this was promoted by the government as further evidence of France’s devotion to secularism, many perceived it as directly targeting France’s large Muslim population, infringing upon their right to religious freedom. This is important because of France’s very large immigrant population, many of who come from France’s past colonies with largely Muslim populations, including Algeria. The

law seemed to be not only religiously but also racially discriminatory against Maghrebi immigrants and their descendants, who have now lived in France for decades.

In 2012, newly elected French President Françoise Hollande made two important official apologies: the first, for the Vel d'Hiv roundup of Paris' Jewish population during World War II, and the second, for the Paris Massacre of October 17, 1961. This marked the first time the event was recognized by a French President.

Additionally, the war has begun to receive more attention in French popular culture in recent years, including in comics, which enjoy great popularity and prominence in France. Jacques Ferrandez, like Benjamin Stora, was born in Algeria in 1955, but fled with his family to France at a young age. He enjoys great popularity for his comics in France, and in recent years has done a series of works on the history of the French colonization of Algeria and particularly the Algerian War, called *Carnets d'Orient*. He has also authored comic book adaptations of philosopher and *pied-noir* Albert Camus' works including the short story, *L'Hôte* (2009), and the novel, *L'Etranger* (2013).

Ferrandez's work was prominently featured in the groundbreaking exhibition on French colonial Algeria and the Algerian War in France's national military museum, La Musée de l'armée at l'Hôtel des invalides in Paris. The exhibition was on display from May to July 2012. It owed the attention it received in France in large part due to Ferrandez's featured involvement in the images he produced for the exhibition. Additionally, the exhibition was a significant moment for the French military in publicly acknowledging its involvement in Algeria, including revealing the violence the army committed such as torture and its use of napalm. This was not an exhibition

celebrating the glory of the French military might, but rather a somber, commemorative exhibition, addressing honestly and openly the reality of what happened.

Of all the ways in which the Algerian War has slowly begun to be addressed in French public discourse, I believe a particularly significant and interesting medium that has been used is film. In the past fifteen years, there has been an outpouring of films that feature the Algerian War. Prior to the mid-2000s, there had been a steady trickle of films, but in the past fifteen years, there has been a significant increase in the number of films made that address the war, either indirectly or directly. Although I focus only on recent five films in this project, there have been several others that have been made between 2005 and today. According to Stora in his article, "The Algerian War: Memory through Cinema," as of 2008, there have been over forty films total made about the war. My own research shows that the number may now be approaching fifty. [3]

The power of films about France's colonial history to effect real change has already been evidenced by Rachid Bouchareb's 2006 blockbuster hit, *Indigènes* (*Days of Glory*). The film tells the story of a regiment of African, including Algerian, soldiers who fought in the French free army and contributed to key moments of liberation during World War II. The end of the film reveals in a markedly politicized message that in France's colonies, native veterans' military pensions were frozen as of the year their nation gained independence from France. Thus, Algerian veterans in the year 2006 were still receiving a pension of the same amount as their pension of 1962, with no adjustment for inflation or cost of living increases.

[3] Some films made in recent years include: *La Trahison* (*The Betrayal*), dir. Philipe Faucon, 2005, which tells the story of a French army unit that includes many Algerian soldiers; *Cartouches Gauloises* (*Summer of '62*), dir. Mehdi Charef, 2007, which follows two young boys, one French and one Algerian, in the final days and aftermath of the war; and *C'était pas la guerre* (*It Wasn't War*), dir. Alexandrine Brisson, 2003, a short film depicting the war through the perspective of a six-year-old French girl.

When then French President Jacques Chirac saw the film, he was moved to announce that something would be done in response to this injustice. When past President Nicholas Sarkozy came into power, he announced that the policy would be changed, and veterans from France's former colonies would have their pensions unfrozen and receive the pensions they are due in today's monetary amounts (Lichfield 2010). It is believed that popular outcry in the weeks following the film's release contributed to the pressure put on the French Presidents to respond. This event shows that films have the power to motivate real change in the world, not only in influencing contemporary public memories and attitudes, but also in effecting real political change.

Purpose and Methodology

In my thesis, I examine the ways that five contemporary French films about the Algerian War raise philosophical questions about how colonial relations damage and disfigure the colonizer along with the colonized, and reveal the irreparable damage that the extreme violence of war inflicts on both the perpetrator of the violence and the victim. The five films I consider each address the war with varying degrees of directness, and from varying perspectives. The films are: *Caché* (*Hidden,* Michael Haneke, 2005), *Mon Colonel* (*The Colonel*, Laurent Herbiet, 2006), *L'Ennemi intime* (*Intimate Enemies*, Florent Emilio Siri, 2007), *Hors-la-loi* (*Outside the Law*, Rachid Bouchareb, 2010), and *Loin des hommes* (*Far From Men*, David Oelhoffen, 2015).

In short, I argue that these films offer an important perspective: colonial relations and the violence of the decolonial war profoundly scarred and damaged the colonizers and the soldiers, along with leaving lasting damage on the colonized and the revolutionaries. I believe that taking into account the harm these films show that results

from an oppressive colonial system and a brutally violent decolonial war can help to explain why the war remains such a sensitive topic that France continues to struggle to cope with today.

These films illustrate, exemplify, challenge, and complicate the theories posited by four canonical decolonial philosophers, each of whom took the colonization of Algeria and the Algerian War as exemplary case studies for their colonial theories: Albert Camus, Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, and Jean-Paul Sartre. I place these films in dialogue with the theories offered by these philosophers, thus showing how films may help contemporary audiences to consider these philosophical questions in new ways, and perhaps come to different answers than the philosophers who watched the events unfold provided. I consider key texts of these philosophers including: Camus' *Algerian Chronicles* (written over the course of 20 years and published in 1958); Fanon's chapter "On Violence" in *The Wretched of the Earth* (published in 1961); Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (published in 1957); Sartre's section on "Racism and Colonialism and Praxis and Progress" from *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* (published in 1960), and his works collected in the volume *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (written over several years, published in 1964). While an enormous quantity of ink has been spilled over these theorists, I focus almost solely on the primary texts by these philosophers rather than the vast body of secondary literature, because I aim to offer my own unique way of reading these philosophers anew, in engagement with contemporary films. I draw upon secondary literature only where I feel it is helpful to explicate or summarize these thinkers' ideas in a manner more efficient and effective than I myself could do.

Just as I for the most part take these philosophers' for what they say themselves, so too do I take the films as independent texts to be read, primarily without considering the possible aims and motivations of the directors and producers behind them. While I do draw upon film reviews, film theory, and scholarly work that have already been done on some of these films, I aim to let the films speak for themselves rather than trying to speculate about the possible intentions or motivations of those involved in the production process. In my conclusion, I discuss aspects of the reception of these films that I deem important for further understanding these films' particular importance, not only philosophically but also socially. The largely negative and indifferent responses to these films, which I address in my conclusion, is particularly telling about how the French public continues to have difficulty facing up to its history.

These films deserve to be seen, and I believe they have the potential to shape public collective memory of the war in productive ways that allow for recognition of past wrongs and the possibility for moving forward. In the continued relative absence of other forms of widespread public dialogue about the Algerian War, I believe that popular media, but especially films, provide a valuable and important avenue for promoting productive discussion. Stora, who has done extensive work on the way the war has been portrayed through various mediums, but especially film, argues in his article, "The Algerian War: Memory through Cinema," that "historians today are affected by what happens in cinema. Not simply a reflection of society, film is a formidable catalyst of memory, which also serves as an essential form of support to observe the traces left by history" (97).

I would further argue that not only are historians "affected by what happens in cinema," but so too are virtually all people, due to cinema's dominating presence among all forms of popular culture (97). Films are cultural artifacts that shape and alter the society that creates them. It is important to consider what these films say about the war to understand what ideas French people today already hold about the war, and what further questions and challenges these films might send out to their audiences.

My philosophical consideration of these films not only reveals that these films have important questions to pose to the people of France, but also that they raise important questions for all people who have been affected by systematic oppression or wartime violence. Unfortunately, I believe that perhaps most everyone in the world has had contact with one or both of these things, even if only indirectly. In completing his seminal work, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Albert Memmi writes that he had initially thought his text would only be applicable and relevant for the people of his native Tunisia and the neighboring nations of Maghreb. In fact, the theories he posited and figures he portrayed brought the book fame around the world. This led Memmi to conclude, "that all the oppressed are alike in some ways" (ix). There are universal elements that can be observed not only in the instance of colonial or wartime oppression, but also in virtually any system of oppression in the world.

I find that these films too, although most of them focus primarily on the specific historical moment of the Algerian War, like Memmi's work with its initially supposed narrow focus, in fact have much to say that is universal about how oppression disfigures the oppressor as surely as it destroys the oppressed, how all people are implicated in oppressive systems and thus all have responsibility to address them, and how all people

involved in violent relations, whether as perpetrators or as victims, are harmed in some way. These films then raise the question of how all people, not only the citizens of France, can respond to these tragic realities of our human condition.

Before I begin my thorough analysis of the films and the philosophical questions they raise, I shall first give in the next chapter a broad overview of the history of French Algeria and the Algerian War so as to situate my later discussions. I follow this with a chapter featuring in-depth summaries of the films to further help contextualize my analysis. Then, the following three chapters form the heart and the bulk of this thesis, including my central arguments surrounding colonial relations, the violence of the war, and the conclusions that can be drawn and the implications of my work.

Chapter 2: Historical Context

The colonization and decolonization of Algeria is unique among the histories of France's colonies. According to Jennifer E. Sessions, Algeria was "the jewel of the French empire and its only colony of large-scale European settlement" (1). Because Algeria was not just another of France's colonies, the Algerian War for independence was not simply just another of the several revolutions that occurred throughout France's colonies in the twenty years following World War II. To understand what made Algeria "the jewel of the French empire," and how Algeria's special status in France's empire contributed to the extreme violence and long duration of the war, I shall briefly discuss the history of the French colonization of Algeria. Then I shall provide historical background information on the war itself, especially emphasizing how, among all of France's decolonial wars in the fifteen years following the end of World War II, the Algerian War was different in important ways. I shall conclude by briefly explaining the aftermath of the war, particularly in Algeria.

The French Colonization of Algeria

The period of colonization began in 1830 with the French invasion and capture of the city of Algiers. The invasion of Algeria had widespread support across all public sectors of France: from the business merchant class, who had already established trading posts in port cities of Algeria and looked forward to the end of Mediterranean piracy as France took control; to the military who were "frustrated by barrack life… [and] saw [Algeria as] the opportunity to relive the Napoleonic era and win enduring military glory" (Evans 9). Indeed, the invasion and colonization of Algeria met with

virtually no public criticism in France, even among the humanist intellectuals, until the mid-20th century as a revolutionary war became visible on the horizon.

The capture of Algiers on July 5, 1830 was met with public celebrations throughout France. The capture of Algiers marked the beginning of France's Second Empire, and its victorious age of massive imperial progress, which continued with little resistance throughout the 19th century. By 1920, the French Colonial Empire was one of the largest in the world, second only to Britain (Evans xi). Algeria occupies a profoundly symbolic place in the history of the French Second Colonial Empire: its conquest in 1830 marked the establishment of France's first colony, and its independence gained in 1962 marked France's last colony lost.[4] Thus, the conquest and the loss of Algeria bookended the whole of France's most powerful imperial period.

The conquest of all of Algeria, however, was not so easy, nor was it quick. At the time of France's invasion, Algeria had been under the rule of the Ottoman Empire for over 300 years, since 1510. While the Ottomans quickly retreated from Algiers, and announced that they would not attempt to challenge France, the French army met with great resistance from the native Muslim Algerians, who fought to defend their land from again being subsumed under a foreign imperial power. Additionally, it was initially unclear to members of the French government what France's ultimate plans for Algeria were, leading to the military being left to its own devices in Algeria (a foreshadowing of

[4] France had already gained and lost several colonies during its First Colonial Empire (1534-1814). These colonies, which included such diverse places as southwestern India, Quebec Province in Canada and much of the modern day United States, and Haiti in the Caribbean, served France primarily as trading outposts and plantation colonies. In contrast, during the Second Colonial Empire (1830-1962), France spread its imperial power much further, and engaged in its *mission civilatrice*; France used its colonies not just for the extraction and trade of natural resources, but also as places to spread its government, culture, and language. It was during this period that large numbers of French settlers moved to the various colonies.

what was to come during the Algerian War for independence, in which the French government again responded with ambivalence to the situation in Algeria and left the military to enforce its own will). In 1834, the new French government decided to annex as an official colony the occupied northern areas of Algeria, to which opportunistic and enterprising colonizers had already begun to immigrate. The violent military conquest was not over though, and endured until 1847, when the Muslim Algerian resistance officially ended with the surrender of the powerful Muslim Algerian war commander, Abd el-Kader.

In 1848, over 100,000 European settlers or *colons* lived in Algeria, not including the French military. Less than half of these *colons* were French. Under France's new and short-lived Second Republic, Algeria as a colonial outpost was no more. The French government divided northern Algeria into three civil departments, Oran in the east, Alger in the center, and Constantine in the west. In 1889, French citizenship was extended to all European *colons*, most of who came from Spain and Italy. Thus, the settler population felt itself grow more unified into a common front with common interests, even as the society continued to be classist and hierarchized (Evans 20). This made Algeria very unique among France's other colonies, as it came to be popularly considered, and was officially and legally decreed, no longer simply a colony but an integral part of France itself.

The society in Algeria was strictly hierarchized, with the wealthiest Christian French *colons* occupying the highest social positions, followed by Italian, Spanish and other European settlers, then by Jewish Europeans, then Jewish Algerians, who were officially offered French citizenship by the Crémieux Decrees of October 1870. Indeed,

Albert Memmi states, “the Jewish population identified as much with the colonizers as with the colonized” (xiv). Memmi continues, “For better or for worse, the Jew found himself one small notch above the Muslim on the pyramid which is the basis of all colonial societies” (xiv). Over time, the Jewish population of Algeria came to identify itself much more with the European colonizers and did not generally resist French colonial rule. Thus there is a distinction made between the Jewish Algerians the Muslim Algerians. From the beginning, it was those permanently relegated to the bottom of this strict hierarchy, the Muslim Algerians, who came from different ethnic groups including Kabyle, Berber, and Arab, who revolted against French rule. Indeed, the Muslim Algerian population was in fact remarkably diverse, and did not have any real sense of national unity prior to the French invasion.

It is arguably and ironically only because of France’s strict stratification of colonial society and imperial project in Algeria that the various Muslim groups began to unite and see themselves in a unified, nationalist sense of all Algerians united against France. Thus, France’s colonization of Algeria was, from its inception, also its own undoing. Evans states, “the result [the imposed social hierarchy] was a society that was deeply divided and deeply unequal, defined by hatred, conflict, and tension. This fault line [between European and Jewish French citizens and non-citizen Muslim Algerians], running right through the history of French Algeria, was to be the major cause of the 1954 to 1962 war” (23).

The French military during the 19th century initiated large-scale confiscation of Algerian tribal lands, which was given to *colons* and to French soldiers after their required military service. The European population grew rapidly in Algeria, and in

1875, the population of a few hundred thousand settlers rejoiced as France's Third Republic's 1875 constitution declared that Algeria would be administered as any other French region under the Ministry of the Interior in Paris.

The French expanded their cultural domination, largely forbidding the speaking of Arabic, and converting mosques into Catholic churches. France claimed its project in Algeria as a *mission civilatrice*, and gradually Frenchified the three major northern Algerian cities, Oran, Algiers, and Constantine, which had the largest concentration of European *colons*. The University of Algiers was established in the capital city, French cafés and businesses flourished, local French language newspapers were published, railroads and modern roads were built, and the land was exploited for agricultural crops and oil, which were traded almost exclusively with France.

The French government in Algeria became increasingly anxious to have more local authority and autonomy, rather than always answering to the governance of the French *métropole* (the mainland, hexagonal France of Europe). Indeed, the *colons* of Algeria began to see themselves as distinct and separate from the French people of France. As generations passed, cultural differences between *colons* and *métropolitan* French grew more and more pronounced. The *colons* came to be known as *pied-noirs*, literally "black feet," a term of uncertain origin that may refer to the black boots of the French soldiers who came to Algeria during the war years. These *pied-noirs* comprised all European settlers and Jewish Algerians, in opposition to the Muslim Algerians, who themselves were becoming a gradually more unified group.

Films such as the gangster film *Pépé le Moko* (1937) perpetuated the image of Algeria as an exotic, foreign land, full of mystery. The film was wildly popular in

France and indeed around the world, leading to a Hollywood remake, *Algiers* (1938), and a musical production. The star of the film, Jean Gabin, was one of the most popular French actors at the time. The film portrayed the Casbah, the Muslim quarter of Algiers, as a particularly mysterious, oriental space, both grotesquely repulsive and fascinatingly seductive. Algeria, and even its European population, was decidedly a different place from the French *métropole,* the film emphasized.

For a time, the European *colons* identified themselves with the settlers of the British thirteen colonies in America (Evans 31). They knew, however, that due to the overwhelming size of the Muslim population, they could not maintain control in Algeria without the *métropole*'s political, military, and economic support. Despite widespread famine during the 1930s, modern infrastructure and medical care helped lead to the skyrocketing of Algeria's native Muslim population under France's rule. By 1960, the Muslim Algerians outnumbered the *pied-noirs*, 9 to 1. The Muslim population numbered nine million compared to the *pied-noir* population of just over one million. Over the years, the situation only grew worse for the Muslim Algerians of all ethnic groups; the famine of the 1930s in particular took a great toll, as the Muslim Algerians were allocated significantly smaller food ration portions per person compared to the European *colons.*

During all the years of France's imperial rule, unrest and resistance among the Muslim Algerians never entirely ceased, with continual small and sporadic uprisings throughout the country. Occasional riots, violent protests, destruction of *colons*' farms, and killings by disenfranchised Algerians ensured that the French military presence

remained constant. The French government used every uprising or small rebellion to justify further repression and confiscation of tribal lands.

The continual confiscation of tribal lands was arguably one of the most significant ways in which the Muslim population became universally disenfranchised and increasingly united against the French. In "Colonialism is a System," Sartre argues that, "the story of Algeria is the progressive concentration of European land ownership at the expense of Algerian ownership" (35). For Sartre, what defined the French colonial project in Algeria more than anything was the takeover of Muslim Algerian tribal lands (followed closely by racism). After the Algerian Revolt of 1871, Sartre states, "hundreds of thousands of hectares were taken from the vanquished [Algerians]" (35). Sartre cites the steady growth of the colonists' territories: in 1850, the colonists owned 115,000 hectares; in 1900 they owned 1,600,000 hectares; in 1950, they owned 2,703,000 hectares (36). Thus, the minority of European colonizers controlled virtually all of the arable land in Algeria.

Additionally, Muslim Algerians continued to be denied rights and protection under law, and were treated as subhuman by their European colonizers. Citizenship was extended to Muslim Algerians only if they agreed to give up their allegiance to Muslim Sharia religious laws. Exceedingly few took up this offer. The denial of full citizenship rights for the Muslim population continued even as Muslim Algerians enlisted and were drafted to fight in the French army in both World War I and World War II. In both wars, approximately 240,000-250,000 Algerian men fought for France in the Allied forces (*Algérie 1830-1962*, Hôtel national des Invalides). The large-scale centennial

celebrations in 1930 throughout Algeria celebrating 100 years of French rule spurred further discontent among Muslim Algerians.

Anti-Semitism swept through Algeria just as it did through Europe, and became virtually as widespread as anti-Muslim sentiment among the European *colons*. The Crémieux Decree that gave French citizenship to Jewish Algerians was revoked with the French Vichy government's alliance with Nazi Germany during World War II. Jews of European and Algerian descent alike were deported to prison camps in Algeria. Muslim Algerians witnessed this fall of France as it was buoyed about by the larger powers of Germany, Britain, and the United States and began to see France no longer as an invincible world power, but rather a nation vulnerable to challenges.

On May 8, 1945, while France was celebrating its liberation and the surrender of Germany, riots and violence broke out in the Constantine region of Algeria, centered around the town of Sétif. In historian Martin Evans' 2011 account, the day began with a parade of some 8,000 Muslim Algerians through the city, under the condition that they were to display no Algerian nationalist banners (86). The Algerians were marching, like the people of France, in celebration of the end of World War II. When French *gendarmes* (police officers) observed a nationalist Algerian flag, they entered the parade to seize it. Shots rang out and at least one Muslim Algerian was killed.

Historical accounts of what precisely occurred in the following days widely vary, reflecting the chaotic nature of the violence that ensued. Evans states that some 102 Europeans were killed in the following three days, and most of the corpses were ritualistically mutilated (86). European military and *colons*' reprisals were harsh. Evans states, "Just how many died has remained an unresolved controversy. At the time

British army sources put the figure at 6,000, three years later the nationalist [Algerian] press would talk of 15,000 to 20,000, while since independence, Algerian estimates have never been less than 45,000" (91). The Sétif Massacre marked an important turning point in Algeria, a prelude to the violence that was to break out again nine years later. It opened an ever wider schism between the European settlers who increasingly dissociated themselves from native Algerians and began to see themselves collectively as *pied-noirs*, and the native Algerians who became increasingly nationalistic, no longer demanding equal treatment with the Europeans and French citizenship, but now expressing a new goal: Algerian independence.

The Algerian War 1954-1962

In the years following World War II, the French military had no rest, as revolutions and rebellions broke out in virtually every French colony across the globe. By 1960, France had granted independence to all its colonies in West Africa including modern-day Ivory Coast, Sudan, Guinea, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. Additionally, all of France's equatorial Africa colonies were granted independence as well, including Chad, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, and Cameroon. And east of Africa, Madagascar successfully gained independence after a violent revolution.

In Asia, France suffered more losses, as upon the conclusion of a particularly sustained and violent revolution, all of its Indochina colonies gained independence including present-day Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia in 1954. Many of the soldiers who fought in this war were conscripts who had also fought in World War II for the Allied forces. And many of the soldiers were from Maghreb: Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. These drafted soldiers, subjects of France's colonial empire themselves, witnessed how

other colonized peoples successfully fought for and won their independence. And when they returned home, the Arab soldiers, despite their loyalty to France, were continually denied citizenship and treated as sub-human. By 1956, both Tunisia and Morocco had won their independence.

Thus, when the Algerian War broke out officially on *Jour Toussaint* (All Saint's Day), November 1, 1954, France was both distracted by the number of other colonies it was losing, and, because of this series of embarrassing losses, was more determined than ever to maintain the "jewel" of its empire: Algeria. Furthermore, for the 1 million European *colons*, many of which had never set foot in Europe, the loss of Algeria was inconceivable, and perceived as an expulsion from their own rightful land. Muslim Algerian nationalists carried out sporadic, seemingly random attacks throughout Algeria, concentrated in the east, and in the capital city of Algiers, shocking the *colons* and the French *métropolitain* government. On November 12, before the National Assembly in Paris, François Mitterrand, the Minister of the Interior, declared: "L'Algérie, c'est la France" – Algeria is France. France's prolonged and brutal fight to keep Algeria is understood better through understanding it as a war that was, for France, just as much symbolic as it was political.

The war lasted for just over seven years, and it was not until after two years of fighting that November 1st began to be seen as the official starting date of the war by Algerian fighters for independence (Evans 117). For France, the "events" in Algeria were never acknowledged as a war at all. Initially, there was little organization, unity, or cooperation on either side. And indeed the complexity of the war and the number of differing interested groups involved makes it impossible to reduce the war to simply

French against Algerians. I shall discuss some of the most important different groups involved in the war and the roles these different groups played.

The Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), which by the end of the war, had grown into the massive and dominant political group that claimed power after independence, began as a very small group of only a couple thousand followers, led by men from rural Algeria. They were largely conservative, and rather than wanting to create a new socialist, egalitarian independent Algeria, they wanted "a return to Arab and Islamic values" and they declared they were "going to cleanse the country of the stain of humiliation through violence" (Evans 120). The FLN demanded absolute support from its members and from the Muslim Algerian people.

Another major group that the FLN overpowered over the course of the war was the Algerian National Movement (MNA), which aimed to work through political channels, such as gaining the right to vote and electing more Muslim Algerians to government positions, in order to gain independence for Algeria. The FLN believed that these methods were useless, and that violence was a much better and more effective way to liberate Algeria, thus leading to violent conflicts between the FLN and the MNA. Significant fighting occurred between these rebel groups, each jostling for power over the Algerian people.

Conflicts and tension grew in Algeria with the Phillipeville Massacre in August 1955. FLN fighters killed over 100 French *colons*, including the elderly, men, women, children, and infants. This garnered greater attention from the French government and public than the events of November 1, 1954, and led to an increased number of soldiers being sent to Algeria on what was officially declared a "peacekeeping mission." In the

reprisal attacks on the FLN and Algerian people by the French army in the weeks following the attack, the French government estimates over 1,000 Algerians were killed, while the FLN counts more than 12,000.

In 1956, the FLN took the fighting to the major cities, and the battle of Algiers began. According to Evans, to call it a battle is a "misnomer," for it was actually a period of prolonged unrest and dramatic, sporadic spurts of violence from 1956 to 1957 in the city of Algiers. Although most of the war's combat occurred in rural Algeria, the battle of Algiers is perhaps the most well-known period of the war, made famous by the film, *The Battle of Algiers*. By 1956, there were over 500,000 soldiers in the French army stationed in Algeria, including the unit of elite army paratroopers stationed in Algiers. In his article, "The Battle of Algiers: Filmic Representation and Historic Truth," Evans notes some of the key moments of violence in the war. For example, the guillotining by the French police of two FLN leaders on June 19, 1956, which spurred 21 separate attacks by the FLN in Algiers, causing the deaths of 10 Europeans.

Following this, in retaliation, the French police placed a bomb in the Casbah on August 10, 1956, an act of extreme violence, which Evans notes killed as many as 70 people. This bombing in turn sparked a more extreme reaction by the FLN on September 30, 1956, in which three women were charged to carry out terrorist bombings in three carefully selected locations in some of the busiest places in the French quarter of Algiers: two popular cafés, the Air France airport terminal. The explosions at the cafés led to 3 killed and over 50 wounded; the bomb at the airport failed to detonate. It was only after another series of three bombings carried out on a single day by three women, on January 26, 1957, that the French army began searching

and interrogating not only male Algerians, but women as well, recognizing their presence within the FLN. Each additional bombing or assassination by the FLN was followed by attacks by the French police or civilians, causing a cycle of violence that endured throughout the battle.

Both the FLN and the French army engaged heavily in torture techniques during this time. Because torture was so prevalent, the FLN ensured that each high-up member only knew the names of just a few other members, so that when the inevitable capture and torture occurred, the rebel would only be able to give away a few other members, whom the FLN could quickly replace. Almost always, after a captured prisoner was tortured, he or she would "disappear," as the French carried out numerous summary executions. The deaths of more high profile FLN figures such as Larbi Ben M'Hidi, were often made to appear to be suicides, when in fact they were executions.

On January 7, 1957, the French government gave essentially free reign to the French army paratroopers in Algiers, serving under the leadership of General Jacques Massau, to use whatever forces necessary to put an end to the violence. Through heavy crackdowns on the native Algerian population in the Casbah and the extensive use of torture, Massau and his unit succeeded in breaking up the FLN organization in Algiers. According to Evans in his aforementioned article on the Battle of Algiers, "Of the Casbah's total population of 80,000, between thirty and forty percent of its active male population was arrested at one stage or another." The so-called Battle of Algiers concluded in October 7, 1957 with the bombing of the hideout of Ali la Pointe, who was the last living leader of the FLN's branch in Algiers. After this, all FLN leadership

operated in exile, directing the organization from neighboring North African countries or from Europe, including from hideouts in France itself.

The war in Algeria was far from over, and continued for the next six years, marked by guerilla warfare in the mountainous rural regions of Algeria to the east and the west. The FLN fighters, many of who came from these rural regions, had the upper hand because they knew the landscape well, and often used caves in the mountains as hideouts. The French army adapted to this, and used a method that had been employed during the original 19th century conquest, known as *enfumades*. *Enfumades* entailed setting large bonfires outside the caves in which the FLN fighters were hiding, thus ensuring all those inside would suffocate from the smoke.

The FLN used campaigns of terror, demanding food and shelter from the rural Algerian villages, already impoverished and living in fear of the French army. Thus, many villagers suffered greatly during this period for they were caught in the crossfire. If the French army discovered a village was helping the FLN, which was usually discovered through torturing villagers, they would regularly raze villages to the ground, setting fire to every home and slaughtering all the livestock to ensure the FLN could no longer use the village. This also almost certainly ensured the deaths of the villagers who lost everything. It was not too uncommon for the French army to massacre entire villages as well. But the villagers also lived in fear of the force of the FLN, for if the rebels discovered they were aiding the French army, the FLN would similarly indiscriminately kill their fellow Muslim Algerians for being traitors, and regularly engaged in torture and massacres of Algerian villagers.

Just as the French army was given free reign to use whatever methods necessary to "pacify" the Algerians during the Battle of Algiers, so too did the government give the commanders of regiments in rural Algeria approval to use whatever force was deemed necessary. The FLN regularly engaged the army in sporadic, small attacks, equally engaging in torture, ritualistic executions, and mutilation of bodies. The French army carried out torture and routine summary executions of Algerian prisoners of war as well. Notably, the French army also used helicopters in rural regions to drop napalm a chemical weapon that had already been declared against international law.

One of the most shocking and troubling ways in which the extreme violence of the Algerian War manifested itself was through the use of torture by both the French army and the FLN, for purposes of gaining information, for punishment, and generally for threatening and asserting power. The French army tortured European colons and Muslim Algerians alike. The FLN too tortured not only French prisoners of war and captives but also other Algerians. According to Jacques Duquesne in his 2003 work, *Pour comprendre la guerre d'Algérie* (*To understand the Algerian War*), in his chapter "Tous tortionnaires?" ("Are we all torturers?"), torture was indeed as widespread, routine, and normalized. Duquesne argues that while, "Hors d'Alger, elle ne fut jamais generalisée. Mais chaque region l'a connue, à une époque ou l'autre" (80). ("Outside Algiers, it [torture] was never as generalized. But each region knew it, at one time or another" [my translation]). While torture reached its extremes during the battle of Algiers, there was not a region in Algeria according to Duquesne that did not at some time or another experience torture at the hands of the French army.

However, Duquesne also emphasizes that non-conventional methods of psychological warfare and acts that would without a doubt be termed crimes against humanity were used in addition to torture in many cases. Duquesne states, "Il faut enfin souligner que la torture n'etait pas evidement la seule forme d'exaction. S'y ajoutaient, notamment, le vol, le viol, les brutalités gratuites, les destructions de bâtiments…" (80). ("It is necessary to underscore that torture was obviously not the only form of exaction. Added to that were notably, theft, rape, gratuitous brutality, destruction of buildings…" [my translation]). In the end, Duquesne emphasizes that although torture did not always manifest itself with electric shocks or waterboarding, it was virtually omnipresent throughout Algeria during the war. According to Duquesne, there was not a single village in Algeria that remained untouched by the war, and that did not have some of its members tortured by either the French army or the FLN. Torture, Duquesne says, was the rule, not the exception (80).

Henri Alleg, a French-born communist journalist who went to Algeria to assist the communist party there, wrote *The Question* about his time being tortured by the French army in El-Biar, a camp outside Algiers in 1957. He secretly wrote the book in prison, detailing all of his experiences including waterboarding, electric shocks, burnings, and overhearing the summary execution of his friend and fellow French communist, Maurice Audin.[5] *The Question* was smuggled out of prison by Alleg's lawyers, and within two weeks of being published in 1958, it sold out 60,000 copies in France. The French government attempted to censor the work, claiming it was

5 Maurice Audin's story is a tragic and unresolved one. While his date of death was confirmed in France and Algeria as June 1957, his body was never recovered. As recently as 2009, his wife put forth a request to the French government to investigate Audin's death, but the government has repeatedly rejected and ignored her and Audin's children's appeals to know what happened to their father.

destructive to France's mission in Algeria (which, of course it was), however a Swiss publisher took up the book and by the end of 1958, historians estimate about 160,000 copies of the book were in circulation in France.

Indeed, the war was much talked about in France, and popular intellectuals and thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), Albert Camus (1913-1960), and Albert Memmi (1920--) all took very public stances on the war. Sartre in particular was outspoken, and regularly gave speeches and published news articles on the war, condemning what seemed to him to be relative French apathy towards the war. Sartre notably supported the violence of the FLN, and thus inspired in part the work of Fanon, who as a French colonized subject from Martinique, championed the cause of colonized peoples throughout the French empire in fighting for their independence. Sartre and Beauvoir, along with other prominent public thinkers created the "Manifesto of the 121," which denounced the actions of France in Algeria and called for Algerian independence. Not all public intellectuals at the time were in agreement with Sartre, however; perhaps Sartre's most important critic was Albert Camus. The two thinkers who had previously been friends had a heated public falling out over their differing political views on Algeria.

Camus, a *pied-noir* of Spanish and French descent who grew up in a working-class mixed-race neighborhood in Algiers, was largely alienated and ignored by both the left-wing French and by the FLN. Camus believed he best understood the situation in Algeria, and passionately called for an immediate ceasefire, roundtable discussions between leaders of all factions, and a unilateral agreement to cease the killings of innocent civilians. Camus argued that European *colons*, who had lived in Algeria for

generations, should be allowed to stay. He believed France should adopt a federated system, somewhat like the system of Switzerland, to govern Algeria. He believed that the ideas of Algerian independence and a removal of all the European *colons* were absurd, for Algeria had never been an independent nation. Thus, he alienated the FLN, and all Algerians fighting for independence, and left-wing French intellectuals such as Sartre and Beauvoir.

Similarly he alienated the right-wing French population because he advocated for equality and full rights of citizenship bestowed on the Muslim Algerians, which the *colons* knew would entirely end their way of life and remove all their privileges. After several years of outspokenness, Camus went silent about the war, feeling that he was only adding to the conflicts among people, even as all he wished was to spare innocent lives and see an end to the war. Camus died in 1960, before the end of the war, so it is impossible to know how he would have reacted to the outcome. Fanon also died before the end of the war, in 1961. Thus one can only imagine what the quintessential advocate of violence as the means to liberation for oppressed peoples would have thought about the war's especially bloody conclusion.

By 1962, almost two million soldiers had served in the French army in Algeria. Many of these soldiers were young conscripts, drafted to fight into France's military that had been decimated in World War II and its other decolonial wars. Many of the commanders in the army were war-hardened veterans who had fought in World War II and Indochina. And many others were *Harkis*, men of Algerian descent who fought alongside the French army. In *La Gangrene et l'oubli*, Stora notes that approximately 263,000 *Harkis* fought in the French army or served in the French civil police forces

during the war. Many *Harkis* had already been members of the French army and been important part of the forces that helped liberate Italy and France at the end of World War II, or had brothers or fathers who had been soldiers, and thus found it natural to continue to fight for France.

An enormous number of people were displaced from their homes or killed during the war. According to Stora, some two million native Algerians were displaced during the war, not counting the permanent displacement of over 1 million *pied-noirs*, comprised of Europeans and Algerian Jews (165). Marianne Arens and Françoise Thull in "Torture in the Algerian War" estimate that during the war, over 25,000 French soldiers were killed and an additional 60,000 were wounded. This does not include the over one thousand European civilians killed in terrorist attacks and by the FLN over the seven and a half years of the war. According to Arens and Thull, approximately 500,000 native Algerians were killed in the war as stated by French official estimates. But, Arens and Thull note, the FLN estimates of native Algerians killed is even higher. According to a 2012 *France 24* article entitled "France Remembers the Algerian War, 50 years on," recent Algerian official estimates have put the Algerian death toll at closer to 1.5 million. Those killed include FLN soldiers, and native Algerian civilians, who were killed by the FLN, the French army, and European settlers' attacks.

The Aftermath

When President Charles De Gaulle was brought back to power in France in 1959, he began working to put an end to the war. Peace talks began in 1961, but independence was not officially declared until the signing of the Evian Accords in spring of 1962. During this time the "*ultras*," European *colons* opposed to

independence, carried out many of their own attacks both in Algeria and in Paris to protest President De Gaulle's actions. The conservative French terrorist group, the Secret Armed Organization (OAS), organized many of these attacks and continued to carry out violent attacks even after the Evian Accords were signed. After votes in France and in Algeria with nearly unanimous support of independence, President De Gaulle declared Algeria officially liberated.

On July 5, 1962, Algeria declared itself an independent nation, with the FLN taking control of its new government. Over the course of the summer, over one million *pied-noirs* including European *colons* and Jewish Algerians, and *Harkis* fled Algeria for France, arriving destitute, having lost and left behind everything. The French public treated the refugees largely with hostility and indifference, and the French government built mass housing projects on the edges of cities for the refugees, leading to further segregation of the refugees from the French. The government was sorely unprepared for the massive wave of refugees.

However, the French army, despite promises to protect the *Harkis* after the war, mostly abandoned them. The FLN carried out a nationwide campaign to exterminate the *Harkis* and their families, leading to mass killings across the new country. Duquesne quotes historians' varying estimates that between 50,000 and 200,000 *Harkis* were killed in the months following the French army's departure (251-2). Duquesne himself offers that the number was probably somewhere around 150,000 (252).

Algeria did not have immediate peace, and within a few years, in 1965 there was a military coup. In the 1980s, riots and protests broke out, leading to a law being passed that for the first time allowed political organizations other than the FLN to form,

although the FLN continues to be the ruling party in Algeria to this day. The country had a violent civil war in the 1990s that included attacks in France and killings of French citizens in Algeria, which may have been part of what led to the Algerian War coming back into French awareness. Today, Algeria is still ruled by the FLN party, and experiencing relative peace in comparison with its neighboring North African and Middle Eastern nations.

As part of the Evian Accords, an amnesty was issued to all soldiers and commanders involved in the war on both sides, thus ensuring that the war was largely not discussed and no trials were held for the war crimes committed. French public opinion was almost entirely distracted from the war within a few years by the outbreak of students and workers' protests in May 1968, virtually ending what little discussion there had been. Despite the length, severity, and toll of the war, it would remain almost completely silenced for the next 30 years.

Chapter 3: Film Summaries

***Caché* (2005)**

Caché (*Hidden*) tells the story of the upper class, well-to-do Laurent family who lives in present day Paris, France: Georges, the protagonist of the film, is a famous host of a popular television show in which he discusses books and culture with intellectual figures; Anne, his wife, is equally a member of the intellectual elite, and has a high-up position in a successful publishing company; and their twelve-year-old son, Pierrot, a talented competitive swimmer who acts like a typical distant, moody adolescent. The film begins when the family's peaceful albeit rather mundane and repetitive life is rudely interrupted when Anne finds a videotape on their doorstep that features over two hours of the outside of their house filmed by an unknown stranger. A sense of unease and tension pervades the film throughout, increased by the fact that the film has many periods of long silence because there is no musical soundtrack. Rather, all the sounds in the film are diegetic, meaning they are produced by people or objects within the film scene. The lack of musical accompaniment accentuates the moments of silence, and the moments of startlingly loud voices engaged in heated discussion.

More tapes arrive, accompanied by childish black and white stick figure drawings splashed with red paint depicting a decapitated rooster and a child with blood spilling from its mouth. Anne begins receiving anonymous phone calls at home, and the Laurents become increasingly concerned. They go to the police, but the police say they can do nothing; there are no laws stopping someone from recording their home. The relationship between Anne and Georges becomes greatly strained when Georges hints

that he has a suspicion of who the recorder and deliverer of the tapes may be, but refuses to disclose to Anne who he suspects.

Georges pays a visit to his elderly, ailing mother, who still lives at the country estate that was Georges' childhood home. He discusses his childhood with her and brings up Majid, whom the film reveals is the son of two Algerian immigrants who worked as servants for Georges' parents at the estate when Georges and Majid were young. Majid was a few years older than Georges, and it seems that the two did not get along well. Initially, Georges' mother appears to struggle to remember Majid or his parents, for it has been so long. Then she reveals that she wanted to forget – it was too painful of a memory. The film gradually becomes clearer in showing that Georges suspects that Majid is the sender of the disturbing tapes, although it does not at first explain what the painful memory concerning Majid is.

Georges has a disturbing nightmare that is perhaps also a flashback of his childhood. A young Algerian boy, whom the film implies is Majid, chops the head off of a rooster with an axe. The film shows the blood splatter into Majid's eyes and across his face. A six-year-old Georges cowers in the shadows, watching transfixed at the body of the rooster that continues to flap its wings and flail around the courtyard, spraying blood. Then Majid, still holding the axe, turns and advances slowly towards Georges. When Georges awakens from the nightmare, he is shaking and traumatized.

Soon after, a tape arrives that Georges guesses reveals directions to Majid's home. Georges goes to visit Majid at his humble apartment in a suburb of Paris. Immediately Georges accuses Majid of sending the tapes, but Majid appears completely surprised to see Georges, and denies having had any knowledge of the tapes. Anne

demands more information from Georges, but he refuses to say more. Then a tape arrives at the Laurents' home that Anne watches alone: it is the recording of Georges' antagonistic and threatening encounter with Majid. Anne becomes very upset to learn about this relationship of which Georges has told her nothing. This same tape is also sent to Georges' boss at work, and Georges attempts to explain it away, labeling Majid as a deranged and troubled man, seeking revenge for an imagined past wrong, an explanation that the boss accepts – although he encourages Georges to be careful, for he wouldn't want to ruin his own, or the television company's, reputations.

When Pierrot goes missing, Anne and Georges immediately suspect Majid, and believe Pierrot's disappearance to be linked to the tapes. Georges goes with police to arrest Majid, and discovers that Majid has a son, who is never named. Both Majid and his son are arrested, but the film reveals that because the police can find no evidence to implicate them, they will be released the next day. A friend's mother brings Pierrot back the next morning; she had thought Pierrot had let his parents know he was there. Pierrot is moody and distant and refuses to talk to his anxious parents.

Georges receives a call at work from Majid, and returns to Majid's apartment for a third time, expecting that Majid will finally confess to creating the tapes. Instead, Majid commits suicide by violently slitting his throat, spraying blood across his apartment wall. Georges returns home shaken, but in speaking with Anne, refuses to take any responsibility or feel any guilt for Majid's death. Soon after, Majid's son appears at Georges' work and demands to speak with him. Georges again maintains that he feels no remorse and does not consider himself responsible.

Yet, after Majid's son leaves, Georges goes home from work and to bed; the film reveals that he is indeed troubled. When Georges goes into a drug-induced sleep, the film again shows a dream-flashback that depicts Majid's violent, traumatic removal by social workers from Georges' home. By this point, the viewer has learned that Majid's parents, who were respected by Georges' parents, were killed in the Paris Massacre on October 17, 1961. Georges' parents planned to adopt Majid, but Georges told them that Majid had threatened him with the axe, so they decide to send him away.

In the final scene of the film, we see Majid's son and Pierrot unexpectedly meet up for the first and only time in the film. We cannot overhear their conversation, and they are not the central focus in the shot, however, the film makes clear that they know each other. The film ends without ever resolving who was the sender of the tapes.

***Mon Colonel* (2006)**

Mon Colonel (The Colonel) tells the story of the young lieutenant, Guy Rossi. The film has the structure of a framed story as a whodunit murder mystery, and in the flashback-style scenes that comprise the majority of the film and follow Lieutenant Rossi, has elements of a more traditional war film. The film opens in modern day Paris, with the assassination of a retired war colonel, Colonel Duplan, who carried out a mission in the city of St. Arnaud during the Algerian War. The primary mystery of the film is who the assassin is, and what his motives were for killing Duplan.

Modern day French Army Lieutenant Galois is assigned to investigate the case, and to read through the photocopied pages of journal entries that are mysteriously arriving to the army office. These entries were written by Rossi during the Algerian War when he was stationed in St. Arnaud, serving under Colonel Duplan. Though

Rossi's story is the primary focus of the film, all the scenes depicting the historical events at St. Arnaud are in black in white. The modern day scenes, in contrast, are in color. They show Galois reading the journals, reporting to her superiors, and engaging in interviews with the Parisian police and various aged, but still living figures who appear in Rossi's journal. At the very end of the film, when Galois reaches the end of the final page of Rossi's journal, we discover that the journal was written to his father. Galois goes to investigate, and Rossi's father admits to having killed Duplan, to exact revenge for the loss of his son during the war.

Rossi is a young lieutenant who impulsively signs up for duty in the war in 1955, and is assigned to the town of St. Arnaud in rural Algeria to serve as an army lawyer under the experienced and aged Colonel Duplan. Rossi, who arrives in Algeria believing he will be helping the French army carry out a peace-keeping mission, quickly becomes disenchanted and increasingly dismayed and disturbed to see the reality of the soldiers' lives. The French *colons* in the town are only able to maintain some semblance of normalcy because of the powerful military presence. For example, a "picnic" is planned, carefully monitored by army forces to allow the *colons* an outing outside the town. Rossi is surprised to see that the local Muslim Algerians who have been invited in a symbolic gesture of friendship all refuse to partake, instead leaving in silent protest.

Rossi quickly becomes involved in exerting the army's authority over the local civilian and police authorities, and leads a project to take a census in which every resident of the town is identified and documented, so that they may be monitored to keep them from assisting the FLN rebel fighters. Initially, Rossi shows signs of compassion for the Algerian locals, for example, intervening to reprimand a sergeant for

treating the Algerian women too harshly in forcing them to take their veils off during the process of photo documenting the residents. However, he soon becomes hardened by the war and powerless to do anything besides obey the orders of the colonel, whom Rossi grows to respect, fear, and despise all at once.

Rossi participates in breaking a strike attempted by local Muslim Algerians in support of the FLN's demand for a nationwide strike. He grows more hardened when he spends his first few months of active duty in the mountain regions, and his first friend, Sergeant Schmelk, is killed by FLN rebels. However, Rossi still responds with some dissent to the Colonel's decision to display the bloodied corpses of several FLN rebels in the town square as a reprisal for the killing of Schmelk and the other soldiers.

Rossi grows gradually accustomed to his duties, engaging in late night round ups and intimidation of local Algerian men, until his routine is shaken when he meets a local schoolteacher, René Ascencio, whose school the French army is taking over as it expands its base. Ascencio offers a challenge to Rossi's still strong belief in the value of the French army's presence in Algeria, and encourages Rossi to get to know the local Muslim population better, and to read *La Peste* (*The Plague*) by Camus, who, Ascencio tells Rossi, is considered a traitor by the French.

Then suddenly, Rossi's military life, which had begun to take on some stability, is thrown into chaos when FLN fighters set off bombs at a local public celebration in the town square. Rossi witnesses several French *colons* rush to attack a helpless, elderly Muslim Algerian man and trample him to death in an act of vengeance and hatred. Rossi's newfound friend Ascencio is also injured, losing an arm in the bombing. Rossi becomes increasingly conflicted and begins for the first time to take part in more

forceful interrogations of local Muslim Algerians, which quickly devolve into torture. Rossi serves as the secretary and scribe, recording the confessions given by the tortured.

Inadvertently, Rossi helps the Colonel to establish the practice of public summary executions, and Rossi becomes increasingly despairing and feels powerless. The Colonel gives Rossi a week's leave, which he spends with Ascencio in the large city of Constantine. Rossi tells Ascencio about all the military operations that have been occurring, including all of the Colonel's plans for future military operations. Soon after Rossi returns, the Colonel reveal to Rossi that recently tortured prisoners had revealed Ascencio to be an informer, helping the FLN plan their attacks. The Colonel gives Rossi two options: to maintain his position and feed Ascencio strategic information from the French army to help them fight against the FLN; or to commit suicide or be killed for his treasonous sharing of military secrets.

Rossi spends the following day considering his options, wandering through St. Arnaud. Just after he passes by a French café, chatting with some young women sitting outside, a bomb planted by the FLN goes off. One of the women is killed, the other two badly wounded. Rossi remains resolute and the film shows him signing off his final journal entry to his father, and marching down the hallway to the Colonel's office. Rossi will be summarily executed, the film implies, although it never shows it.

***L'Ennemi intime* (2007)**

L'Ennemi intime (*Intimate Enemies*) is in the style of a traditional Hollywood war film. It is set in 1959 in the rural, mountainous Kabylia region of Algeria. Lieutenant Terrien, an inexperienced soldier who has not seen war before, is assigned to replace Lieutenant Constantin, who was killed accidentally by friendly fire on his final

day of duty. Lieutenant Terrien is assisted by war-weary Sergeant Dougnac, who has been hardened by his time in Algeria, and before that, his time serving in Indochina. The soldiers under Terrien's command are for the most part young French conscripts, some who look to practically still be teenagers, and many *Harkis* who willingly signed up to fight alongside the French in their homeland territory.

Terrien is tasked by headquarters with finding a rebel leader, Slimane, whom the film never shows, and who was a French army veteran himself having fought in World War II. The film shows Terrien growing increasingly distressed by the events of the war as they unfold before him, and the film depicts a litany of some of the worst and most violent aspects of the war that befall Terrien and his troops. Early into Terrien's time, every resident except for one young boy, Amar, in the small Algerian village under Terrien's troops' supervision, is brutally massacred by the elusive *fellaghas* (FLN rebel fighters). Terrien and his troops take Amar in, and despite his youth, welcome him as a soldier with his own camouflaged uniform and gun. Later, Terrien's troops are caught in an impossible gunfight with *fellagha* fighters. When the troops call in for help, the military control sends helicopters, which drop napalm on the rebels.

Terrien initially refuses to participate in torture and tries to maintain composure and calm in the face of the brutality he confronts. He adamantly refuses to carry out a summary execution of an Algerian prisoner of war, and accepts his commander reporting him for his disobedience. Soon, though, he begins to grow weary and distressed at his inability to resist orders for torture to be carried out at his base, or for the summary executions of captured Algerian rebel prisoners. Terrien has a key conversation with his superior, Captain Berthaut, who had once been a victim of torture

himself at the hands of the Nazis during World War II, but who now has no qualms about torturing captured Algerians. Terrien maintains that torture is unacceptable in any situation, but Berthaut reassures Terrien that after he has spent more time in Algeria, he too will come around and see the necessity of the French army's brutal measures. Dougnac too becomes increasingly drawn and troubled by the events that occur under his command, and the film shows his gradual degradation, to the point where he orders a fellow soldier, a *Harki* named Sayeed, to torture him with electrical shocks.

When Berthaut and two young wounded French soldiers whom he is evacuating are brutally attacked, murdered, and their corpses mutilated by FLN fighters, the film reveals Terrien become angry and desperate. The commander and Terrien respond with an act of bitter and vicious reprisal, sending the troops to burn down a nearby Algerian village and machine gun every resident, who are primarily the elderly, women, and children. This scene shows the vicious turn the war has taken on Terrien, who at the beginning condemned the *fellaghas* for their massacre of Algerian villagers, while now he and his troops have done the same.

Terrien, hardened and clearly changed by the war now follows orders with no resistance to summarily execute an Algerian rebel prisoner. He goes home to Grenoble, France on leave for the winter holidays, but the film implies that he does not ever make contact with his family when he is in France. He drives slowly past a young boy, his son, playing pretend soldiers, pretending to shoot and to kill, with another young child. Previously he had seemed proud of his family, but now it seems he cannot bring himself to see them. The irony of his young son treating war as a game is not lost on Terrien. He goes to a movie theater, where he becomes disgusted upon watching a propaganda

newsreel proclaiming the pacifying efforts in Algeria and the peaceful relations between the French and the Algerians. The film implies he cuts his leave from the military short, as he is back in Algeria in time to celebrate Christmas with his troops.

In the end, Dougnac deserts the army, and Terrien is killed by a group of *fellaghas* when he goes out alone to search for Dougnac. Amar, the young boy whom Terrien had taken in, had run away and joined the rebels, and the film implies that it is Amar, who has traded his French soldier's cap for an Algerian fellagha's turban, who fired the shot that kills Terrien. The film's final shots show Dougnac riding away on a bus with Algerian peasants, relaying in a voiceover that it was good that Terrien died when he did, that "he got the bullet he had been searching for." For, Dougnac says, Terrien never would have been able to accept the man he would have become.

***Hors-la-loi* (2010)**

Hors-la-loi (*Outside the Law*) tells the story of the Algerian War from the side of three Algerian brothers, each of who takes a slightly different political position in regards to the war. The film begins by showing the dispossession of the three brothers and their family as French officials removed them from their land in 1925. The film then skips ahead 20 years, to show original footage of the French celebrations on May 8, 1945 after Nazi Germany capitulated at the end of World War II. Then the film returns back to Algeria, to the town of Sétif, where the three brothers, Said, Messaoud, and Abdelkader, all now grown men, live with their family. The film depicts the Sétif Massacre, and shows that the brothers' father and two sisters are all killed.

Abdelkader, the most politically involved of the brothers is arrested for his political activity and imprisoned in France. Messaoud is drafted into the French

military, and gone for many years. The film shows him fighting and taken as a prisoner of war in Indochina. Said, meanwhile, stays with his grieving mother, and the two move to the Algerian shantytown outside Paris to be closer to Abdelkader and to escape the increasing violence in Algeria. Said earns a living for himself and his mother through work as a pimp, which disgusts his mother but enables them to survive. Soon it is 1956 and Messaoud comes to be reunited with his family in Paris, released from his military service. Soon after, Abdelkader is released from prison, and the brothers are united again with their mother. Despite their squalid living conditions, the mother is happy and makes plans for Messaoud, the oldest, to be married to a young Algerian woman who has been helping the mother take care of the home.

Abdelkader, undeterred in his political activities with the FLN despite his long stay in jail, immediately begins making plans with Messaoud upon his release to rally support among the Parisian Algerians to protest France's presence in Algeria. Messaoud is inspired by the victory of the Vietnamese over the French army, and agrees to help Abdelkader. Said, however, is much more reluctant, instead wanting to build a comfortable life for himself in Paris, dreaming of restarting the boxing-gambling business he had in Sétif. Messaoud and Abdelkader work in a factory along with the other Algerian immigrants, and begin to encourage unrest and protest among the workers. They meet resistance in the slums, however, from Algerian members of the MNA or the Algerian National Movement, who are fighting the FLN for power as the authoritative leader of the Algerian resistance. They kill a local important supporter of the MNA, working to gain unilateral power for the FLN in Paris.

A police raid interrupts Messaoud's wedding and Messaoud becomes upset with Abdelkader for bringing his political activism into their intimate family life. Abdelkader uses the moment of confusion to give a speech to the frightened immigrants, attempting to rally them to his cause. Despite his misgivings, Messaoud continues to work alongside Abdelkader, and they form alliances with others and soon establish a functioning branch of the FLN, aided by some local native French people with collecting money that they raise to support the FLN fighters in Algeria. Messaoud continues to carry out murders of local Algerians who refuse to help the FLN, or who break rules or evade paying their required dues.

Then the film returns to Said, whom is now a successful business owner of large burlesque club called "The Casbah." He is also back in the boxing business and training a young Algerian man whom he hopes will compete for France in the championships. Said refuses his brothers' demands that he engage in their political activities with the FLN, not wanting to risk losing the new life he has worked so hard to create for himself.

Tension in the film grows as Abdelkader and Messaoud recruit new supporters among the Algerians, and carry out a significant attack in which they kill several police officers in a Paris police station. The film draws clear parallels between the FLN rebels in Paris and the French Resistance fighters of World War II. The police become aware of the activities of Abdelkader and Messaoud and attempt to track them down, nearly killing Abdelkader when a bomb explodes in a car he was about to get into, killing the French woman who had been helping him, but leaving him unharmed.

A year later, Abdelkader and Messaoud have gained power in the FLN network operating in Europe and are now in Germany, training Algerian men to go to France and

create havoc however they can, to draw the French people's attention to the plight of the Algerian people. The film's climax comes in a dramatic gunfight between the two brothers and French police forces that have at last tracked them down in France. Messaoud is fatally wounded, and Said arrives in a car at the last second to drive his brothers out of the fight.

The film returns to Paris in October 1961. The night of Said's boxing match championship is also the night of an important peaceful demonstration of thousands of Algerians throughout Paris that Abdelkader has helped organize. To prevent the match from happening, Abdelkader intentionally injures Said's prize boxer. The two brothers flee the police, who have recognized Abdelkader and escape on the subway. When they arrive at the next stop, however, they are drawn into the bloody riots that are occurring, as riot police attack the protesting Algerians. Abdelkader is quickly shot and killed, and Said is the only brother to survive to the end of the film.

The film ends in a parallel sequence to how it began, with images showing original footage of the parades in Algeria on the official day of independence, July 5, 1962, thus coming full circle in its parallel of the FLN Algerian resistance with the French resistance of World War II.

***Loin des hommes* (2015)**

The film, *Loin des hommes* (*Far From Men*), an adaptation of Albert Camus' 1957 short story "L'hôte," which means in French both "the host" and "the guest," regards the figures of both the colonizer and the colonized with an ambiguous gaze. The film takes up the question of the possibility of a third figure within the colony, neither colonizer nor colonized, as posed by Sartre and the question of a "colonist of good will"

as raised by Memmi. The film questions the ambiguous position of a well-meaning colonizer within the context of the gradually decaying colonial society in Algeria.

Daru, the protagonist, is a schoolteacher living in the mountainous countryside of Algeria in 1954, bestowing knowledge of the French language and rations of food to his poor, peasant Algerian pupils. Yet his life, which seems so removed from the developing conflicts of the large cities, is brutally interrupted when a fellow colonizer drags an Algerian man, hands tied, to Daru's schoolhouse. The rural *colons* are struggling to keep order, so Daru receives the task of transporting the man to the nearest city, Tinguit, so that the man may be executed for his crime – killing his cousin.

Daru initially vehemently refuses to take the man, whom he later learns is called Mohamed. The next morning, however, members of Mohamed's tribe arrive and demand of Daru that he release Mohamed to them, so that Mohamed may be brought to justice. They engage in a brief shooting match, and eventually Daru drives them off, when he sees the incredible fear of Mohamed and his refusal to be left to the brutal tribal justice. Soon after, the rural *colons* arrive at the schoolhouse, demanding again of Daru that he release Mohamed, this time to them, so that they may kill him in reprisal for the recent decimation of one of the rancher's entire herd. These two run-ins, first with the Algerians and then with the *colons* foreshadow what befalls Daru and Mohamed, as he finally agrees to take him to Tinguit.

Daru and Mohamed travel through the rugged terrain, staying off paths to avoid detection both by French soldiers and roaming vigilantes, and by Algerian resistance fighters and Mohamed's family, searching for him in hopes of revenge. Ultimately, the two are kidnapped first by Algerian resistance fighters, and then after a brief, but bloody

battle that hints at the larger conflict beginning to erupt across the nation, the victorious French soldiers take them captive. Daru's intentions remain vaguely ambiguous throughout the film, as he continuously urges Mohamed to escape towards freedom, yet still leads him on towards Tinguit and certain death at the hands of the unequivocally oppressive French colonial law.

Eventually the two are left alone again to finish their journey. They soon arrive at a crossroads. With Tinguit in sight, Daru washes his hands of his obligation, and turns his back on Mohamed, leaving him the choice to go on towards Tinguit or to turn away to find welcome with the nomadic Algerian tribes dwelling in the desert. When Daru looks back, Mohamed has turned towards the desert and, presumably, freedom. The film ends with Daru announcing to his students that it is his final day teaching; that he will be leaving Algeria is clear, but where he will go remains ambiguous.

The film never resolves the ambiguous positions of Daru and Mohamed within the context of French colonial society. While the title of Camus' original story, *L'hôte* emphasizes particularly the ambiguous and complex relationship *between* the two men, the one the colonizer and the other the colonized, the title of the film, *Far From Men* expresses the film's focus on the similar position of both Daru and Mohamed, in relation to the others, both colonizer and colonized, surrounding them. Daru and Mohamed are far, in the sense that they are both significantly alienated from their supposed communities. And yet, throughout the film, there is a growing sense of the world closing in around them, the violent forces drawing nearer, and the moment of truth demanding that they choose sides. Indeed, the whole film seems to emphasize the similarity between the two men in their position of isolation and alienation.

Chapter 4: The Violence of Colonial Relations

> "Oppression is the greatest calamity of humanity. It diverts and pollutes the best energies of man – of oppressed and oppressor alike. For if colonization destroys the colonized, it also rots the colonizer."
>
> – Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*

Introduction

This chapter discusses the inherent violence necessarily within colonial relations and how, as Memmi writes above, colonial relations damage the colonizer along with damaging the colonized. I shall begin by exploring the ways in which two films, *Caché* and *Hors-la-loi* illustrate the theories of Memmi and Sartre about the structure of colonial relations. I shall discuss how Sartre, Memmi, and Fanon's understandings of the colonial system as based fundamentally upon economic exploitation, dispossession of property, and racism are illustrated effectively by the opening scenes of the film *Hors-la-loi*, and the film *Caché*. By opening the film with a scene of the Algerian family being ordered off their land by the French authorities, *Hors-la-loi* establishes this dispossession of ancestral family land as the cause for all the violence that follows, including eventually the revolution itself. The dispossession is the founding moment of colonial relations, which the film reveals to be the catalyst that later motivated the war itself. *Caché* similarly operates around a historic forceful removal from home of a young immigrant Algerian boy, setting up this childhood tragic dispossession and loss of home as the defining moment that established the unequal colonial relationship.

Next, I shall show how two films, *Caché* (2005) and *Loin des hommes* (2015) powerfully illustrate the complexity of colonial relations and that the colonial structure, as Memmi asserts, damages and "rots" the colonizer. The two films, however, also

complicate the figure of the colonizer as Memmi and Sartre understand him: *Caché* by exporting the colonial situation into the modern day, and thus showing how oppressive neocolonial relations, based on economic inequality and racist ideology, still exist at present; and *Loin des hommes* by featuring as its protagonist a colonizer who arguably suffers from the colonial system more than he benefits from it. Both these two films also show the fragility and foundational instability of the colonial system, which established itself and must sustain itself through repeated violence against the colonized for the benefit of the colonizer.

And finally, I discuss how *Caché* and *Loin des hommes* diverge in their endings in response to a question of post-colonial resolution, and whether or not some kind of understanding can be reached between colonizer and colonized in ending the colonial system. *Caché,* I argue, subtly suggests the possibility of resolution, not for the generation who lived through the atrocities, but for the younger generation of today's youth. In contrast, *Loin des hommes* suggests that the violence of colonialism leads to an irreparable, incommensurable divide that perhaps can never be traversed nor healed.

The Structure of Colonial Relations

For Memmi and Sartre, economic gain is at the root of any colonial endeavor. Memmi writes, "for me, the economic aspect of colonialism is fundamental… the profit motive in [colonization] is basic… the deprivations of the colonized are almost the direct result of the advantages secured to the colonizer" (xii). Economic gain is the primary reason why nations such as France, they argue, choose to establish colonies. And economic exploitation is one of the main ways that oppression manifests itself in the colonial system. Memmi states, "privilege is at the heart of the colonial relationship

– and that privilege is undoubtedly economic" (xii). Colonization appears foremost a system of economic exploitation of the resources of their colony, including both natural resources and human resources in the form of workers and laborers, supplied by the native colonized peoples.

Power and privilege in the colonies directly corresponds with land ownership, which is particularly important because, as Sartre explains, by the time the French arrived in Algeria in 1830, the natives had already cultivated "all the good land." For Sartre, "the story of Algeria is the progressive concentration of European land ownership at the expense of Algerian land ownership" (714). The dispossession of the Algerians of their land was thus the initial way that the French colonizers "destroyed feudal structures" and traditional cultures and societal structures in Algeria, that had been centered around communal and tribal land ownership (Sartre 715). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon argues, "for a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity" (9). Thus, to remove the native Algerians from their homeland was to fundamentally deprive them not only of their means of physical livelihood, their "bread," but also of their most basic human dignity.

However, importantly, something deeper exists that fuels the colonial system of economic exploitation: racism. For it is only through racism, through seeing the native colonized peoples as subhuman and lesser, that the colonizers attempt to justify their extreme maltreatment and exploitation of the colonized. If the colonized are subhuman, then they do not need nor deserve to be extended the rights given to other humans, as the logic would go. Memmi states, that the privilege "at the heart of the colonial

relationship" is "not solely economic" and that "the daily humiliation of the colonized, his objective subjugation, are not merely economic. Even the poorest colonizer thought himself to be – and actually was – superior to the colonized" (xii). Thus, it was not only socio-economic status that differentiated the colonizers from the colonized, but even more fundamentally, it was racial difference.

Indeed, in *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* Sartre argues that the dispossession of the Algerians of their land was simply the material manifestation of racism: "this violence, this cruelty towards Algerian tribes and the systematic operations which aimed at taking over their land, was itself no more than an expression of a still abstract racism" (714). Like Sartre and Memmi, Fanon too views the close interdependency between the three basic aspects of colonial relations: dispossession of land, economic exploitation, and racism. Fanon writes,

> "What divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to. In the colonies the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure. The cause is effect: You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich." (5)

While for the three thinkers, racism and perceived racial differences underlined all aspects of colonial relations, the manifestation and expression of this racism was through economic exploitation and inequality. And the first violent act of the colonizers in the colony to establish this system of exploitation was to dispossess the Muslim Algerians of their land. Thus, each of these three elements were interconnected.

The film *Hors-la-loi* powerfully illustrates the damaging nature of the dispossession of the native Algerian people of their land. The film opens with a scene that shows the poor Muslim Algerian family being ordered off their ancestral family farm. By opening with this scene, the film sets up this first act that the three

protagonists, Messaoud, Abdelkader, and Said, experience with the French colonizers, as the fundamental, original injustice that informs and motivates all the rest of the men's actions, including their decisions to involve themselves in the Algerian War. The dispossession of the Algerians of their land was the first wrong the protagonists experienced, while still young boys. The film makes a strong statement by showing this scene first, as the archetypal representation of what colonial relations meant, and thus illustrates Sartre's understanding of the situation as resting on this economic exploitation and dispossession of land.

The film opens with a long shot, showing a boy, Messaoud, bent over in a field, dry, powdery light brown soil in his hands. The color scheme is entirely light brown and gold; everything looks dried out, the grass brittle and close to dead. "Algeria 1925" appears on the screen, situating the audience.

In the distance, Messaoud sees an Algerian man and two French gendarmes approaching on the road. He runs to alert his family, and they all stand, his father, mother, the three brothers, and two sisters, to meet the arrivals. The Algerian man informs the father, "I have a court order. This land belongs to Mr. Guerini, your neighbor." The father is shocked and indignant when the Algerian man, a local officer appointed by the French, demands to see documents. "What documents?" the father

asks, “We’ve never had them. My ancestors gave me this land. We have always lived here.” The film emphasizes the watchful presence of the three boys during this exchange, as they stand on either side of their father.

The Algerian officer is expressionless as he informs the family they have three days to pack up and move out. The Algerian officer abruptly turns and leaves, followed by the French *gendarmes* (police officers) who do not speak a word during the scene. The film illustrates how the French imposed their control not always directly, but also indirectly, through recruiting select Algerians to work as minor civil servants for them. It is important that the French *gendarmes* do not speak, that it is the local Algerian officer, grandiose and almost pompous with his authority in his mixed dress – turban and cape, with a western-style white suit – who carries out the exchange.

The French are an abstract, faceless enemy, pitting the Algerians against each other. Sartre explains that “repressive practices, the policy of division and above all dispossession soon destroyed feudal structures and transformed this… structured society into an ‘atomized crowd’… and this new… form of Muslim society is a real expression of violence” (715). The Algerians were divided, atomized, by the French colonizers, who often acted through Algerians themselves, as shown in this opening scene. By breaking up tribal and familial land ownership to private, capitalistic land

ownership, the French colonizers also successfully broke up the community relationships and culture that was focused around this communal land ownership.

The French colonizers' selecting of a native Muslim Algerian to carry out the "dirty work" of announcing the eviction to those who most likely were past neighbors further caused strife within communities. Fanon argues, "in the colonies, the official, legitimate agent, the spokesperson for the colonizer and the regime of oppression, is the police officer or the soldier" (3). However, the *gendarmes*, the French police officers who would be Fanon's spokespeople for the colonizers, are silent and passive in this scene. Instead, the spokesperson for the oppressive French power is a carefully selected Algerian. Being dispossessed of the family land thus becomes an act of even more profound betrayal and violence because it comes at the hands of a fellow Algerian, even if he is only acting as a puppet for the French regime. Thus, while this opening scene of *Hors-la-loi* exemplifies the dispossession of the Muslim Algerian people from their land as the first manifestation of the violence of colonial relations, it is also important because it reveals the additional, more insidious way in which the French also worked to break up and divide the colonized: by electing certain of the colonized to positions of apparent power and charging them with the tasks of implementing French colonial rule.

The film emphasizes the severity of what this displacement means for the family in the series of short scenes leading up to the family's mournful departure. The mother cries and an extreme close up shot shows her hands collecting the dusty dirt into a handkerchief. This is at once a gesture of political defiance of holding onto a symbolic piece of what has wrongly been taken away, and a spiritual gesture as she mourns about not being able to be buried on her ancestral homeland. The father speaks to the son Abdelkader, telling him he will no longer be able to attend school, even though Abdelkader protests that he is one of the best students. The father explains they will no longer have the money to afford it. This reveals the loss of land is not only a forced break with past culture and tradition, but also a loss of future possibilities.

Thus, the meaning of the dispossession of their land is not only an economic loss of their livelihoods, but also a much deeper, spiritual, ancestral loss of their homeland, an utter dispossession of what is most important in their lives. The racism of the colonizers is reflected in their lack of concern for not only the economic livelihood of the colonized, but also in their utter disregard for the traditions and cultures of the Muslim Algerians. Even Sartre, who champions the cause of the FLN and Algerian independence, calls the original tribal society of the native Algerians "backward," revealing inadvertently his own prejudices (715). Before they leave, the film shows a close-up of the father's face, as he speaks to his sons, holding a handful of the powdery dirt in his fist: "Remember, this land is ours." Thus, the film emphatically shows that this dispossession foregrounds and frames all the following events as the original violence that was exerted against the boys, which they indeed, as later events in the film reveal, never forget.

And so, with the very origins of the colonial system being violent, Sartre explains how the system must remain violent to continue. In the colonial system, Sartre states, "violence [is] the eternal unity of this… mediation between men" (718). He explains the racism at the heart of this exploitative violence of dispossessing of land, arguing that the French "with premeditation, with cynicism, they imposed a foreign code on the Muslims because they knew this code… could have no other effect than to destroy the internal structures of Algerian society" (35). The "foreign code" to which Sartre refers encompasses the western capitalist system, based upon individualism and individual landownership, which prior to French colonization were ideas that had not existed in Algeria. By appointing native Muslim Algerians as minor officials and having them carry out the dirty work as the opening scene of *Hors-la-loi* shows, the French colonizers created discord and antagonism among the native Algerians.

Caché similarly places the forcible and traumatic removal from home in childhood of Majid at the demands of Georges as the original moment of inequality and violence in their relationship, which haunts both of them the rest of their lives.

The situation in *Caché* is somewhat more complex though, as Majid's parents were merely workers on Georges' parents' estate. Technically, Majid did not have any particular claim to the land. Yet, Georges' parents wanting to adopt Majid do give him a

definitive, legal claim to family, home, and belonging. Georges' interference, lying to his parents about Majid, which leads his parents to send Majid to an orphanage, never to be seen again, is this first act of violent dispossession and removal of the "other" that Majid represents for Georges. Georges, even as a child, jealously guards against any sharing with this "other," and does not for a moment consider any claim of Majid to a home as valid. For Georges seems to see Majid as not quite fully human, only the orphaned son of family servants. Georges eventually comes to realize that Majid's traumatic removal from their home could be the profound act of violence that would motivate Majid to seek revenge by making the terrorizing tapes.

When Georges and Majid have their first encounter at Majid's apartment, one of Majid's first questions is about Georges' family's estate, revealing how he truly saw the place as home and still acutely feels this as a loss. He is surprised and disappointed when Georges shows disdain and dismissively states that he does not live on it any longer, instead living in Paris. Georges cannot understand Majid's sense of displacement, but gradually comes to realize that this could be the reason for Majid's anger and sorrow, although Georges still does not perceive this to be a valid justification, and dismisses Majid as deranged or crazy for wanting to enact revenge.

The film also highlights the economic inequalities between Georges and Majid, showing that the oppressive system of colonialism, characterized by economic inequality and exploitation, seemingly continues in the modern day. Georges' home is incredibly luxurious, a large house in the middle of the city.

The film shows the interiors of almost every room in the house: the kitchen with its modern appliances, the rich dining room with walls of books emphasizing the intellectual and elite status of the Laurent family, the living room with its large TV and desk, the large, comfortable bedroom of Georges and Anne, and even scenes of the interior of Pierrot's bedroom, which is filled with all the gadgets and luxuries an adolescent could want – video game systems, a large computer monitor, games, books, posters. Every shot of the home emphasizes its sumptuousness.

In contrast, Majid lives in a tiny apartment, of which the film shows only a single room. His apartment is one of hundreds in an enormous complex, the top of which the film never shows, conveying its vastness.

Majid's front door is one of a seemingly endless row of bright blue doors in a crooked, poorly lit, grim hallway. His room is haphazardly furnished: an old table with only two chairs pushed up against the wall, outdated appliances also along the wall, right next to his front door. There is an old couch, with mismatched blankets and pillows. On the back wall, the remainder of Majid's possessions, laundry baskets, crates, and bins are crammed in disarray, implying that he has lived in the apartment for some time. Majid's poverty is vivid, and Georges looks around in clear distaste when he visits.

By contrasting the opulence of George's home with the humbleness of Majid's apartment, the film emphasizes the absolute inequality between the two men. Additionally, while Georges' career is an important part in his life, the film never reveals what job, if any, Majid has. This economic divide between Georges and Majid is prominent in the film, as economic privilege in contrast to utter poverty is the manifestation of contemporary neo-colonial relations. Even though Majid is most probably legally a French citizen, as equally French as Georges under the eyes of the law, the inequality between the two men, due to their vastly different economic statuses, seems impossible to resolve. If "economic privilege" as Memmi states, is the "heart of the colonial relationship," then Georges and Majid are still very much locked in a colonial relationship (xii). Georges maintains immense privilege over Majid because of his wealth and Majid remains lower and lesser because of his poverty.

Yet this stark and striking social and economic divide is, according to Sartre, ultimately unstable and will inevitably collapse. For Sartre, because the colonial system relies upon continual, repeated violence to sustain itself, it is ultimately unstable. A system of relations that perpetuates itself through violence and oppression can only lead to an explosion of violence in a revolt of the oppressed. Sartre argues that, from the beginning, the establishment of colonial relations rests upon a kind of violence. Sartre writes that the "contact between the industrial society," namely, capitalist France, "and the agricultural society," or Algeria,

> "was achieved… by the atrocious massacres perpetrated by [the French] soldiers; and that the destruction of the forms of inheritance proper to the Muslim tribes… [which emerged] from the fact that merchants, encouraged by the state and supported by our armies, imposed the code on the Muslims the better to rob them" (717).

This “code” for Sartre, as previously mentioned, is the capitalist, industrialist economic system, which undid all the past traditions of tribal and communal land ownership that had previously existed in Algeria. The establishment and operation of the colonial system is, for Sartre, necessarily violent and destructive. Sartre argues, “this situation of violence produces and reproduces itself as the outcome of a collection of violent practices” (714). The violence of colonial life is carried out daily, in each interaction between colonizer and colonized as the social system maintains the colonized in a position of disenfranchisement to give privilege, socially, culturally, and economically, to the colonizer.

Sartre speaks further of this violence, asserting, “where exploitation must start on the basis of oppression,” as it does in colonial Algeria through the removal of native Algerians from their land, “this violence renews itself; it will extend to mass extermination and torture” (719). The original violence of the conquest of Algeria and the claiming of land by the French was “constantly recreated and re-actualized by every day practice,” with the colonizers treating the colonized as sub-human day after day (Sartre 714). Always already from the very beginning of the colonial conquest, Sartre asserts there was a looming future brutal decolonial war.

A further violence occurs at the personal level in the racist process of dehumanization of the colonized people. Sartre describes the colonial system as “an infernal machine” that “[develops] its own contradictions right up to a final explosion,” which was the Algerian War (715). The process of dehumanization of the colonized rests on an internal contradiction: to see the Muslim Algerian as sub-human, the colonizer must first see the human characteristics of the colonized, and then strip them

from him. Sartre writes, “no one can treat a man like a dog without first recognizing him as a man” (xxvii). The violent treatment of the Muslim Algerians by the French, for Sartre, has simply shown the Muslim Algerians that the way to overthrow the system is the same way it was imposed: violence. Sartre writes, “the colonists themselves have taught their adversaries… that no solution was possible other than force” (47). The daily violence of the colonizers against the colonized is what, for Sartre, led to the colonized’s internalization of this violence and eventual turn to violent rebellion as a means to overcome their oppression.

Additionally, the colonial situation is a Manichean, dualist one, in which the colonizer only exists insofar as he has the colonized over and against whom he can define his own superior identity. Fanon describes in *The Wretched of the Earth* the nature of this profoundly polarized, absolutely divided colonial society in which the colonizer is the symbol of the good and the colonized is the pinnacle of evil (6). But the colonial system, despite its disgust and loathing of the colonized relies entirely upon their presence to maintain the colonial system.

Thus, the French exploited the Muslim Algerians only up to the point where they could still work for the French. To actually kill off the native population entirely would have marked the end of the colonial system, and the end of the potential for economic gain at the expense of the oppressed colonized. Sartre explains that there is a “fundamental structure of reciprocity between the colonialists and the colonized” (720). This mutually dependent relation, in which the colonizers are ultimately dependent on the colonized for their livelihoods, even as they loathe them, means that “the colonialist wants the status quo because any change in the system… can only hasten the end of

colonization" (721). Thus, the colonial system contains its own destruction within itself, in its untenable economic and racial divisions.

The Figure of the Colonizer

But equally integral to the oppressive, violent colonial system as economic disenfranchisement and dispossession of land, is the figure of the colonizer himself who enacts and perpetuates these injustices. In this section, I look at *Loin des hommes* and *Caché* to examine how each of these films portray the colonizer, and whether these portrayals seem in support of or counter to the figure of the colonizer as understood by Sartre, Memmi, and Camus. First, I discuss how Daru in *Loin des hommes* challenges the idea that one can only be either the perpetrator or victim, the colonizer or colonized. Instead, I argue, he occupies Memmi's impossible position of the "colonial," or Sartre's ambiguous third position of neither colonizer nor colonized. Next, I argue that Georges in *Caché* counters Sartre's theory that the colonizer figure is purely a product of his historical situation, by showing how the reasons behind Georges attitudes are left mysterious and unexplained by the film.

In "Colonialism is a System," Sartre's long speech in which he extensively describes how he understands colonialism, particularly as it manifests itself in Algeria, he argues, "it is not true that there are some good *colons* and others who are wicked. There are *colons* and that is it" (32). Whether Sartre sees it as unproductive to try to distinguish among *colons*, or colonizers, or whether he is issuing a blanket condemnation of the guiltiness of all colonizers (which is more likely), he does not make clear in this speech. Interestingly, however, in a footnote to the published version of his speech, Sartre writes, "I do not consider as colonists either the minor public

officials or the European workers who are at the same time innocent victims and beneficiaries of the system" (32). For Sartre, then, colonialism was not simply a Manichean dichotomy between exploiting colonizer and exploited colonized, rather, there was a third option: to be both an "innocent victim" and a "beneficiary" at once.

In *The Colonizer and The Colonized,* Albert Memmi seems to respond directly to Sartre when he writes, "It is often said that a colony does not contain only colonists. Can one talk of privileges with respect to railroad workers, minor civil servants, or even small farmers?" (10). For Memmi, to live in a colony there are two positions one may occupy, though within these positions there remain nuances and variations: one is either a colonizer or a colonized. The third option of Sartre, what Memmi terms a "colonial," does not exist. While a poor European living in a colony may have been both "dupe and victim," Memmi asserts that because "he also gets his share," he too is a colonizer (11). There is no colonizer who does not benefit in some way from colonialism, "ultimately to the detriment of the colonized," Memmi argues, and this privilege is what makes him a colonizer (11). Any non-native who profits from the colonial system is a colonizer.

This privilege has to do with the fact that no matter how impoverished or lowly the colonizer may be, he still can lay claim to his European ancestry in contrast to the wealthiest and most powerful Muslim Algerian colonized, who will always be held down because of their Arab, Berber, or Kabyle ethnicity. Thus, even as the French would seem to extend the possibility of citizenship or increased rights to the colonized, attaining a full humanity in the eyes of the French would always remain impossible for the Muslim Algerians precisely because of their race. Even as the Muslim Algerians

were held against the standard of the fully human and civilized Frenchman, they were always already denied the possibility of achieving this status.

Memmi also takes issue with Sartre on the question of whether there can be "good" colonizers or "bad" colonizers. For Memmi, although there are no ambiguous nor unimplicated third parties in the colonial system, in which one is either always a colonizer or a colonized, there are different ways of being a colonizer. Essentially, while for Sartre, all colonizers are created equal, for Memmi, they are not. Memmi defines multiple stages of being a colonizer: first one may be a colonial, a person in the colony entirely unaware of the problems of the system and who does not benefit in any way from it; then there is the "colonist of good will" who is a "colonist who refuses" who recognizes the problems and refuses to benefit from the system; and then, the final stage, is the "colonist who accepts" or the "colonial," someone who embraces and strives to perpetuate the colonial system.

While both Sartre and Memmi differentiate to some extent between a "colonizer" and a "colonist," with the former referring to the original French and other Europeans who established the colony in the 19th century, and the latter referring to the foreign settlers who arrived later, I choose to use the term colonizer to describe both Sartre's and Memmi's "colonizer" and "colonist." Indeed, I do not think this choice contradicts their ideas, as they both viewed the colonial system as something that demanded constant repeating and renewal of violence and subjugation of the colonized. Even historically, it can be argued that the process of conquering Algeria never truly ended, but rather was 130 years of continual violence. Thus, I believe "colonizer" as someone who establishes and works to perpetuate the colonial system is a fitting term. I

do believe that all of Memmi's distinctions in his terminology are indeed very important distinctions to make, but they all fall under the umbrella of the larger term "colonizer."

Memmi asserts that there is such a thing as "a colonist of good will," a colonizer who refuses, or at least attempts to refuse, to participate in the exploitative and discriminatory colonial society. The position of this good-willed colonizer, whom Memmi synonymously terms "a colonist who refuses," is an unstable one, however. Memmi argues that he will inevitably either be forced to leave the colony or degenerate into the "colonist who accepts." Memmi describes how the "colonist who refuses," "even if he is in no way guilty as an individual… shares a collective responsibility by the fact of membership in a national oppressor group" (39). Memmi further asserts, "the benevolent colonizer can never attain the good, for his only choice is not between good and evil, but between evil and uneasiness" (43). Thus, while there may be well intentioned and good willed colonizers, none of them can do any good for the colonized so long as they remain in the colony. Ultimately, the only solution is to leave. If not, he will become a "colonist who accepts," who in turn becomes a "colonialist": not only a beneficiary of the colonial situation, but also a passionate advocate for it.

In his introduction to Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Sartre argues,

> "The work establishes… that there are neither good nor bad colonists: there are colonialists. Among these, some reject their objective reality. Borne along by the colonialist apparatus, they do every day in reality what they condemn in fantasy, for all their actions contribute to the maintenance of oppression. They will change nothing and serve no one, but will succeed only in finding moral comfort in malaise" (xxvi).

Sartre finds confirmation of his own prior-established thesis that "there are *colons* and that is it" in Memmi's work, despite the fact that Memmi devotes half of his portrait of the colonizer to a portrait of a "colonist who refuses," a "colonist of good will."

For Sartre, to be a colonizer who refuses is to "reject… objective reality," and to live in a fantasyland. Sartre is emphatic in his absolutes: "*all*" the colonizer's actions contribute to the oppression of the colonized, "they will change *nothing* and serve *no one*" (my emphasis). While a colonizer may morally object to the oppression and violence of the colonial system, by merely living in the colony, he perpetuates the system. Any good intentions on the part of the colonizer are, for Sartre, mere "fantasy." The only "moral comfort" that well-intentioned colonizers may find is in their own sense of "malaise" as they continue to participate in the system even as they condemn it.

In a sense, Memmi is in agreement with Sartre's argument that colonizers cannot effect any real good for the colonized as long as they live in the colony. However, Sartre misses the nuance that Memmi so expertly details in his portrait of the colonizer. For Memmi, it is not enough to say "there are *colons* and that is it," for there is more to the colonizer than simply the fact of his position as colonizer. Importantly for Memmi is how the colonizer responds to finding himself in this position, whether with refusal or acceptance. This refusal is what makes a "colonist of good will" for Memmi, and acceptance is what makes a "colonialist."

In *Loin des hommes,* I argue that Daru seems to be Memmi's impossible "colonial," or at the very least, his "colonist of good will." The film portrays Daru as a "benevolent European who does not have the colonizer's attitudes towards the colonized" and who has "no privileges, whose living conditions are not higher than those of a colonized person of equivalent economic and social status" (10). From the outset, the film emphasizes Daru's affection for his rural Muslim Algerian students, showing clearly he does not have the superior nor condescending tones one would

expect of a typical racist, paternalistic colonizer. Additionally, the film emphasizes his simple, even poor living conditions early on. He lives in a one-room shanty connected to the schoolhouse, both of which are sparsely furnished.

But Daru cannot be a "colonial," for Memmi argues that a "colonial," as he defines him, "does not exist, for all Europeans in the colonies are privileged" (10). As previously discussed, even in the absence of any economic advantage, Daru's race as a European will always already make him elevated above both the Jewish and Muslim Algerians. So Daru, Memmi would perhaps allow, is "a colonist of good will," with indisputable "generosity," who clearly attempts to reject his position, but retains his social superiority and privileges nonetheless (xv).

But for Memmi, even the position of being "a colonist of good will," is an ultimately untenable and necessarily short-lived position within colonial society, that leads to "inevitable ambiguity and the resulting isolation" of the would-be good colonizer (xv). If the character of Daru does not make a case that would convince Memmi of the possibility of a "colonial" existing in Algeria, it does depict him decisively as a "colonist of good will" and directly addresses the ambiguity of Daru's unique position, and emphasizes his extreme isolation from the opening shots. And the film addresses too what Memmi critiques as the most serious problem of the good colonist: his "inability to act," due to his values conflicting with what he is able to do within his situation (xv). Daru clearly intends no harm to any of the Muslim Algerians whom he encounters, and indeed aims to help his students. He even explicitly expresses at one moment in talking with Slimane, the commander of the unit of FLN fighters, that he supports the cause of Algerian independence. Yet ultimately his moral beliefs and

personal sentiments are useless due to the reality of his position in which he has few choices. Despite his sincerely goodhearted intentions, his very presence is oppressive.

Loin des hommes opens panning across the rugged, brown desert hills, revealing a single dirt road winding unevenly through the valley and disappearing in the distance. Gradually it pans down to reveal a small, whitewashed schoolhouse dwarfed by the enormous hills surrounding it. Algeria seems an inhospitable, foreign landscape in which Daru's small schoolhouse is impossibly isolated.

After a series of brief scenes revealing Daru as a compassionate and playful teacher with his young Algerian students, the film returns to highlighting Daru's isolation with a series of long shots of the mountainous horizon, the sky gradually darkening. A shot of Daru's laundry flapping in the wind, reveals he lives alone and lives simply. This is followed by a shot of him pulling up a bucket of water from the well, and cooking outside over an open fire, thus emphasizing both his isolation and his self-sufficiency. When the film shows him in a long shot, cooking at night over the fire, there is not a single light in the distance, revealing definitively that Daru is alone, living "far from men."

Daru's seemingly self-imposed, almost ascetic isolation is abruptly ended the day after November 1, 1954: "Le jour Toussaint Rouge," (The Red/Bloody All Saint's Day), the day that officially signaled the beginning of the Algerian War. Fellow apparent friends and colonizers arrive unexpectedly in the middle of the school day, causing Daru to leave his students mid-lesson to greet them. One man shows Daru the newspaper, and explains why they have come so suddenly to see him: in another village in the Aurès, Algerian rebels killed a rural teacher just like Daru. The friend advises Daru to hand out the daily grain rations and leave for the town of Tinguit to take refuge immediately until the period of unrest blows over. Although Daru immediately refuses to go, they are all in agreement that the unrest will soon end.

His friend urges desperately, "we are all in the same boat." Daru turns away towards the schoolhouse, where we see the faces of his students pressed against the windows, watching. Daru responds, "I don't believe so," thus distancing himself from the other colonizers, refusing to be intimidated by threats of violence, perhaps, and insisting that he has nothing of which to be afraid. He explicitly refuses this request to act in solidarity with those who would seemingly be his compatriots, and instead remain with his Algerian students. To retreat to the town would admit of a sense of guilt and

fear, which Daru refuses. Rather, he chooses to remain at the school, with his students, wanting to remain outside the conflict, choosing neither side.

While Daru seems at the outset to exemplify Memmi's untenable "colonist of good will," he also exemplifies Sartre's parenthetical non-colonizer figure; Daru, as a public school teacher, is a "minor public official" and "European worker" who is at once an unwitting, "innocent victim" and a "beneficiary of the system" (32). The film portrays Daru decisively as an "innocent victim," who refuses to embrace any part of what Memmi's colonialists would perhaps relish as a privilege – namely, the opportunity to take a "subhuman" Algerian to justice. He seems to not benefit from the colonial system in any way, except perhaps for the fact that he has the reliable job of being a schoolteacher with the opportunity to carry out France's *mission civilatrice*.

To the contrary, early moments of the film that show Daru with his pupils depict him as more interested in the wellbeing of his students than imparting traditional French education. While he speaks to them primarily in French within the classroom, he speaks to them in Arabic as he plays ball with them in the schoolyard and distributes their grain rations. Additionally, the first lesson is focused on the beginning of "history," which, Daru reminds his students, began with the first writings in Mesopotamia and Egypt, not so far from their native Algeria. The large map at the front of the classroom features the continent of Africa, further emphasizing how Daru's lesson focuses not on France, but on a world perhaps closer to his Algerian students.

Daru displays immediate distaste when he is offered a French colonizer's supposed privilege (and obligation) of taking an Algerian prisoner to justice. Daru reluctantly, begrudgingly agrees to take on what for him is a burden of delivering

Mohamed to Tinguit. The arrival of Mohamed in his schoolhouse not only disrupts Daru's peaceful, routine of life, but also shatters the semblance that he can continue to remain impartial in the growing conflict between the Algerians and the French. Memmi explains how in the colonial system, "the colonist was bound to act" in a certain manner, just as the colonized was necessarily subjugated in a certain way leading to his "inevitable destruction" (13).

Daru ultimately has no choice but to take up the colonizer's role as a paternalistic protector of the Algerian prisoner. His initial attempt to let Mohamed leave freely in the night is thwarted when Mohamed chooses to remain captive, a choice that remains unexplained until much later in the film. Daru seemingly sees taking Mohamed to Tinguit only as the lesser of three evils: the retributive justice of Mohamed's village; the vigilante justice of the French ranchers and herders ready to enact revenge on the first vulnerable Muslim Algerian they find; or, Mohammed's choice, the justice offered by discriminatory French colonial law.

FLN rebels capture Daru and Mohamed as they are making their journey through the desert. It is thanks only to Mohamed's intervention that the fighters do not kill Daru on the spot, but instead take both the men prisoner. In this moment, there is a reversal of their positions, as Mohamed becomes Daru's protector. Mohamed immediately lies to the rebels that that Daru is his old teacher, who has problems with "his people," and who has promised to protect Mohamed by hiding him in the town of Tinguit. The rebels take them captive, and the film cuts to showing Mohamed and Daru both equalized now: both men with their wrists tied together, the ropes tied to the saddle of a horse as the men struggle to keep up with the horses.

When they arrive at the rebel camp, Daru discovers that the leader of the band of *fellaghas* who have taken them captive is an old comrade at arms from World War II named Slimane. Slimane is delighted to see Daru, and quickly cuts away the ropes from Daru's and Mohamed's hands. The film shows the Mohamed's shocked face in the background as Daru and Slimane greet each other excitedly and affectionately.

Later, Slimane and Daru speak to each other. "What's this about a school?" Slimane asks half-seriously, "So you teach the little goatherds French? Our ancestors the Gauls?" referring to the fact that French teachers in the colonies would teach the children all about the history of France, as though the colonized children were also descendants of the Gauls. Daru insists, "I teach them to read," remaining certain that what he is doing in Algeria is indeed good for his students. Slimane sarcastically jokes that Daru is like all the other French public officials in Algeria who do "good works," but Daru simply insists again, "I teach them to read."

Later that night, when the rebels have made camp in a cave, Daru and Slimane again converse and Daru reveals why he is so troubled: "I never thought I would see this again… war." Slimane asks Daru if he has any family and Daru responds, "No, I have my students," reinforcing the true affection Daru has for his students. For him, they are equivalent to children. The mood of the conversation is somber, and the camera switches from Daru to Slimane's faces as each man speaks, looking directly at the other. They are on an entirely equal level, their faces equally half-lit by the campfires and lanterns in the background and in front of them. When Slimane asks if Daru is happy with his life as a teacher up in the mountains, Daru immediately responds, "Yes."

Daru seems comfortable with the Algerian soldiers, especially as we see his encounter with another soldier who used to be in his unit in World War II. The Algerian rebel salutes respectfully when he sees him, and Daru half-salutes back, before remembering he is no longer a soldier – though in this moment, it almost seems he would like to be one. With each new encounter between Daru and the rebels, Daru seems slightly more conflicted, at once dismayed by the thought of war while also slowly gaining understanding of the depth of the anger of the Muslim Algerians.

Slimane says, “You’re on the wrong side this time,” and Daru replies, “I’m not against independence.” Slimane looks up and says, “Join us then.” The two men stare at each other silently. Then Daru explains that his way of fighting for war is by educating his students, so they can learn to read. Daru, it seems, sees education as power for his students, and thus we see that for him, his teaching the young Algerian students is a political act itself just as much as the units of rebel soldiers organizing themselves. Slimane seems saddened: “We’re beyond learning to read. We’re throwing you out.” Daru is incredulous and surprised to be lumped with this general “you,” clearly considering himself one with the Algerian people.

Slimane says, “It’s war. You have to pick a side.” Daru grows angry at this ultimatum, and we learn that he has grown up in this countryside, that his parents are buried here, that he cannot live elsewhere. The irony of Slimane’s assertion that “you

have to pick a side," is that Daru seems never to have had any choice of what side he was on. Even had he fought alongside the Algerian rebels, it seems that upon the end of the war, he would have been forced to leave anyway. Thus, Daru's position seems increasingly impossible, as he feels himself rejected by the Algerian soldiers, and has already irreparably alienated himself from the French.

This scene between Slimane and Daru clearly highlights the "suspicion on the part of the colonized" as Slimane questions whether Daru truly believes in the cause of independence (Memmi xv). Daru's "inevitable ambiguity" and "isolation" are also profoundly depicted, as his face twists in anguish when Slimane criticizes his pacifism. Soon, it is clear, Daru will no longer be able to live in Algeria, for although he does not believe himself to be on the other "side," he sees now that for the colonized Algerians, even those who had been his friends and comrades in arms, he is.

Daru also complicates the idea of a purely French colonizer in contrast to the purely Algerian colonized when he reveals to Mohamed that he is not actually French. When Daru expresses his profound sorrow at the impossible situation the two men find themselves in, Mohamed is curious. Daru opens up about his heritage, revealing that he is the son of poor migrant workers from Spain. He grew up alongside the Algerian peasants working in the wealthy colonizers' vineyards, but managed to get an education. After World War II, he requested to be posted as a teacher in rural Algeria.

Daru is upset, but stays calm, showing his emotion only in his voice as he says softly, "For the French, we were Algerians. Now, for the Algerians, we are French." Daru, by speaking in the plural, voices the impossible plight of thousands of the *pied-noirs* who, like him and his parents, were poor agricultural laborers, living day to day

much the same as the colonized Algerian population, suffering from the same poverty and exploitation of their cheap labor. Further, Daru voices the same plea for being allowed to stay in Algeria that other films, such as *Hors-la-loi* show given by the native Algerians: this is the land of his family, his parents are buried here, he has never known any other home. Daru is very much a fictional embodiment of Camus in this moment, who writes, "the French are attached to Algerian soil by roots too old and deep to think of tearing them up" (114). But the Muslim Algerian rebels cannot tolerate this, and their fight for national liberation takes precedence over any claims of the colonizers and *pied-noirs*, no matter how lowly and how attached to Algeria they may be.

One wonders if Memmi, upon hearing Daru voice this, would express sympathy. More likely, he would simply respond that ultimately Daru still held privilege, however slight, over a native Algerian such as Mohamed, simply because he was European. But by revealing that Daru's heritage is not in fact French, the film complicates the idea of a Manichean colonial system, in which it is simple to divide colonizers from colonized. Were the division between colonizer and colonized so clearly defined, it would be easy to determine who has a rightful claim to stay in Algeria (the native colonized), and who must be removed by whatever means necessary (the non-native colonizers). Figures such as Daru, who occupies a liminal space, alienated by both colonizers and colonized,

challenge the idea of a clear-cut dualistic colonial situation. If indeed though, Sartre would see Daru as neither a colonizer nor a colonized, but rather that parenthetical European settler who does not benefit from the system, one wonders what Sartre would say about the place of such a person in the colony post-revolution. I think that ultimately, Sartre would argue, along with what the film's ending seems to suggest, that even seemingly innocent settlers would also have to leave Algeria.

The portrait of the colonizer given by *Caché* through the character of Georges, and his relationship with Majid is very different than what we see in *Loin des hommes* in the character of Daru and his relationship with Mohamed. Like *Loin des hommes, Caché* depicts the figure of the colonizer and the colonized on an intimate level, with the two men, Georges and Majid, representing the larger colonial situation in a sort of allegory. As has been discussed, Georges occupies definitively the position of colonizer in the relationship between himself and Majid, as evidenced by his economic and social wealth in contrast with Majid's poverty. However, even though Georges fits the image of a colonizer, the hints that the film gives the audience about Georges' childhood and upbringing challenge one of Sartre's central theories about the colonial situation: that the colonizer is produced exclusively by growing up in the colonial situation.

Sartre writes, "For the child of the colonialist, violence was present in the situation itself, and was a social force which produced him. The son of the colonialist and the son of the Muslim are both the children of the objective violence which defines the system itself" (718). Sartre argues that the position of being a colonizer is inherited; a child becomes a supporter of the colonial system because he has been born into it. By Sartre's logic, Georges' prejudice against Majid would have been inherited from his

parents then. When a child grows up seemingly entirely the product of his social milieu, the child's prejudices would be, if not excusable, then at least understandable.

Although this is a narrowing of Sartre's perhaps broader connotation in referring to the familial inheritance of either a privileged or oppressed position in the colonial system, I believe it fits *Caché*, because the whole of the film represents colonial relations on a reduced and more intimate scale. Thus, the fact that Georges' colonial attitudes appear to not be inherited from his mother suggests that although he was not born into a colonialist family, attitudes such as his still persist. I do not think the film entirely satisfactorily explains why Georges holds the attitudes he does, but rather emphasizes simply that he does hold them – which is what is truly key in the film. The film focuses not so much on the causes of prejudice and bigotry, but rather their effects.

Sartre almost seems to hint at a slight absolution of guilt for the *pied-noirs* and the children of colonizers, who were born into a system of oppression, from which they benefitted before they were even aware. However, Georges does not necessarily seem to be the product or offspring of a colonial situation. Thus, the film leaves the question unanswered as to what the origins of Georges' deep prejudice are.

We learn from what Georges tells Anne that Georges' parents felt very kindly towards Majid's parents, so much so that upon their deaths, Georges' parents planned to adopt Majid. The film does not explain from whence or where Georges' prejudice came. The fact that Georges' prejudice and bigotry, which he first manifests so violently as a six-year-old child do not seem to be motivated by anything makes Georges seem even more responsible for his sentiments and his actions. The audience cannot place the blame for Georges' prejudice on anyone else. He is not a product of a

colonial system, not the child of colonialist parents – at least as far as the film shows. Thus, it seems that he and he alone is responsible for his terrible treatment of Majid.

The film reinforces that Georges' prejudice and his deep-seated feelings of guilt that he constantly tries to repress are not inherited in the scene where he goes to visit his elderly mother, who still lives at Georges' childhood manor home. After Georges sees the tape that records a car driving and stopping out his rural childhood house, Georges goes to visit his mother. Although they speak of superficial things, Georges' mother quickly realizes that something is wrong. She asks him finally what compelled him to visit. Georges explains that he is traveling for a TV special in Aix-en-Provence. He then slowly reveals what really drove him to visit his mother: the increasingly disturbing dreams he has been having featuring Majid. His mother's face shows no recognition, as she appears to not know the name. Georges becomes agitated, raising his voice slightly. "Majid!" Georges cries, "Hashem's son! You and dad were going to adopt him." His mother's face remains impassive and her voice quiet when she replies simply "I see."

When Georges seeks some acknowledgement from her about his troubling dreams, his mother simply responds that it's perfectly normal for one to dream of one's childhood as one ages, and that she dreams of her childhood all the time. Georges is unsatisfied and presses her further, asking if she ever thinks or wonders about Majid. She responds, her face still emotionless, that no, she does not think about him. When Georges asks why not, she responds, "It was a long time ago. And it's not a happy memory. As you know only too well." Georges is silent.

Suddenly, the conversation switches as his mother asks about Anne and Pierrot. Majid's name is not spoken again in the conversation. When his mother asks again if anything is bothering him, Georges insists that everything is going well in his life – there are no particular highs, no more particular lows, everything is "chugging along," he says. Eventually, Georges ends the conversation, saying he is tired and must go to bed. While he makes plans to eat breakfast with his mother the next morning before leaving, the film does not show his mother again.

While Georges' mother seems to admit that part of the reason she does not think of Majid is by choice, because what happened is "not a happy memory," at the same time, she does not appear to be troubled or surprised even when Georges brings it up. Although the memory is sad for his mother, unlike Georges, she seems to not be troubled by any guilt of her past actions. The film shows us how it was Georges' father and mother who loved Majid's parents and Majid, to the point of wanting to adopt him. Only Georges felt so antagonized and threatened by Majid. But it remains a question as to whether this was purely the natural jealousy of an only child suddenly faced with the possibility of having to share his home and his parents with another, or whether there

was a deeper conflict between the two. What this scene importantly shows is that Georges' feelings of guilt about and his loathing for Majid are not inherited.

It is after this conversation with his mother, when Georges is sleeping in his childhood room, that he has his longest and most vivid dream-flashback of the film. The placement of this scene directly after his conversation with his mother, in which she seems to not suffer from any guilty conscience – not because a tragedy did not occur, but rather because she seems to know she is not responsible for it – reinforces just how shaken and disturbed Georges truly is. Georges, then, does not fit the mold of a typical child of a colonizer for Sartre, because as the film shows us of his mother, she does not seem in anyway to demonstrate traits of a colonizer. Her enigmatic remark that Georges knows best himself what a sad time it was for the family implies too that the responsibility for the tragedy rests solely on Georges, and this is why his conscience is troubled while hers is not.

The Question of Postcolonial Resolution

In this section, I discuss how *Loin des hommes* and *Caché* each address the question of postcolonial resolution differently. I argue that *Loin des hommes*, seemingly contrary to what Camus, the author of the story on which the film is based, advocated for so passionately throughout his life – dialogue and reconciliation between opposed groups – appears to suggest that the possibility of resolution may be ultimately impossible because the gulf between the colonizer and the colonized is simply too deep and too wide to be overcome. However, I argue that the ending of the film does not necessarily provide an absolute answer, but rather ends as a provocative question. Its ending accurately represents what happened historically, with the mass exodus of the

pied-noirs during and after the war. Yet it leaves it ambiguous and up to the viewer to decide whether what happened in the past is feasible or desirable in the present day.

In contrast, I argue that *Caché,* even as it illustrates profoundly that we do not even live in a postcolonial world, subtly suggests that coming to a resolution of mutual understanding is a real possibility. *Caché* is an important film because it powerfully problematizes the emphatic beliefs of Memmi and Sartre that colonial relationships would and could end by removing the colonizer from the colony, thus allowing the colonized to form their own independent nation and become free, liberated men. By demonstrating that neocolonial relations continue to exist in present day, in France – the motherland, not the colony – *Caché* greatly problematizes Memmi's and Sartre's arguments, questioning the idea that colonial relations will end with the removal of the colonizer. In the context of French Algeria, one cannot dispute the claims of the native Algerians who wished to have self-determination in their native land and expel all foreign colonizers. In the context of modern day France, however, in which neocolonial, oppressive relations persist, one cannot expel all of the French to end these relations because the French are in their native land. *Caché,* by showing that oppressive, neocolonial relations exist far outside in time and space from the colonial situation, shows the unfeasibility of Memmi's and Sartre's arguments in our modern day.

Instead, *Caché,* I argue, shows what Camus posited ahead of his time: that ultimately we must all learn to live together, because separation, whether geographic, political, or social is no longer possible. To what surely would have been much to Camus' dismay had he lived to see the day, in 1962 the newly independent Algerian nation demonstrated it was indeed possible to drive out every European settler from

Algeria. But *Caché* shows that in the present day, Camus' proposed solution to the problem of the oppressive colonial system is a better option than that proposed by Memmi and Sartre. *Caché* suggests that coming to a mutual understanding is perhaps not possible for the generations who lived through the war itself, but rather must be carried out by the new, younger generation.

Ironically, although *Loin des hommes* is based on a story by Camus, who advocated so passionately for reconciliation between the French and the native Algerians, I argue that the film takes an ending that aligns much more with the thoughts of Sartre and Memmi on the question of the solution to the damage done by colonialism. Why the screenwriter and director made the choice to alter the ending of Camus' story is unclear, however, it is decidedly more peaceful, while still maintaining the profound sense of tragedy and loss with which Camus concludes his story.[6] The ending of *Loin des hommes* is nothing short of tragic, and exemplifies what Memmi and Sartre claim is the only possible solution to the colonial system: the only way to end oppression is to remove the oppressor.

Memmi critiques indirectly Camus' positing of the European colonizers and Algerian colonized living together with equal rights under the law as a "minor pseudosolution" (150). Memmi writes, "the memory of unjust privileges would be sufficient to guarantee their permanence," so that "there is apparently no hope for the colonizer within the framework of colonization" (150). The years of colonization and

[6] In the original Camus story, rather than choosing to take the path into the desert to join the nomadic tribes, Mohamed instead takes the path towards Tinguit and certain death. Additionally, Daru returns to his schoolhouse to find it vandalized by native Algerians who have written: "You have turned in our brother. You will pay" on his chalkboard. Thus Daru's decision to leave seems more provoked by this threat of imminent violence rather than coming to a realization of his presence in Algeria as oppressive.

systematic privileges accorded to the colonizers at the expense of the colonized is for Memmi, too much to ever allow for the possibility of ending all those privileges; merely the memory of the privileges would ensure their continuation. Memmi argues that "revolt" is the only way for the colonized to carry out "the complete liquidation of colonization," which is how the colonized will realize himself as a free, full, liberated man (151). And for Memmi, this necessitates a removal of the colonizer from the colony because "the mere existence of the colonizer creates oppression" (150).

Although Memmi never provides an answer for what is to become of the colonizer when he leaves the colonial situation, in her afterword to *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Susan Gilson Miller interprets Memmi to mean that, "there is no conceivable compromise that will allow the foreigner to stay… a return home for the colonizer is the only release from the prison of colonialism" (156-157). Thus, Miller provides a generous reading of Memmi that he intends to mean that colonizers should "return home." Memmi does seem though, through Miller's interpretation and my own, to see that colonialism was a "prison," a profoundly restrictive and limiting situation for the colonizers similarly to how it was for the colonized. For Memmi, ending colonialism was not simply a matter of freeing the colonized from their oppression, but also freeing the colonizers from their damaging, limiting position of being oppressors.

This claim that the "release from the prison of colonialism" would be a homecoming for the "foreigner," the colonizer, is problematic though in the context of French Algeria. Many *pied-noirs* had never visited mainland Europe, had no family or friends in France, and had developed a distinctly different culture from that of the *métropolitain* French. After 130 years of French colonial presence in Algeria,

generations of families had been born, lived, died, and buried there. Indeed many of the *pied-noirs*, like Camus, felt that they had a claim to their own culture, land, and lives in Algeria. They felt that they were not "foreigners" inhabiting a stolen land, but rather natives of Algeria themselves.

Furthermore, I believe that one could also read Memmi more critically than Miller does. In making his argument for the necessity of the removal of the colonizer, Memmi himself never explains the colonizer's future after the end of the colonial system. One could interpret Memmi to mean that through the colonized's revolt, a violent extermination of the colonizers needs to take place, which is a reading akin to Fanon's proposal, in which the colonized can only become human through not just an expulsion of the colonizers, but through an actual violent elimination of them. In the process of revolution, "the last shall become first," but for Fanon, "the last can be the first only after a murderous and decisive confrontation" with the colonizers (3). The ending of *Loin des hommes*, then, in which the colonizer Daru and colonized Mohamed go their separate ways peacefully, without any violence between them, would still not enable Mohamed to attain full humanity for Fanon.

Sartre similarly argues that removal of the colonizer is the only way to enable the liberation of the colonized. He argues in "Colonialism is a System,"

> "the leaders of the FLN have replied: 'even if we were happy under French bayonets, we would fight.' They are right. And indeed one must go further than them: under French bayonets, they can only be unhappy. It is true that the majority of the Algerians live in intolerable poverty; but it is also true that necessary reforms can be implemented neither by the good colonists nor by France herself, as long as she intends to maintain her sovereignty in Algeria. These reforms will be the business of the Algerian people themselves, when they have won their freedom" (31).

Even the "good colonists" of Algeria, which, as discussed, Daru seems to represent in *Loin des hommes*, cannot bring about any positive change, according to Sartre.[7] Only the Algerian people themselves can change their society, and the first step to this is gaining their freedom from France. Additionally, for Sartre, the native Algerians can never do any good for the French; it seems that no mutual understanding can ever be reached between the two populations, and even "France herself" cannot carry out any "reforms" (31). The division between oppressors and oppressed is absolute for Sartre.

Sartre argues passionately, "People who talk of abandonment of Algeria are imbeciles. There is no abandoning what we have never owned" in what can be read as a stabbing critique of Camus (47). For Sartre, the colonizers are, and always have been, unwelcome and temporary strangers in Algeria, and thus the only solution is for them to leave at once. Sartre recognizes not a single valid claim of the European settlers to Algeria. To him, each colonizer is nothing more than an oppressor, who will, as Memmi argues, remain an oppressive force as long as he remains in the colony.

[7] It is interesting to note here how Sartre contradicts himself. While earlier he vehemently argues there are neither good nor bad *colons*, here he directly states there are "good colonists," seeming echoing Memmi.

The ending of *Loin des hommes* reveals, like Sartre and Memmi argue, that despite Daru and Mahomed's new friendship, and despite Daru's good intentions, he ultimately must leave the colony. Leaving is the only good act he can truly do. When Daru and Mahomed arrive at the crossroads with the town of Tinguit in sight, they share an emotional farewell. It is clear that in their time together, they have come to see each other as equals. Mahomed calls Daru by name, and speaks to him in French. In return, Daru responds to Mahomed in Arabic. Each wishes the other good luck and blessings.

After Daru's vehement encouragement him, Mohamed seems to agree that he will go to the desert to live with the nomad tribes. Daru insists that this is an act of resistance; an act of survival, as going to Tinguit and subjecting himself to the biased French colonial law would be "to surrender." This language of surrendering reveals that Daru sees the inevitability of the war. No longer are the decisions he and Mohamed make solely for themselves on a small individual scale, but they are now choices that have a larger meaning in the context of the war. Every small act has suddenly become political, Daru realizes, and neutrality is no longer a possibility. The film, which began on such an intimate level of a story purely between two men suddenly attains much larger social significance.

Ultimately Daru turns and leaves, and the camera follows him as he marches back up the hill, back towards home. Then gradually the focus changes to Mohamed's face in a close-up, lingering on his face as his eyes scan the horizon. Then a long shot shows Mohamed turn to take the path that goes into the desert. The film cuts to a shot of Daru's face, which breaks into a slight smile as he watches Mohamed. Then, after a moment, Daru himself turns back to walk home. The film again shows extreme long shots, with Daru only a tiny figure walking along the ridge of a hill, his silhouette visible against the light of the moon. These extreme long shots make Daru seem smaller and more isolated than ever before in the film.

The final scene of the film is the next morning. Daru has restored order to the schoolhouse that was left in disarray when he and Mohamed had rushed away to Tinguit. Daru sits at his desk at the front of the classroom. On each desk is a Geography book, and at the front of the classroom, a large map of Africa is hung on the chalkboard. The children arrive, running, playing, and giggling as they jostle each other to line up outside the schoolhouse door when Daru calls them to attention. Everything seems just as it was in the beginning; nothing appears to have changed.

Then Daru reveals that he has indeed has been changed, as he announces to his students that this will be his final day in Algeria. The film cuts to the students' faces as Daru speaks. They are crestfallen and wide-eyed. Their sorrow at Daru's announcement, even as he says that they all knew this day was coming, is touching, revealing their deep affection for their teacher.

Daru's voice breaks as he says, "I am so proud to have been your teacher." Then he turns to the chalkboard and writes a word in Arabic. Then, on the other side of the chalkboard, he writes the translation in French, "L'Atlas," or Atlas, for the mountain range. Daru spends his final day teaching the children for the first time their own language, teaching them their home's geography.

When the children say goodbye to Daru at the end of the school day, the mood is somber. The light in the classroom has dimmed, reflecting that it is late in the afternoon. The film cuts to several close-ups of students' faces, with tears swelling in their eyes.

Each student shakes Daru's hand as he or she departs, and the final student to leave pulls Daru down to kiss his cheek, and then gives him a present – a drawing of the school. The final shot of the film is an extreme long shot from above, showing the tiny distant bodies of the students walking away from the school. The faint sounds of their chattering and giggling is audible. Somber piano music underscores this final scene, adding to the sorrowful atmosphere of the end of the film.

Thus, *Loin des hommes*, even though it spends most of the film building up the possibility of an equally respectful, mutually understanding relationship between the two men, the European colonizer and the colonized Algerian, in the end affirms the theses of Memmi and Sartre: ultimately the only solution for Daru is to leave, for as long as he exists in Algeria, despite his good intentions, he is an oppressive figure. And yet, even though the film's ending corresponds with what Memmi and Sartre advocate, the film also begs the question as to whether this ending is inevitable and necessary, and whether it is indeed the best solution. The somber atmosphere hints otherwise.

The moment of Daru and Mohamed exchanging blessings and gifts as they say goodbye, the sincere affection the students show for Daru, and Daru's teaching the students about their own history, their own Arabic language in the final scene of the film all seem to broach the possibility of some reconciliation, some common understanding. Yet even as the film shows this possibility, it also shows the impossibility. Precisely because Daru is so caring, because he loves the land and people of Algeria so much, he is driven to leave. Reading these final moments through a Sartrean lens, what feels to be a profound moment of loss and abandonment for Daru is not abandonment at all, for one cannot abandon what was never one's own in the first place (*Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, 47). But the deep connection we see between Daru and his students, and the genuine friendship that develops over the course of the few days between Daru and Mohamed calls into question why a mutual reconciliation was not possible, even though the film's ending asserts it was indeed not possible.

In contrast to Sartre and Memmi, Camus never stopped calling for or believing in reaching a truce in Algeria. In his "Letter to an Algerian Militant," Camus writes,

> "And yet, you and I, who are so alike, who share the same culture and the same hopes… know that we are not enemies. We know that we could live happily together on this land, which is our land – because it is ours, and because I can no more imagine it without you and your brothers than you can separate it from me and my kind." (114)

To his French left-wing contemporaries, to assert the right of the European settlers to remain in Algeria as valid was absolutely scandalous and absurd. Camus alienated himself from the Muslim Algerians and the FLN as well, who were fighting passionately for an independent, self-determining nation that had no room for Europeans in it. Yet Camus believed in a real shared culture, a Mediterranean culture

that had existed for centuries, and thus went deeper than the temporarily imposed colonial relations. While Sartre, Memmi, and Fanon insisted upon an utter incommensurability between Europeans and Algerians, Camus believed in a shared experience and an inseparability between the groups. This fundamental difference in perspective may be what led these thinkers to such radically different solutions.

Camus insists emphatically that a roundtable discussion, representing people of all interests, including those from *métropolitain* France, the European *colons*, and the FLN, is the best solution to the conflict. To Camus, only dialogue and frank, honest, open conversation between all sides, can possibly lead to an end to the violence. Camus insists, "It is not good for people to live apart, or isolated in factions. It is not good for people to spend too much time nursing their hatred or feelings of humiliation, or even contemplating their dreams" (124). It seems here as though Camus is speaking across the decades directly to Georges in *Caché*, who literally spends much time "nursing [his] hatred" and brooding over his disturbing dreams (124).

Caché is important because it offers an undeniable critique to Sartre and to Memmi, who believe that a removal of the colonizer from the colony is the only way to allow for the liberation of the colonized. *Caché* shows that colonial relationships continue to exist decades after the end of the war, in France itself, not the former colonial Algeria. The oppressive colonizer figure cannot simply be sent home any longer because indeed, he is home. And the Algerian immigrants, French citizens themselves, are also home. A solution of separation of oppressors from oppressed to end oppression is no longer an option. As Camus saw, though no one seemed to listen,

we are destined to live and to die together – separation is not only not productive, but indeed not even possible.

The very last scene of *Caché*, which has been an enigma to a number of film critics, I believe importantly, although subtly, confirms Camus' beliefs. And not only is it "not *good* for people to live apart," but I would also say that today in our contemporary world, that it is not *possible* for people to live apart (my emphasis, 124). The final scene comes after Georges' dream-flashback of the removal of Majid from their home in 1961, the camera is placed in a long shot, stationary, evoking the same voyeuristic set-up as the school scene from earlier in the film, and the other scenes that have been tape recorded. In the foreground is the roof of a car; the camera is not positioned for an ideal view of the action. The frame is full of students pouring out of the front of the school down the steps, chatting with their friends in small clusters. Parents wait for their students on the sidewalk with their backs towards the camera.

The essential exchange that occurs is almost impossible to see, but nevertheless, it is of key importance. On the far bottom right corner of the shot stands Majid's son, waiting along with the other parents. Suddenly, from the doors on the top left hand part of the shot, Pierrot exits the school along with some friends. Majid's son makes his way directly to Pierrot up the steps, and then the two young men walk down the stairs together, away from Pierrot's friends. They stand in the bottom left corner of the shot, obstructed partially by the car roof and the other people around. Due to the noise of the parents and students, it is impossible to hear what the two are saying, and difficult to see their faces, especially Pierrot's, whose face is mostly hidden by his hair. Majid's son puts his arm on Pierrot's soldier as he leads him down the steps, and gestures

enthusiastically to himself and to Pierrot over the course of their conversation, which lasts over a minute. When the two say goodbye, Majid's son appears to be smiling.

This scene is an enigma, because up until this point in the film, there is no suggestion of possibility that these two characters could know each other. But, this scene reveals, they do. Like Roger Ebert, in his review of the film, titled "Caché: A Riddle wrapped in a Mystery inside an Enigma," I believe that the body language and gestures of the two implies that this is not their first meeting. Not only do the two know each other, but they have known each other for some time. Pierrot does not seem surprised to see Majid's son, and the two stand much closer together than would strangers meeting each other for the first time. Ebert writes, "I believe but can't prove it indicates this is not their first meeting. What is important in… the shot is: These two know one another. That's what we can say for sure." The importance that I find in this scene is the film leaving the audience not with the last dream sequence of Georges, the tragic upheaval of Majid as a child, but rather what appears to be a suggestion of a possibility of reconciliation and resolution between the future generations.

The film shows through Georges' and Majid's antagonist encounters, and Majid's violent suicide, that resolution and mutual understanding between their

generations is impossible. Georges already has his mind made up about whom Majid is, and there is no possibility for any productive discussion between them – what Camus insists is the only way to bring about peace. But Pierrot's and Majid's prolonged, and apparently amiable discussion provides a very different conclusion to the events: it demonstrates a possibility for resolution between the future generations, the ones who did not themselves live through the violence and bloodshed of the war.

It seems that in the encounter between the two young men, the dialogue and discussion that Camus dreamt of becomes possible. With the film having established Georges as the symbol for colonizing France and Majid as the symbol of colonized Algeria, it seems natural that the two men's sons would represent the new young generation of French, who are discovering and uncovering their nation's and their families' "hidden" past and learning to come to terms with it. While the majority of *Caché* is dark, grim, and tension ridden, the film's final scene is bright. Although the scene is shrouded in mystery, its atmosphere feels much more positive.

While in Camus' writing, he pleads for the allowance of the European population to be allowed to remain in Algeria, *Caché* reveals the need for the acceptance of Algerian immigrants in France – but the message of solidarity the ending of the film gives is decidedly in accordance with Camus' thoughts. Camus speaks of a "community of hope," of people who recognize that they "must live together where history has placed them" (153). He continues, "they can do so only if they are willing to take a few steps toward one another for a free and open debate" (153). In the final scene of *Caché*, the two young men take literal, physical steps towards each other. Majid's son initiates the contact, but Pierrot leaves behind his friends to go have the personal,

intimate conversation with him. Camus would most likely have been devastated to see what happened upon the conclusion of the Algerian War, and at what cost came officially declared "peace" to the European settlers and the native Algerians. However, the ending of *Caché* suggests that while Camus' message was not fulfilled during his lifetime, his proposed method of resolving conflicts through conversation and moving forward in solidarity is now right for France's contemporary conditions.

Summarizing Thoughts

Overall, these films show the complexity of the colonial situation, perhaps with greater finesse and depth than the theories of Memmi, Fanon, and Sartre are able to express. They also, importantly, highlight the difficulty of achieving any kind of resolution or reconciliation between colonizer and colonized. While the resolutions offered by *Loin des hommes* and *Caché* are very different, as the former proposes separation, and the latter a coming together in conversation, they are both similar in one important way: they both depict nonviolent resolutions. In reality, the end of French colonization in Algeria came about neither peacefully nor easily, but rather through an extreme outpouring of violence in a seven and a half year war. In the following section, I shall discuss the way three other films, *Mon Colonel, L'Ennemi intime,* and *Hors-la-loi* show the effects and outcomes of striving to reach a resolution through violence.

Chapter 5: The Violence of War

> "Before long, Algeria will be populated exclusively by murderers and victims. Only the dead will be innocent."
>
> – Albert Camus, *Algerian Chronicles*

Introduction

This chapter discusses the ways in which three recent films, *Mon Colonel*, *L'Ennemi intime*, and *Hors-la-loi*, portray the events of the Algerian War itself. These films often pay clear homage to the archetypal film that has defined perceptions of the war, *Battle of Algiers*. They also draw elements of classic film genres including the murder mystery, the gangster, the Western, the *film noir*, and the classic Hollywood war film. I argue that these films engage with and complicate the theories of Sartre, Fanon, and Camus in regards to the role of violence in a revolution. Taken together, these films seem to object to the idea of violence as being essential and cathartic in a revolution. The films' ability to viscerally and graphically portray the most violent aspects of the war calls into question any endorsements of violence in war, even if the war is for a noble cause. I shall particularly focus on violence in torture as it appears in *Mon Colonel* and *L'Ennemi intime*. I argue the films instead reveal how the extreme violence of the war, particularly of torture, effects irreparable harm on both sides.

In some respects, the calls of Fanon and Sartre for violence must be acknowledged for their value in the situation of colonial Algeria. Sartre, for example, powerfully argues in an editorial article published in a French newspaper,

> "If violence were only a thing of the future, if exploitation and oppression never existed on earth, perhaps displays of nonviolence might relieve the conflict. But if the entire regime, even your nonviolent thoughts, is governed by a thousand-year-old oppression, your

> passiveness serves no other purpose but to put you on the side of the oppressors" (lviii).

The problem for Sartre is that the violence is already occurring, and always already has been from the establishment of the colonial system. To expect the oppressed peoples to respond nonviolently after over a century of oppression is absurd to Sartre. Further, he champions the cause of the Muslim Algerians to take their independence and freedom at whatever cost, arguing that for the Algerians, "killing a European is killing two birds with one stone, eliminating in one go oppressor and oppressed: leaving one man dead and the other man free" (27). Not only through the process of removing the oppressor, but through taking his very life, does the oppressed become free, for Sartre.

Fanon takes this argument of violence to the point of killing the colonizers to the extreme, arguing in *The Wretched of the Earth* that, "for the colonized, life can only materialize from the rotting cadaver of the colonist" (50). For Fanon, when the colonized have suffered for so long under violent oppression, responding violently in revolution is not just the best response, but the *only* response. To simply exile the colonizers was not enough; they had to be killed. Importantly Fanon sees this violence as organizing action that sets the stage for the nation building that will follow the achievement of independence. He explains that for the colonized,

> "To work means to work toward the death of the colonist… Violence can be understood to be the perfect mediation. The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence. This praxis enlightens the militant because it shows him the means and the end." (44)

It is by violence that the colonized have lost their humanity, Fanon argues, and thus it is through violence, and only violence, that they can regain it.

Yet despite these compelling arguments by Sartre and Fanon about the essential role violence plays in a revolution of the oppressed against their oppressors, I ultimately think that the films offer important challenges to these theories, showing at the very least that violence is not something to be taken lightly, for it leaves lasting and perhaps permanent scars on both the perpetrators and the victims, regardless of the cause for which the violence is carried out. As Homi K. Bhaba writes in his 2004 foreword to *The Wretched of the Earth*, "Fanon, the phantom of terror, might be only the most intimate, if intimidating, poet of the vicissitudes of violence. But poetic justice can be questionable even when it is exercised on behalf of the wretched of the earth" (xxxvi). I believe these films support this attitude of critically assessing the poetic justice of the violence that was enacted in the war, and importantly reflect on the ways in which the French soldiers suffered themselves as perpetrators of violence. I think these films show, as Camus argues, "bloodshed may sometimes lead to progress, but more often it brings only to greater barbarity and misery" (115).

Firstly, I shall discuss how the films *Mon Colonel* and *L'Ennemi intime* powerfully bring to life the image of a soldier helplessly caught as a mere cog in the powerful colonial wartime system, as Sartre discusses in his essay "A Victory." However, these two films complicate Sartre's treatise because the protagonists are neither entirely innocent and naïve, nor are they entirely powerless. Indeed, I shall show how the two protagonists' position as lieutenants within the army is important, because it puts the characters in an ambiguous position of power.

Secondly, I shall discuss how the graphic portrayals of torture, arguably one of the most brutal aspects of the Algerian War, in *Mon Colonel* and *L'Ennemi intime*

challenge the idea that violence can ever lead to peace, and rather show how the practice of torture inevitably leads to the degradation of the torturer and the tortured. Instead, these films seem to support Camus' argument that, "bloodshed… brings only greater barbarity and misery" (115). I argue that these films show how the violence is cyclical, feeding on itself, damaging all those involved. *L'Ennemi intime* in particular illustrates how the repeated violence and brutality the soldiers were forced to carry out leads to profound suffering and degradation for them: the violence they commit wreaks destruction not only on their victims but on themselves as well. I shall discuss how the films reveal the gradual decay of the soldiers, not at the hands of others, but through their own actions. The ability of films to viscerally portray in extreme detail and extreme closeness the sight of a writhing body undergoing electrical shocks or a mutilated, bloodied, and scarred body left to hang in the desert heat, leads one to draw into question the idea that violence can ever lead to a victory.

I shall also consider the deaths of the two lieutenants in *Mon Colonel* and *L'Ennemi intime,* examining how the endings of these films seem to operate alongside Camus' assertion that, "only the dead will be innocent" upon the conclusion of the Algerian War. I argue that the only way the films were able to maintain their protagonists as heroes, the films ultimately had to end with the deaths of the soldiers. The soldiers have, by the end of the film, inflicted too much violence in order to ever go back and return home to France, and yet they have also profoundly suffered so that they are victims as much as perpetrators. Thus, to fulfill the role of the tragic hero, the two soldiers must die.

Lastly, I shall discuss how Fanon's theories about a united colonized group challenging and overthrowing the common enemy of the colonizer are challenged by the films *L'Ennemi intime* and *Hors-la-loi*. Both these two films depict powerfully the complexity and variety of situations for Algerians involved in the war. The films reveal that Fanon's theories rest too much on the idea of a homogeneous colonized group united against a homogeneous colonizer group, when this was not ever the case for Algeria. The Algerian War, these films correctly show, was far more complicated.

L'Ennemi intime, for example, has *Harkis* for characters, and one important supporting character is a *Harki*, who reveals his motivations for fighting alongside the French. And *Hors-la-loi* focuses significantly on the extreme violence that occurred between the various rebel Algerian factions that each fought violently and desperately to become the leading group in the revolution rather than showing these groups fighting against the French. This internal violence, contrary to what Fanon theorizes, does not exhaust itself, and the Algerians never coalesce into a single cohesive, homogeneous group wholly united against the homogeneous French enemy. The film, by representing three different viewpoints in the three protagonist brothers, reveals how the divisions among the Algerians about the war were not just between different ethnic or religious groups within Algeria, but actually split even the closest of families.

The Figure of the Soldier

Both *Mon Colonel* and *L'Ennemi intime* show the degradation of their young soldier protagonists and their helplessness in the wartime colonial system. They both illustrate and challenge the idea of an innocent soldier figure as put forth by Sartre and Camus. The soldiers of both films are emphasized repeatedly as innocent, naïve, and

unfamiliar and unprepared for the harsh conditions of the war into which they are thrown. And yet, because both are lieutenants, they have some degree of control over their actions and the actions of the soldiers under their command. However, the position of lieutenant does still answer to several higher authorities, including the captain and the colonel, so a lieutenant is in some circumstances powerless, as the films show. The liminal space between innocence and culpability these soldiers occupy complicates the idea of a soldier who is completely powerless as put forth by Sartre. By making this the soldiers' first experiences with war, and having the audience arrive at the scene of the war at almost the same moment the lieutenants do, the films encourage the audience to identify with the soldiers as they become increasingly aware of and disturbed by the atrocities being committed all around them.

The two films introduce each of their lieutenants, both of whom are markedly similar, in a strikingly paralleled fashion. *Mon Colonel* first shows Lieutenant Guy Rossi through a slow fade-in from the photocopied pages of his journal to the black and white shots used for all the "past" scenes in the film as Rossi is being driven to his newly assigned base. In a voice-over of the young modern lieutenant Galois, we hear her read the lines of Rossi's journal describing how he was rushed through accelerated training in France, named a second lieutenant despite never having seen any combat, and promptly shipped off to France in 1957. The film crossfades to an extreme close up of Rossi's face, squinting in the desert sun, as he rides in a military jeep. We see the desert hills in the background, and followed by another larger military truck in the distance. The film cuts to a medium shot to show Rossi bouncing uncomfortably in his

seat. His helmet hangs low over his eyes and his uniform is clearly too big. In short, he does not look prepared to be a soldier.

Then, abruptly, accompanied by the diegetic sound of the military jeep motors running and the non-diegetic sound of slow piano music that accompanies many of the heightened emotional moments of the film, the voiceover switches to Rossi's voice. The shot is a close up of his hands as he pulls out his wallet and looks at a picture of a young woman. Rossi's voice explains, "despite what I told my friends at law school, I only enlisted because Isabelle and I broke up. I had hoped she'd dissuade me. She didn't try." Thus, the film gives perhaps almost a trite, yet strikingly innocent explanation for Rossi's enlistment: upset at the end of a relationship with his girlfriend, he made a rash and impulsive decision to join the army.

The film hints at Rossi's discomfort and his unpreparedness as it cuts to a shot of a burnt, abandoned jeep – just like the one Rossi is currently riding in – on the side of the road. Rossi's voiceover says, "and now, here I am in Algeria." Already there is foreshadowing of Rossi's eventual fate, and it seems he too realizes that he is about to face more than he had anticipated, thus reinforcing his character as innocent and naïve, yet also seemingly aware. Thus, even though Rossi enlisted, the film implies that it was not for any racist nor nationalist purposes, but rather the brash action that any

heartbroken and angry young man might do. Rossi's long lingering look at the burnt jeep reinforces his fear and malaise. Already, in these first few seconds, the film shows how Rossi's character begins to evolve. It pans down to the gun on Rossi's lap, which he picks up and places his finger on the trigger, holding the gun as though he is prepared to shoot. Thus, the film shows how the experience of fear leads to an almost instinctive rush to self-defense. Rossi begins to develop into a soldier immediately.

It is only as the jeep and convoy pull into St. Arnaud (which the sign outside the city limits claims is "Une ville française," "a French town"), does Rossi take the gun off from around his neck and appear to relax and take comfort in being in a safe and protected space. The camera follows Rossi's gaze, showing the strange view of a military checkpoint at the entrance of the town, of Muslim Algerians appearing to beg and cry out on either side of the street. He is greeted by Master-Sergeant Schmelk, who briefly acquaints Rossi with the military base. The film focuses on Rossi's questioning eyes as he surveys the groups of soldiers running laps for training and observes surprised that they are in a constant state of alert. The camera is hand-held, following Rossi's gaze and aligning with his eye level, emphasizing the audience's affinity with Rossi, as it feels as though the audience sees what Rossi sees.

Rossi's profound innocence is revealed in his first encounter with Colonel Duplan, whom he meets soon after his arrival. When Colonel Duplan asks Rossi if he understands why the military is in Algeria, and what they are doing there, Rossi responds confidently that France is on a peace keeping mission to ensure the safety of the native Algerians and the vulnerable European settlers in the face of some recent sporadic uprisings by minority extremist groups. "We pacify, sir," Rossi asserts.

Colonel Duplan shakes his head no, and tells Rossi that it is war, contrary to "what they say in Paris," and that war is not pacification.

This opening sequence with Rossi, even as it emphasizes that he willingly enlisted, thus seemingly puts him in a position of more culpability for the rest of the film. Rossi is not like one of Sartre's entirely innocent and vulnerable conscripts, because he willingly enlisted. And yet at the same time, Rossi's enlistment seems to emphasize his utter innocence and ignorance, and his belief that he would be doing good deeds through his work in the army. Thus, questions of culpability in relation to all Rossi's future actions already become complicated.

The character of Lieutenant Terrien and his introduction in *L'Ennemi intime* are strikingly similar to that of Rossi in *Mon Colonel*. Like the introduction of Rossi, the introduction of Terrien comes only after the film has somewhat acquainted the viewers with the storyline and introduced other important characters. *L'Ennemi intime* throws the audience into action in typical war-film fashion, by opening with a fight – the fight that kills Terrien's predecessor, Lieutenant Constantin, in friendly fire between the two units of soldiers.

Like Rossi, the film follow Terrien at first as he rides into his new military base in a convey of jeeps, freshly arrived in Algeria. While it is not entirely clear whether Terrien was drafted or not, the film does quickly reveal that rather than be posted at an office job in Algiers, Terrien choose to sign up for active duty in the mountainous regions. And so, like Rossi, the audience must question Terrien's culpability. He has chosen to be a soldier, he has chosen active duty, so it would seem that he must be held accountable for what he will do, since he put himself in the situation.

Unlike Rossi, who is stationed in a small city, under his commanders' supervision at all times, Terrien is stationed at a rural military outpost where he has much more authority and autonomy. Terrien's colonel soon leaves him to handle the troops on his own, with the experienced Sergeant Dougnac to assist him. It is important that Rossi and Terrien are lieutenants and not privates. They enter the war seemingly with some degree of agency; indeed they have chosen to be there in the first place. The two lieutenants maintain some control over their situations, able to command the soldiers beneath them. Yet, quickly we see that their power to resist is limited, that they are forced to comply with the orders of their superiors, as hard as they try to resist.

Sartre's describes how the soldiers in Algeria "have their backs to the wall" (66). While safe at home in France, men may make resolutions, but Sartre says, these

resolutions “they make here will appear abstract and empty when the day comes… and they will have to decide over there, alone, about France and themselves” (66). Rossi’s and Terrien’s situations aptly embody this, as each man struggles to continue to live according to his morality, to refuse to carry out summary executions or torture, for example. They both arrive innocent, believing in what they have been falsely told: that they are on a peacekeeping mission, there to help out the subjugated Algerians and the poor settlers and reduce the power of the wealthy *colons*. And yet, in the end, both of them are unable to live in actuality according to their morals, and are forced to carry out these tasks that they find so odious and morally unacceptable. In the situation of the war, their abstract values become tragically meaningless and futile.

The Question of Torture

In his essay, “A Victory,” Sartre attempts to explain how a presumably innocent young French conscript could ever become a torturer. Torture in Algeria was so widespread that it was not limited only to “career soldiers,” or older, experienced soldiers who chose to be in the army. Rather, oftentimes young, newly drafted soldiers were the ones carrying out or at least aiding in the carrying out of the torture. Contemporary historian Jacques Duquesne also notes that *Harkis* were commonly involved in assisting the French army in the torture of Algerians. Unlike during World War II, when the brutality of concentration camp operators and SS officers could be attributed to their cold-blooded masochism or psychopathic natures, Sartre emphasizes that the soldiers who torture in Algeria do not do it by choice, and do not get any pleasure out of it, but rather are mutilated, disfigured, and destroyed as surely as their own victims.

However, it is important for Sartre to assert that it is not the European colonizers who are the torturers, it is the soldiers in the army. He says, "without any doubt, the torturers are not colonists, nor are the colonists torturers" (76). While Sartre, as previously discussed, sees the colonial system as a whole as fundamentally violent, torture is perhaps the most extreme and destructive form of violence that one person could inflict upon another. Thus, the torture that occurred during the war is a form of violence that goes dramatically beyond the daily violence of colonial relations. While the colonial system oppressed, subjugated, and denied achievement of full humanity to the colonized Algerians, for Sartre, this violence pales in comparison to the utter brutality and life-negating violence of torture. It is not a historical question of whether colonizers actually joined the army and became soldiers who carried out torture themselves; rather, it is a matter of the way in which the violence of torture was fundamentally different in nature than the violence of colonial relations.

The French, Sartre says have in the "15 years" since World War II, have changed from "victims into torturers" (66). Indeed, Sartre radically argues, "depending on the circumstances, anyone, at any time will become a victim or a perpetrator" (66). This new assertion is somewhat of a break from Sartre's earlier existentialist theses positing radical freedom and self-determination. David A. Spritzen describes how in Sartre's earlier works such as *The Flies*, Sartre suggests that "we… simply choose to be whatever we want," or in *Being and Nothingness*, in which Spritzen summarizes Sartre as positing the radical freedom of individuals who are "ever and of necessity defining and redefining [themselves], others, and the world by choosing [their] future, while never being identical or determined by the past that [they have] been" (22, 20). But

witnessing the powerful, institutionalized oppressive weight of the colonial system, which seemed to force people into certain roles, stripping away freedom depending upon which position one was born into in colonial Algeria, seemed to change Sartre's view, which had already begun to be challenged by his experiences in a German prison camp during World War II.

The Muslim Algerian of 1954 simply did not have the same kind of freedom or opportunity for self-determination as the European colonizer in Algeria. Even the colonizer's life was conditioned and restricted by his position as oppressor in the oppressive system. In his later writings, Spritzen asserts, Sartre revised his position and became "increasingly preoccupied with the concrete historical impediments to, and possibilities for, the realization of human freedom" (21). Being born as a colonizer or a colonized person, or being drafted as a soldier in the French army during the war seem to have been important situations for Sartre that would be profound impediments for the possibility of freedom.

Indeed, Sartre's witnessing of the situation in Algeria arguably is what led to his gradual revision of his thesis to this radical point in 1958: anyone, at any time, given the proper situation, "*will* become a victim or a perpetrator" (66, my emphasis). From utter existential freedom to this point, in which Sartre unequivocally asserts that it is purely the historical conditions in which one finds oneself that will dictate what one will do and become. The circumstances of war in which the soldier finds himself determine his future actions;; any semblance of existential freedom seems entirely lost.

Only two questions remain open for the soldier in wartime Algeria, Sartre states: "If they pull out my nails, will I talk?" or, more significantly, for those young military

conscripts, “having scarcely left childhood,” who must “ask themselves the other question: If my friends, my brothers in arms or my superior officers, before my eyes, pull out the nails of an enemy, what will I do?” (66). The only hint of freedom that remains is the freedom to choose between two painful evils: to be tortured or to torture. And indeed it seems far more desirable and less damning to be the one whose nails are pulled out than to be the one who pulls out another’s nails.

The Battle of Algiers was the first film to display graphic scenes torture on a large screen. More recently, *Mon Colonel* and *L’Ennemi intime* have both also portrayed brutal scenes of French torture that occurred during the French army’s military campaigns in rural Algeria, and both clearly draw on the montages from *The Battle of Algiers* for inspiration. The two films place Sartre’s difficult questions before Rossi and Terrien. Both films, I argue, exemplify the limited choice of the soldiers in Algeria that Sartre discusses: to become torturers or to be tortured, and yet, as Sartre says, “victim and perpetrator are one in the same image” (66). These two films illustrate Sartre’s thesis that torture destroys the torturer as surely as the victim, and it is the act of torturing that creates the torturer. There is no way of escaping the system, but in fact sometimes “the only means of rejecting one of the two roles is to effectively assume the other” (66). In other words, the only way to avoid being a torturer is to be tortured.

Both Rossi and Terrien embody what Sartre depicts as the stereotypical innocent soldier-turned-torturer: “young men who come from France and who have lived twenty years of their life without every worrying about the Algerian problem. But the hatred was a magnetic field: it passed through, corroded, and subjected them” (76). The films both show, as discussed, the innocence of these young men when they first arrive, and

indeed suggest that until just before enlisting, and perhaps even after enlisting, neither had ever seriously worried about or considered "the Algerian problem." The films show powerfully this process of becoming a torturer, and how the "hatred" corrodes the two men, how they are swept up and implicated in the system before they realize it.

When Rossi arrives in St. Arnaud, the practice of torture has not yet been established. In fact, it is Colonel Duplan who manipulates Rossi into researching the legal precedent for the military using torture, in order to find exceptions in the law that will allow the Colonel to begin using torture on the local Algerian residents. Thus, Rossi enables the whole practice of torture to be established in the town, but entirely inadvertently. For when he does his extensive legal research on torture, he believes that rather than helping Duplan find a way to justify torture, he is finding proof that torture is entirely illegal. There is a sad dramatic irony in the film, as the film makes it clear to the audience that Rossi has been grossly naïve, and it is obvious that Duplan will institute torture regardless of what Rossi finds to be legal or illegal.

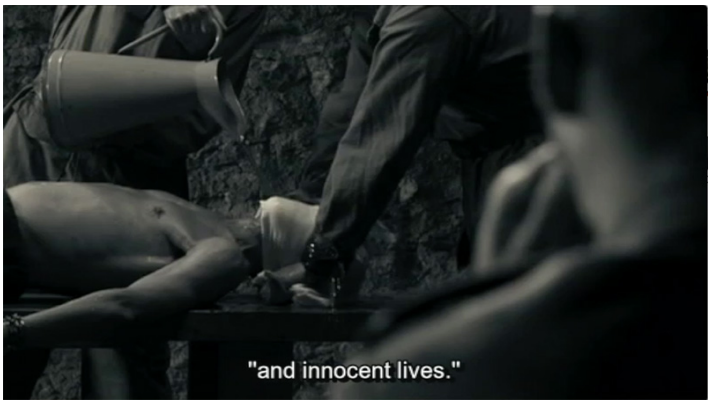
Rossi is thus emotionally destroyed and distraught to discover that his work has been used to justify torture. Duplan tricks Rossi into carrying out the first harsh interrogations, as Rossi believed that another officer was going to arrive to carry them out, while Rossi would simply be the scribe. Duplan tells him the following day that he had intentionally told the other officer not to go in order to leave the task to Rossi.

Indeed, through Rossi's gradual, inadvertent decline into a full-fledged overseer of torture, we see represented through him, Sartre's understanding of how torture came to be so widespread, so routine in Algeria: "I do not claim… that the Europeans of Algeria invented torture, nor even that they encouraged the civil and military authorities

to practice it; on the contrary, torture imposed itself, it had become a routine practice before we even realized it" (76). While one may be tempted to lay the responsibility for the torture in St. Arnaud on Duplan, attentive viewers of the film will see that Duplan has little to do with the torture. He discusses it openly, calling it by name, refusing to use euphemisms like "harsh interrogations." But Duplan himself is never present during the torture. Rather it is Rossi whom the film shows, sitting at his desk facing the torture victim and the soldiers inflicting the torture, overseeing what methods are used and recording everything the victims say.

In a montage that evokes to the torture montages of *The Battle of Algiers,* Rossi witnesses man after man stripped, intimidated, threatened, beaten, and tortured with waterboarding, electric shocks, and being left to hang tied up by the arms. The camera view switches between close up and medium shots of the bodies of the Algerian men writhing in pain as they are tortured, with the shadow of Rossi's back or shoulder, in the foreground of the shot, showing the audience the scene from Rossi's perspective. Then the camera switches to shots with the shaking and writhing tortured bodies in the foreground, and Rossi in the background looking towards the camera and the tortured

man. Rossi too shakes and writhes and cringes, trying to cover his eyes yet unable to look away as he records the proceedings.



Throughout the montage, the audience hears the voice of Rossi, who describes his conflicted emotions and his increasing doubts, despite a book by a Catholic priest that Duplan gives Rossi to “ease his conscience” about the torture. Rossi explains how the priest justified the Catholic Inquisition’s use of torture because it allowed for

"purification." The doubt and disgust for this argument is audible in Rossi's voice. The effect of a film montage is powerful, for it suggests a passage of time by its rapid succession of scenes, thus there is a sense of each scene building on the next, an increase and a repetition. *Mon Colonel* packs immense force into the sequence of brief clips of torture, and indeed although the entire montage lasts for under a minute, by the end, having witnessed so many brief moments of torture, the audience is left with the sense that these nights of torture have gone over many days, perhaps even weeks.

This sense of repetition illustrates Sartre's argument of the futility of torture, how it is "useless violence" that seeks to "extract from one throat… everyone's secret" (74). This is impossible, Sartre states, for "the vast secret is elsewhere, always elsewhere, out of reach" (74). This leads to an eternal repetition of the process of torture, for even as one rebel's name is given by a victim, there always remains that newly revealed rebel to be tortured, and then the next, and the next. Thus, Sartre says, "the torturer turns into Sisyphus: if he applies torture, he will have to begin over and over again" (74). *Mon Colonel*'s montage, showing shot upon shot of different men being tortured, reveals the task of Rossi to be very much like the task of Sisyphus, beginning the torture again and again, never having gotten the ultimate confession.

L'Ennemi intime similarly shows how Terrien becomes increasingly upset and disgusted with the war as he witnesses the torture that is carried out in the name of pacifying and maintaining control of French Algeria. The character of Sergeant Dougnac adds to the film's emphasis on the way the torture damages and harms the torturers and the soldiers who are forced to bear witness to it. Even though Dougnac is an experienced war veteran, knowing about and witnessing the torture of the Algerian

prisoners drives him to alcoholism. One night, Terrien is awakened by the jarring sound of Dougnac blowing away on his trumpet, playing one-handed, with his other hand covering his ear. Terrien goes out to help Dougnac, smiling bemusedly at Dougnac's extreme drunkenness. When Dougnac pauses his playing for a moment, a distant screaming and moaning is heard. Terrien leaves Dougnac and goes in search of the source of the sound. It is already clear to the audience that the sound is the scream of a man being tortured. While this is Terrien's first time encountering torture, Dougnac has become devastated by it, having witnessed it so often that he now has a well-established coping routine. He drinks until he is horribly drunk, then plays his trumpet in an attempt to drown out the cries of the tortured man.

Terrien weaves through the crowded, noisy mess hall, where the young soldiers laugh, joke, and drink, listening to the radio, seemingly not even noticing the occasional burst of screams. The sound, it seems, is all too normal. Terrien barges into the backroom of the mess hall and witnesses the scene, which the film shows the audience from his point of view, in a handheld camera that moves slightly as Terrien walks. Three of the Algerian soldiers stand around the old, frail man, who has a stick shoved in his mouth in an apparent failed effort to quiet his screams. His wrists and ankles are tied, and his body is bent awkwardly in half, shoved in a tub of water. Electrical cords are clipped to his body, and one of the soldiers is running the generator.

Terrien does not hesitate but rushes over to rip the cords out of the machine, and tag the gag stick out of the victim's mouth. He speaks to one of the soldiers, an "intelligence specialist," who it seems is there solely for the purpose of carrying out the torture at that base, and says, "Get the fuck out of my sector." Then Terrien storms back

out. As he leaves, the camera pans up to reveal two of the youngest soldiers sitting on a ledge up near the ceiling, who had been watching the torture happen from above, drinking and smoking. In a rage, Terrien shuts off the radio, then flips over one of the tables where soldiers had been sitting, drinking and playing cards. The room goes silent. Terrien stares at them, then leaves without saying anything.

This scene, Terrien's first encounter with torture, reveals much about his character: not only does he refuse himself to carry out torture, but he also refuses to let the soldiers under his command torture. The responsibility and culpability Terrien feels for the torture of the man is palpable, and his frustration and desire to control his men and their situation is clear in his rage when he discovers what has been happening without his knowledge. It seems, briefly in this moment, that Terrien is able to regain some measure of control, he is able to banish the intelligence specialist, and to stop the torture of the man.

However, quickly the film shows Terrien's powerlessness in the face of the torture that has already been established as a systematic, routine practice. He is helpless to prevent it. Terrien and his troops discover the man hanging outside one of the buildings, his face bloodied with flies buzzing around his body. The commander has

arrived, and Captain Berthaut, a senior intelligence officer with him, and they inform Terrien that the prisoner gave them the information they sought: the location of the FLN leader they are searching for.

The commander leaves Terrien to talk with Berthaut, who reveals that he is an experienced war veteran. With a prominent view of the tricolor French flag flying on the roof of the outpost building behind them, Terrien and Berthaut discuss the use of torture. The flag flying in the background situates their conversation as decidedly political: it is not purely an intimate, individual conversation, but rather one that represents the larger struggles of France as a whole. Additionally, the flag's presence is ironic, as it historically symbolized the revolutionary, self-determining French people in the *métropole*, but has come to represent the oppression of the French colonial empire.

Berthaut smiles as he greets Terrien, revealing only a single real tooth left in his top jaw among golden and silver metal teeth that fill the rest of his mouth. Berthaut says to Terrien, referring to the torture, “I don’t like it either. But I obey orders.” Terrien, who has been standing silently, motionless and expressionless at a distance, suddenly speaks: “If an order is morally unacceptable, you should refuse it, sir.”

Berthaut passes Terrien a large packet, filled with photos of mutilated bodies of victims of the FLN. Terrien looks only briefly before folding it back up in disgust. Berthaut explains that whenever he doubts the use of torture, he simply looks at the photos. Berthaut’s attitude embodies the situation of violence that Camus feared so much and foresaw all too keenly: “each side’s excesses reinforce the reasons – and the excesses – of the other” and so, Camus predicts, “the deadly storm now lashing our country will only grow until the destruction is general… soon Algeria will be reduced to ruin and littered with corpses” (115). The large packets of photos of mutilated corpses that Berthaut shows Terrien make Camus’ prediction seem very much a reality.

Terrien, though, refuses to be implicated in this system, arguing that to use the same methods of the FLN is to fall to their level of inhumane violence. In the next few moments, Terrien seems to sum up all of Camus’ arguments in a few short sentences. If Algeria is France, as Berthaut asserts, then, Terrien reasons, the Algerians must be given the same rights as French citizens. “You cannot fight barbarism with barbarism,” Terrien asserts. He concludes, “Sooner or later we will have to negotiate.”

It is then that Berthaut reveals his history of being tortured himself. Berthaut tells Terrien that he was a member of the Resistance during World War II, and captured by the Nazis and tortured – this is why he has lost almost all his teeth. He reassures

Terrien that soon Terrien will change his mind, will "come around" to accepting the reality of the war, "like us all." And indeed, as the film progresses, Terrien begins to be hardened and worn down by the repeated scenes of brutality and torture he witnesses. When Terrien sees more of the atrocities committed by the FLN, he becomes increasingly anguished and troubled, growing in his hatred for them even as he believes in their cause of independence more than his own purpose being in France.

He begins to hate the FLN, and then to hate himself. Sartre describes the way this hate, that both fuels and is fueled by torture, grows. He writes, "A radical hatred of man, takes hold of both torturers and victims, degrading them together and each by the other. Torture is this hatred, set up as a system, and creating its own instruments" (71). Despite Terrien's struggle to remain calm in the face of the brutalities he witnesses, ultimately this hatred takes hold of him too. In heated moments of anger, we see him brutally grab Algerian prisoners, shaking them, demanding that they speak. He tortures them himself, hoping that his shaking and hitting, which is perhaps less painful than electric shocks, will end their torture. But he only grows to loathe himself more for his actions in these moments of hatred and rage.

The Necessary Death of the Soldier

Ultimately both *Mon Colonel* and *L'Ennemi intime* end similarly, with the deaths of the two young soldiers, Rossi and Terrien. These two soldiers have by this point done too much to have any real claim to innocence were they to continue on in life, and yet finally refuse absolutely to participate any longer in the war. Their deaths echo the words of Camus in his *Algerian Chronicles*, that "soon Algeria will be populated no one but murderers and victims. Only the dead will be innocent." These

two films, by concluding with the deaths of the two soldiers, highlight the helplessness of the soldier in the face of the larger, powerful colonial situation. Although the deaths do not entirely absolve the soldier of his guilt, they do somehow soften the crimes and show how the soldier himself was ultimately more of a victim than a perpetrator. Both soldiers attempt to escape the question put before them: to kill or be killed, but ultimately the only way to escape the colonial wartime system is to negate themselves and their lives entirely.

At the end of *Mon Colonel,* after Captain Roger and the Colonel discover that Rossi has shared classified military information with his friend, the FLN-supporting Ascencio, who has in turn shared it with the FLN rebels, the Colonel puts the choice to Rossi very explicitly. To redeem himself, Rossi may continue to meet with Ascencio, but must supply names of known FLN fighters specifically chosen by the French army, to tell Ascencio that they are in fact working as informants for the French. Thus, Rossi will effectively lead Ascencio to cause internal havoc within the FLN. Or, the Colonel suggests, Rossi may commit suicide.

In this moment, the film puts to Rossi explicitly the question that Sartre raises in "A Victory." Sartre writes, "Victim and Perpetrator… in extreme cases, the only means of rejecting one of the two roles is to effectively assume the other" (66). Ultimately, Rossi chooses death, and yet the film implies that it is death by execution and not suicide. Indeed, Rossi's voiceover as the film shows him bent over the final pages of his journal, announces that he had considered suicide and decided against it. Instead, he has decided to go face the Colonel. This is important, because it shows that Rossi refuses to find himself guilty of the treason of which the Colonel convicts him.

For to commit suicide would be to admit that he had committed an error, while Rossi still believes that he did no wrong.

However, Rossi still knows that he will be executed, should he refuse to follow the Colonel's orders to betray Ascensio or to commit suicide. And yet, his choice seems almost a refusal of Sartre's binary of perpetrator or victim. Instead, in Rossi's final moments as he walks to Duplan's office, he seems to be striving for a third way, something more akin to what Camus suggests is an "obscure and thankless" task – to preserve any innocent life however possible, and to remain a "free man" (158). Camus describes the truly free men as "men who refuse both to engage in terror and to endure it" (159). Yet, ironically, it is only through death that Rossi can attain this status of a free man in the film. Rossi refuses both to participate any longer in the system as either perpetrator, which he would be if he worked as a double agent with Ascencio, or victim, which he would be if he chose to commit suicide. While Sartre assumes that the wartime situation is as Manichean and polarized as the colonial system itself, in which one's only choices are to "either terrorize or die of terror," Camus seems to suggest another kind of rebellion and revolt – a refusal to be a perpetrator of terror and to be a victim of it (Sartre 67).

Sartre's vision of a freeman would perhaps be Henri Alleg, the aforementioned writer of *La Question*, which detailed his torture at the hands of the French army. For Sartre, Alleg provides the answer to the dilemma of the troubling Manichean reality, which leads to the question, "why should we take the trouble to live and remain patriotic" by showing, "the victim frees us by letting us discover, as he himself discovers, that we have the power and the duty to endure anything" (68). For Sartre,

then, Rossi's final actions at the end of the film may perhaps make him less of a free man than Alleg was, for Rossi refused to be a part of the war and the colonial system any longer. Alleg was a heroic free man for Sartre because he endured the torture. But in *Mon Colonel,* Rossi can simply no longer endure.

While for Sartre, the power to endure suffering is what makes one a free and full man, for Camus, it is the power to refuse to endure any longer – even if, as it seems in Rossi's case, that means acknowledging the possibility of the end of one's life. Thus, I believe that Rossi embodies Camus' "free man" although this meant his certain death. Additionally, I believe the film also then, in having Rossi die, and his actual fate left unknown, as his body was never found and the military simply officially declared him "Missing in Action," confirms Camus' fatalist, tragic declaration that "only the dead will be innocent" in Algeria.

By this point in the film, Rossi has already committed too much violence, participated in too many arrests and born witness to too many scenes of torture, to be capable of being absolved of the crimes he committed, whether by the other characters in the film or by the audience. When the Colonel asks rhetorically after Rossi confesses to having shared sensitive military information with Ascencio, "What do we do with you now?" Rossi responds gravely, "I can hand in my resignation." The Colonel laughs

as he says, “You’re a soldier, Rossi. A soldier. You cannot resign.” To simply leave the military and go back to his old life is no longer an option for Rossi. Thus, the only way for the film to attempt to absolve him of his undeniable guilt is to have him revolt against the system the only other way he can: to refuse resolutely to carry out any act of violence, even against himself in an act of suicide. Rossi lives finally by Camus’ goal – to work to the last to spare any life that can possibly be spared.

L’Ennemi intime, like *Mon Colonel,* concludes with the death of its protagonist lieutenant. Although in contrast to the anti-climactic denouement of *Mon Colonel* that reveals there is no definitive closure to Rossi’s death as his body was never found, *L’Ennemi intime* concludes with the graphic shooting of Terrien by Amar, the Muslim Algerian boy whom Terrien had taken care of after everyone in Amar’s village was murdered by the FLN.

Terrien seemingly goes to his death accidentally and unexpectedly. He awakens early in the morning to find Dougnac’s medals, trumpet, and small first aid box of possessions outside his door. When Terrien asks the soldiers where Dougnac has gone, they are nonchalant and seem untroubled. They tell Terrien that the sergeant went off alone towards the ravine. Terrien goes innocently to search for Dougnac, armed only with a rifle, not dressed up in any of his military fatigues. Thus, Terrien goes to his death not knowingly and intentionally as Rossi does, but peacefully and innocently, merely searching for his friend, not seeking any violence.

The mountainous landscape seems peaceful, as the viewer scans the green terrain through the eyes of Terrien’s binoculars and the diegetic sounds of birds chirping and the wind moving in the trees is audible. Then the film cuts to a long shot of

the stony cliffs, with Terrien at the far right, almost completely camouflaged and hidden in the landscape. Suddenly, there is a movement in the bushes across the ravine, yet Terrien, initially startled, relaxes when he sees it is only a wild boar.

Then Terrien turns and raises his binoculars again to his eyes, but this time the film does not cut away to a point of view perspective. Instead the shot shows Terrien's mouth break into a smile – one of the few times he smiles in the film. It seems that whatever he sees is thus a pleasant surprise. Then suddenly a sniper's fire hits Terrien in the chest and he collapses to the ground, which the film portrays in slow motion from a distance. The smile partly remains on Terrien's face as he lies gasping for breath on the ground. The shot shows him in profile, centering on his side where the bullet hit him, his blood increasingly darkening his shirt.

Soon, a group of Algerian rebel fighters appear over the hill, which the film shows through a point of view shot from Terrien's perspective, the figures blurry and indiscernible until they grow very near. Terrien's face breaks into a wide smile as he makes eye contact with his killer, who is first identified by an extreme close-up shot of the sniper rifle in his hands, and then his face is shown: it is Amar, the young Muslim Algerian boy whom Terrien had taken in with his troops. Amar's face is serious and

emotionless, and though he still appears to wear the uniform given to him by Terrien, he now wears a turban on his head like the other FLN rebels in place of his French army cap. Terrien and Amar exchange no words, but each watches each other as Terrien slowly dies, the smile remaining inexplicably on his face.

In a sense, Terrien's death seems to be poetic justice, the relationship between Terrien and Amar having come full circle as representing the full cycle of the colonial relationship. First, Terrien, while trying to help Amar, only creates strife and chaos in Amar's village. Then, after Amar's village is destroyed and his family massacred, Terrien returns as Amar's savior, taking the boy in and treating him as other soldiers in the army. Terrien contrasts his own caring, civilized way of engaging in war with the apparently bloodthirsty and savage ways of the FLN. Then, after Amar has grown and matured, and seen not only the atrocities committed by the FLN, but also the atrocities committed by the French soldiers under Terrien's command, Amar makes his decision

and deserts the French to join the Muslim Algerian fighters. Ultimately he gains his liberation from Terrien by killing him. One could read Terrien's death then entirely in this sort of allegory of the stages of the French colonial project in Algeria between the lieutenant and the young Algerian boy.

I believe that another productive reading, however, could be through a Sartrean lens, as *L'Ennemi intime* seems to illustrate Sartre's understanding of the dualistic, Manichean colonial world, which becomes only even more harshly divided during the war. While the death of Rossi in *Mon Colonel* seems to challenge Sartre's idea that one can only be a "perpetrator" or a "victim," one "must either terrorize or die of terror," the death of Terrien at the hands of Amar in *L'Ennemi intime,* in contrast exemplifies Sartre's idea (66-7). Terrien, who has been the perpetrator, however unwillingly, of so much violence, becomes in his final moments, the victim. Because his death is sudden, and comes at a moment when everything seems to be relatively peaceful and Terrien is unarmed and unprepared, he becomes a helpless and vulnerable victim. This is an important narrative device, because were Terrien not killed, the film could certainly not maintain him as a tragic hero, a victim of his circumstances.

In order to keep Terrien the protagonist of the film rather than devolving into the antagonist, he must ultimately die. Were Terrien to survive the war, he would become a murderer who had committed crimes against humanity, and it is doubtful the film could evoke any sympathy for him. The other choices, to have Terrien desert the army as Dougnac does, or to change sides and fight with the FLN would be inconsistent with Terrien's character and historically too inaccurate to be convincing, respectively. Indeed, the whole film works to establish this impossibility of Terrien's position, his

ideals and values constantly conflicting with the reality of his capacity to act in his actual, material situation – in this way, his character is very similar to that of Daru in *Loin des hommes*.

Sartre writes, "depending on the circumstances, anyone, at any time will become a victim or a perpetrator" (66). Though Sartre doesn't explicitly say this, what this amounts to is that one may be, throughout one's life, at different moments a victim, and at others, a perpetrator. Although for a large part of the film, Terrien is a perpetrator of violence upon the native Algerians (which in turn inflicts profound suffering on himself), the film depicts Terrien in his final moments as an innocent, vulnerable, and importantly non-violent victim. Thus, the audience can end the film in sympathy with Terrien, seeing him for the final time as someone suffering bodily himself, rather than inflicting suffering upon another. True, he has committed atrocities, but what the film leaves the audience with is rather the sight of Terrien smiling, seemingly still feeling affection for Amar, even as Amar has become his murderer. The smile could also be interpreted to be Terrien's own realization of the necessity of this outcome and the inevitability of Amar turning against him. Their relationship has come full circle, as Amar grew up and asserted himself as independent and self-determining against the paternalistic, even if well-meaning, care of Terrien.

The Internal Violence Between the Algerians

In this section, I discuss how *L'Ennemi intime* and *Hors-la-loi* challenge Fanon's assertions that the fighting among the colonized Algerians would quickly exhaust itself, and give way to a united nationalist consciousness. It was, for Fanon, only through violence carried out by this unified and homogeneous collective, that the

revolution would be successful. *L'Ennemi intime* challenges Fanon's idea by having as one of its important supporting characters, a *Harki*, a Muslim Algerian man who willingly and passionately, and with good reason, fights alongside the French.

Hors-la-loi, I argue shows powerfully the intricacies of the inter-Algerian fighting that occurred throughout the war, and indeed did not end even with the signing of the Evian Accords. There was never complete unity among the Algerian peoples, these two films taken together show, thus problematizing Fanon's ideas that there could be or was such a unity, and secondly that this unified force is necessary for a revolution to succeed. Rather, these films show a more nuanced understanding of the conflicts among the colonized groups than that which Fanon provides. *Hors-la-loi* especially, by showing three different political perspectives among the three brothers, illustrates how political and ideological divisions existed among the Algerian peoples not just between different factions, but also even within families. These films challenge Fanon, who seemed to understand the colonized so well in so many ways, and show that he was perhaps dangerously and profoundly wrong in asserting the fact of a wholly united, homogeneous collective of colonized rising up against the colonizers.

In "On Violence" in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon famously calls for a violent revolution, which he sees as the only way the colonized peoples can gain their independence and liberate themselves. Because they have been violently denied their humanity, the only way it can be gained is to violently reclaim it. Sartre interprets Fanon in his preface to the work, saying that as the "offspring of violence, [the colonized] draws every moment of his humanity from it: we were men at his expense, he becomes a man at ours" (lvii). As the European colonizers used the subjugation and

violence against the Algerian colonized to raise themselves up and become "men," so too now in a reversal of the system will the Algerian colonized react back with violence and assert themselves as men at the expense of the European colonizers.

But the essential key to this violence for Fanon is that it must be unified. All the colonized peoples must rise up together in a unified, homogenous group in search of creating a single nation for them to be effective. Fanon declares a glorious vision of unity among the Algerian people: "Factions recognize each other and the future nation is already indivisible. The armed struggle mobilizes the people… it pitches them in a single direction, from which there is no turning back" (50). Fanon believes without a doubt that through violence exerted against a common enemy, the native Algerians will naturally unite. And this unity found originally in collective acts of violence will be the foundation for the newly independent nation after the war is won.

Fanon states, "the mobilization of the masses introduces the notion of common cause, national destiny, and collective history into every consciousness" (51). Fanon argues further, "the violence of the colonized… unifies the people" (51). Thus, Fanon believes that it is through violence that a national unity will be developed among the native Algerians. He argues that the violence of colonialism separates the colonized, because "by its very structure, colonialism is separatists and regionalist" and so "reinforces and differentiates" the differences between tribes (51). And so it is through fighting back against colonialism that the colonized can become united again. This line of thinking that Fanon proposes, however, seems to imply that there was a unity among the native Algerians prior to the arrival of the colonizers, who created this violence. Fanon does not seem to realize that various different factions and ethnic groups existed

in Algeria independently and had conflicts, which were sometimes violent, for long before the French colonizers arrived.

Fanon does not ignore the fact that fighting among the colonized peoples was prevalent, especially leading up into and during the early years of the war. Indeed it was sometimes this extreme violence of the native Algerians fighting each other that led the French military to justify its presence and its use of force. For example, Fanon admits, "it is not uncommon to see the colonized subject draw his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive look from another colonized subject" (17). But for Fanon, this violence purely comes because the colonized has been beaten and abused every day of his life by the colonizers with no ability to fight back. And so, Fanon, argues, "the colonized's last resort is to defend his personality against his fellow countryman" (17). Essentially, it is only because of the colonized's powerlessness in the face of the colonial oppression that he turns upon another colonized rather than upon the colonizer.

All of the violence the colonized peoples exert on each other for Fanon is simply a prelude, a manifestation of the internalized violence inflicted by the colonizer. In reality, all the violent acts the colonized commit on each other are, for Fanon, meant for the colonizer. The inter-Algerian violence is for Fanon simply one of the few ways the colonized can "release his muscular tension" pent up by the colonial system (17). Although Fanon does admit that it is a "very real collective self-destruction," he believes it will quickly exhaust itself and lead to a singular, cohesive, unified group of colonized, united against the equally homogeneous colonizers (17).

In his 2004 foreword to *The Wretched of the Earth*, Bhaba voices an important critique of Fanon's work, which I follow in my own thinking. Bhaba writes, "To have

Fanon uphold the view that the building of national consciousness demands cultural homogeneity and the disappearance or dissolution of differences is deeply troubling" (x). I believe that the prominent presence of *Harkis* in *L'Ennemi intime,* and the apparently entirely valid and comprehensible reasons they give for fighting alongside the French challenges Fanon's argument. Further, the conflicts between the three brothers in *Hors-la-loi* reveals that Fanon's idea of a complete national unity may well never be even possible at all, for divisions exist even among brothers in a single family. The violence carried out by the brothers in the name of creating a united Algerian resistance reveals how rather than violence creating unity, the struggle to create unity drives violence, which only provokes further discord among peoples. This is exemplified in one particular scene in which Messaoud murders a man for not having fulfilled his role as a supporter of the FLN.

Harkis, particularly the Muslim Algerian supporters who fought with the French in the army, play an important role in the *L'Ennemi intime*. There mere existence of the *Harkis,* who numbered some 200,000 soldiers in the French army, challenges Fanon's assertion of a unified national consciousness and cause. The character of Sayeed in particular, who offers compelling reasons for fighting alongside the French, challenges Fanon's assertion that the colonized would only fight each other until they had the opportunity and the power to fight against the French. Sayeed has both the means and the opportunities to combat the French, but instead he chooses to fight with them.

In Terrien's first mission to the village of Taïda, which we learn the French army controls by day and the FLN *fellaghas* control each night, it is the Muslim Algerian soldiers who react most violently to the villagers' refusal to share information

with the French soldiers. First the film establishes the innocence of the Muslim Algerian villagers, showing an almost bucolic, peaceful series of shots. The viewer is identified with the gaze of Terrien, as the film shows the distant view of the village with sprigs of grass in the foreground of the frame, slightly obstructing the view. Then we see the view through the binoculars: first children running and playing, then men lifting hay, then women working on a large loom. Then Terrien's binoculars focus on the face of a man who has been mutilated.

A *Harki* soldier, Rachid, informs Terrien that the man is a lookout for the village, and he had his nose cut off by the *fellaghas* for smoking, which is forbidden to Muslims. Thus, the film immediately interrupts the seeming innocence and peacefulness of the Algerian village. Before the film shows any evidence of Algerian rebel violence against the French, the film instead shows graphically an image of Algerian violence against Algerians, an explanation of which is relayed nonchalantly by the Algerian soldier.

When the soldiers enter the village to inquire about the *fellaghas*' recent activity, the frightened villagers say nothing. It is Rachid, who has just told Terrien that the village of Taïda was his own home, who interrogates his cousin, Amar, a young

boy, standing sullenly under his mother's shoulder, about the activities of the rebels. The *Harki* soldier quickly becomes angered and knocks Amar to the ground. Another *Harki*, an older, grizzled man, Sayeed, speaks up, "Give him to me. I'll make him talk." Rachid responds, "Leave him to me." The familial ties that would seemingly for Fanon draw the Algerians into even closer unity with each other instead seems to be a spark for further aggression. It is Sayeed, a Muslim Algerian, who voices the film's first hints of torture, seeking to torture another one of what Fanon would say is one of his own people. It is the *Harkis* who appear the most belligerent and bellicose, while Terrien steps in and forcefully orders, "A boy stays with his mother." The scene ends as the soldiers restively move out of the village.

Sayeed is a character who offers a convincing challenge to Fanon's theory of an internal violence that would exhaust itself, a violence turned only against other colonized because the colonized man is too impotent still to turn against the French. In a brief moment of respite for the soldiers, lounging and eating lunch on one of their missions into the forbidden zone, the audience learns, along with Terrien, the history of Sayeed. Dougnac tells Sayeed, "Sayeed, show the lieutenant your scar." Sayeed springs up and smiling broadly, opens his uniform proudly displaying a huge diagonal scar stretching from his shoulder to his hip and declares "Monte Cassino! May 18, 1943!" to the soldiers who whistle and laugh, having clearly heard the story many times before. "A bayonet cut," Sayeed explains, "74 stitches, and a medal." Dougnac, Terrien, and the other soldiers reflect on the bravery of the French soldiers who, unlike the "Brits, the Americans, the Poles, and the Kiwis" had managed to take Monte Cassino back from the Axis forces.

Sayeed revels in the praise, then grows reflective, and explains that he is “a good soldier. So good, the *fellaghas* wanted to force me to join them.” The shot is a close up of Sayeed’s face, his eyebrows furrowing and his mood becoming more serious. In the background, behind his soldier, slightly out of focus, the shot shows see Terrien watching Sayeed, clearly listening intently. Sayeed states, “They butchered my wife and my three children,” referring to the actions of the *fellaghas* who retaliated against Sayeed for his refusal to join them. The film cuts to Terrien’s face, growing still and sad. The camera lingers for a moment, as all the soldiers fall silent.

This is an important moment because it reveals Sayeed’s motivations for fighting with the French army are two-fold. Firstly, he had already been a soldier fighting for the Free French Army, and excelled as a soldier. Secondly, when he refused to turn his back on the army he had almost nearly already given up his life for, the FLN permanently alienated him by retaliating forcefully and killing his family. A man like Sayeed was not naïve in the choice he made to fight with the French, and not unjustified in his anger towards the *fellaghas*. The audience learns as Terrien does, the reason for Sayeed’s aggressive hatred of the *fellaghas*.

But perhaps the most affecting scene where Sayeed expresses his unequivocal, deep-seated hatred for the FLN is in a scene that depicts a *corvée du bois*, a summary

execution of a prisoner in the countryside. As Dougnac leads a group of soldiers to carry out the execution, Sayeed, marching behind the *fellagha* prisoner, engages him in conversation. “Why the limp?” Sayeed asks in Arabic. The film shows a close up of the Algerian prisoner’s face, distressed, covered in sweat, clearly in pain, being led by a rope around his neck. The prisoner reveals it is from a wound from World War II. Sayeed appears surprised and replies, “You were in World War II? Where were you wounded?” Sayeed is delighted and amused to discover that the soldier was in the Algerian regiment along with Sayeed that fought at Monte Cassino. Like Sayeed, the man had been wounded and honored with a medal for his bravery.

Dougnac asks Sayeed to explain, and the film shows in a medium shot, Sayeed stand close side by side with the prisoner, glancing at the prisoner’s face for the first time. “It’s incredible,” Sayeed exclaims, “We fought at Monte Cassino, the both of us together!” Dougnac appears somewhat troubled and surprised to learn that the prisoner whom he has agreed to execute is a decorated French veteran, of the 7th Algerian Infantry, 2nd Company. For Dougnac, the similarity between Sayeed and the prisoner not amusing, but rather troubling as he looks the prisoner directly in the eyes and seems to truly see the prisoner’s fear and suffering.

When the troop takes a brief rest break during their march into the countryside, Sayeed continues to converse with the prisoner lightheartedly, seemingly seeing nothing but a curious and amusing coincidence in the tragic circumstances. Even as he responds to the prisoner's question about his family, Sayeed seems untroubled to reply that they were all "butchered." He asks smilingly, "So, why'd you join the FLN?" The prisoner grows serious, and takes a long breath, staring uneasily at Sayeed. He lights both ends of the cigarette Sayeed has shared with him, holds it out in front of him. One burning end is the French, he says, and the other is the FLN. The prisoner says, "Either way, you lose. You do not know who you are anymore." It seems almost that the prisoner could be speaking of both himself and Sayeed. Each man seems to be moving to an inevitable death, regardless of which burning side they choose. The prisoner continues, now not explaining his choice, but instead offering an indictment of Sayeed: "You're no longer an Algerian. You will never be a Frenchman." Sayeed shakes his head at the man and begins to laugh, appearing entirely unbothered.

Then the film cuts to the moment of the prisoner's execution in a clearing. The camera zooms in gradually closer to the prisoner, as he stands vulnerable in the field, his jacket open revealing his bare chest heaving as he struggles to breathe. Dougnac approaches the prisoner, and in the background of the shot stands Sayeed, who shouts out in Arabic, "Go on! You're free!" The prisoner breathes heavily and loudly, glancing at each of the French soldiers who stand readily holding their guns. The prisoner turns to Dougnac imploringly, who orders him to go. It is clear the prisoner is familiar with this style of execution, knowing the moment he turns, he will be shot in the back. The film increases the dramatic tension with the distant sound of thunder, the scene

darkening as rain begins to fall. As soon as the prisoner turns, each of the soldiers in the background lift their guns and cocks the triggers.

Suddenly, the prisoner turns and cries out “wait!” in French. He takes out of his coat a small medal, crying out “my medal!” and clumsily pins it on the lapel of his jacket. Then he stands in salute and says, with his hand up at his forehead, “you can go ahead and shoot now.” Dougnac appears deeply troubled by this, and the film shows an extreme close up of his face, as he drops his head. It is clear he cannot stomach the idea of killing a decorated French army veteran, a brother at arms. Dougnac orders the soldiers to be at ease, and commands the prisoner to go, reassuring him that he will not be shot, that he really is free.

The soldier, warily trusting Dougnac, turns and begins to run, pitifully limping due to his wound. Suddenly, a shot rings out and the film shows from a long shot the body of the prisoner writhing in the air before falling dead to the ground. The film cuts to Sayeed as he lowers his gun, his face drawn and grim, as the other soldiers look on in shock. Dougnac slaps Sayeed to the ground in a fury, but Sayeed cries out, “a fellagha like him murdered my family!” Sayeed shows no remorse for the killing, only anger and desperation, seeming to realize that he will never be able to achieve the justice he desires, no matter how many FLN rebels he kills. This highlights the unquenchable

thirst for vengeance that takes over not just Sayeed, but Terrien and many of the soldiers throughout the film.

The film cuts to an extreme close up of the dead prisoner on the ground, showing the side of his face and the glinting gold of his medal, as flies begin to descend upon him. This final shot of the scene provides a provocative image of the reality of the man's death, the real consequences of the violence embodied in a single man. The central position of his French army medal signifies the multiple ways in which the man sacrificed himself and suffered for France. First, he was honored for his valiance in war fighting to liberate France. Then, when he sought to use this same courage to fight to liberate his own people, he becomes not a war hero but a criminal to be executed.

Thus, the film makes clear that contrary to Fanon's theories, the violence between the Algerians did not exhaust itself so quickly and easily, and was not so

simple as the colonized peoples turning on each other solely because they were at first too impotent and powerless to turn upon the colonizers. Additionally, the film complicates even the figure of the FLN prisoner: he is not a wholehearted hater of the French, unquestioningly devoted to the FLN. The prisoner wants to die the death not of a rebel but of a decorated French army veteran, facing his executioners bravely in a salute. Additionally, the prisoner's final words are in French. In his final moments, even the FLN fighter, the symbol of Algerian resistance, seems torn in his loyalties, still retaining a trace of pride in having once been an honored soldier fighting for France.

The character of Sayeed, and particularly this event in which he comes into contact with a character who acts as his foil, someone who he could have been, further complicates Fanon's argument that the reason for violence between Algerians was a pent-up tension due to the violent treatment by the colonizers. Rather, we see that Sayeed's violence comes from a deep sense of loyalty to the French military, despite his treatment as a lesser human in the colonial system, and an even deeper resentment of the FLN, whom he views as made up of nothing but murderers.

While *L'Ennemi intime* offers a powerful challenge to Fanon's assertion that the violence of the war would unify the Algerians against the common French enemy, the film *Hors-la-loi* gives another important critique to Fanon's theory. *Hors-la-loi* challenges Fanon's idea that the inter-Algerian violence of the "fratricidal struggles" would inevitably and necessarily "exhaust itself" (21). Indeed, the film takes this question of "fratricidal struggles" literally, by focusing on three brothers who conflict in their political views and actions to the death, revealing that this internal violence does not end as simply nor as quickly as Fanon believes it will. *Hors-la-loi*, by depicting the

ways that political ideologies and loyalties conflicted among the Muslim Algerians, even within a single family, argues against Fanon's belief in the possibility of a single, unified, cohesive group of Algerians. Each of the three brothers, Messaoud, Abdelkader, and Said, hold slightly different positions on the French colonization of Algeria and the burgeoning war, which leads to much strife and conflict between the brothers. Indeed, throughout the film, we see almost equal amounts of violence between the different liberation factions each fighting for control over the Algerian people, and between these factions and the French.

Messaoud, the eldest of the three brothers, is also arguably the most complex and nuanced of the three in his ideologies. He is proud of his war wounds and having been a skilled soldier who fought valiantly for France. He seems to ascribe to traditional values, as he agrees to his mother's proposed arranged marriage. And yet also, when his younger brother, Abdelkader implores him to team up with him in working for the FLN, Messaoud agrees. He soon becomes the special hit man for the FLN, using a string to quietly strangle chosen victims. However, Messaoud at times expresses reservations about Abdelkader's actions, and their relationship especially becomes strained when Messaoud discovers that Abdelkader anticipated Messaoud's wedding being broken up with ten of the men arrested by a police raid, due to a murder the two brothers had committed earlier. Messaoud struggles when Abdelkader's political activism seems to endanger their family. Although all the brothers are fiercely devoted to protecting each other and their mother, Messaoud is the one who takes on this role the most. His conscience becomes increasingly troubled as Abdelkader sends him on murder assignments, while his wife is pregnant with their first child, Abdelkader shows little

mercy and encourages Messaoud to flee with him out of France to organize terrorist fighters for the FLN. Ultimately, Messaoud is killed in a gunfight, protecting Abdelkader. He dies in his brother's arms, as Said drives the two away from the fight.

Abdelkader is the middle brother, the revolutionary imprisoned in Paris early on in his life, who becomes radicalized during his time in prison. Abdelkader's character seems based on the FLN *fellaghas* from *The Battle of Algiers*. He rebels passionately throughout the film, without ever thinking of his safety. Abdelkader is the kind of revolutionary whom Fanon imagines, who will stop at nothing to bring about the liberation of Algeria. He joins the FLN after his time in prison, because he believes that the MNA will be ineffective, because the MNA as a peace-promoting party puts their faith in the political system.

Abdelkader decries the MNA, and some of his first acts on behalf of the FLN are, with Messaoud's assistance, murdering prominent Algerian Parisian supporters of

the MNA. For Abdelkader, violence and force are the only way to make France pay attention to Algeria.

Due to living in Paris with his family, Abdelkader takes it upon himself to lead the FLN campaign to bring the violence of Algeria to the people of Paris. Abdelkader's politics bring him into conflict with both of his brothers at various moments, because he does not worry about endangering their family, and because he refuses to accept anything less than total devotion and commitment to the mission of the FLN. Abdelkader dies almost pathetically at the end of the film, shot abruptly in the midst of the riots in the subway station on the night of October 17, 1961.

Said is the youngest brother, the resourceful and practical one, who whisks his mother away from the violence of Algeria to the relative safety of the *bidonville* (shantytown, slum) outside of Paris, so that she can be close to Abdelkader. Said seems the least politically concerned of the brothers, and the most pragmatic when it comes to surviving by any means possible. In Algeria, prior to the Sétif massacre when his two brothers are marching in the political demonstration, we see Said gambling successfully at a boxing match. His passion for gambling and for boxing already reveals him at odds with traditional Islamic values.

Once in the slum, Said quickly finds work and becomes a pimp, making money however he can to support himself and his mother. He rapidly develops his business, and after a few years owns a successful cabaret called “The Casbah.” Said is proud of his entrepreneurship, and does not want his newfound stability or business success to be jeopardized by his brothers’ political activities, so he largely resists getting involved. Said’s relationship with his brothers becomes very strained when they demand to collect half of the profits of Said’s cabaret to put towards the FLN, yet Said is forced to give in, knowing that the force of his two brothers is more powerful than him.

His brothers put incredible pressure on him when Said reveals he is training a new young Algerian man, who he hopes will become a champion boxer for France. Abdelkader is disgusted, saying that the man must never fight for France, and instead should fight for Algeria. Said argues that if his protégé fights and wins on behalf of France, it will win respect for all the Algerians. But Abdelkader remains firm that only when Algerians can fight for Algeria, and win against the French, will they gain respect. Ultimately Said manages to navigate the pressure of both his brothers and the Parisian police, and is the only one of his brothers to survive to see the end of the war.

It seems that Abdelkader is the archetypal Algerian of whom Fanon dreams: he is wholeheartedly devoted to the cause of liberation through violence, and rids himself of his "passive and despairing attitude" and his "inferiority complex" through the "cleansing force of violence" (51). But in fact, *Hors-la-loi,* by placing Abdelkader as only one among three brothers, suggests that the view that he espouses was perhaps not always the majority opinion of the Algerian people.

Although I do not take the film to suggest that each brother represents symbolically one third of the entire Algerian population's political beliefs with Messaoud the relative moderate, Abdelkader the extremist *fellagha,* and Said the *Harki,* I do think the film does powerful work by placing these three distinct figures as three brothers within a family. In doing so, the film emphasizes the intimacy of the conflict among and between the Algerians. These were not tribal conflicts that would run their course, as Fanon predicts. Instead, *Hors-la-loi* shows that conflicts of interest, and differences of hopes and fears divided even the closest of relations. If even the closest of brothers within a single family are never completely unified in their political beliefs against their French oppressors, then how could one ever imagine all the people of a nation of some 9 million Muslim Algerians to be unified?

Hors-la-loi challenges Fanon's theory of violence not only because it shows the tension and possibility of coexistence of multiple different political ideologies and value systems, but also because it graphically illustrates the violent methods the FLN used to ensure loyalty among the Algerian people. Under Abdelkader's command, the FLN violently suppresses any disobedience or resistance among Muslim Algerians. The film shows the early days of the FLN's struggle to gain supporters and suppress the MNA,

and later in the film, the FLN's harsh punishments for all of its own members who do not adequately demonstrate their loyalty. One moment in the film that exemplifies this is when Abdelkader sends Messaoud to kill a minor character, Omar, whom Abdelkader discovers has been stealing small amounts of money from the organization's funds.

When Abdelkader informs Messaoud of his latest task, Messaoud glances at his pregnant wife, who walks slowly away from the men into their small shanty. Messaoud speaks slowly to Abdelkader, "He has three children. A warning…" But Abdelkader responds vehemently, "Discipline! No warning! It only takes one disobedience or one betrayal." At last Messaoud agrees to carry out the murder.

The film cuts to the interior of Omar's apartment. It is revealed that Omar used the money to buy a fridge to be able to keep more food for his three children. He offers, "it's yours, take it" and then "I'll sell it. I won't do it again, I promise." Another FLN member stands by Omar's wife, who cries and pleads with Messaoud to not punish her husband. "It was me who wanted the fridge!" she cries, and Messaoud pats her tenderly on the shoulder, telling her not to be afraid, as the other FLN member escorts her outside. Then Messaoud directs Omar to sit in the chair in the dimly lit room, the fridge glowing prominently in the left of the shot. The shot shows only the backs of Omar and

Messaoud, and the audience hears Omar's voice pleading, "Please. I have three children. A second chance, please." But, as in the previous murders the film has shown Messaoud carry out, he quietly and quickly unravels the short string he keeps in his pocket, and uses it to strangle Omar from behind. Once Omar is dead, the film follows Messaoud into the bright yellow light outside, and is framed closely on Messaoud's face as he bends over, expressionless, and vomits. Then he straightens up and walks away.

Thus, the film depicts in a brief scene the mercilessness of the FLN's methods, and the utter loyalty the organization demanded from its members. For the sake of the larger goal of a liberated Algeria, the organization stops at nothing, even murdering its own members should they transgress a rule. Messaoud's moment of physical illness and nausea after the murder humanizes him and evokes sympathy for him, especially as this scene of grotesque murder is situated between scenes of him with his own wife and family. In a way, then, Messaoud's crime becomes even more tragic when the film reveals the disgust he feels towards himself for committing it. By highlighting some of the violent methods the FLN used to gain and maintain support, the film suggests that even when there was some semblance of national unity and rallied support behind the FLN, it was not necessarily freely given by the Algerian people.

Summarizing Thoughts

These films importantly bring to light the complexity of the situation in Algeria, more effectively in some ways than did Sartre and Fanon in their observations. While the two thinkers insisted on a strictly divided dualistic colonial world, these films show that this was not the case, and not even in the war were there two distinct sides fighting against each other. As historian Martin Evans writes,

> "The violence of the Algerian War was a diverse violence. This was never a struggle between two monolithic blocs. It was never just colonizer versus colonized. It was a violence which drew in a range of political and social actors and… set French against French and Algerian against Algerian." (336)

The complexity and utter divisiveness of the violence in the war is illustrated more effectively in *Mon Colonel, L'Ennemi intime,* and *Hors-la-loi* than Sartre and Fanon account for in their works.

Evans further notes the significance of the violence that the FLN inflicted on Algerians to gain their support. This violence was not a frustrated release of internalized oppression as Fanon interprets, but rather the "bloodshed within the FLN was motivated by the lust for power. FLN activists were killing other FLN activists for political and social advancement " (336). Furthermore, Evans also highlights another point that Fanon misses: that violence among the various groups in Algeria had "deep roots in Algerian society that pre-dates the colonial period" (336). While these films focus on the conflict of the war rather than historic, pre-colonial violence, I think they do much to complicate and problematize Fanon's idea of a unity and solidarity that can be achieved through violence.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

> "Understand that the greatness of a nation is not measured by the quantity of blood it causes to flow, but by the number of human problems it solves; stop the hostilities immediately, negotiate… for peace, bring together all men. "
>
> – Jean-Paul Sartre, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*

Even after this lengthy discussion, many questions linger, which I believe attests to the richness of these films, and their possibilities of provoking serious thought about important issues that continue to face the world today: systematic oppression and wartime violence. A few important questions remain to be addressed in further work, which I have only just barely touched on. First is the question raised by Camus of culpability and innocence. Is it true, as he asserts, that "only the dead will be innocent" upon the conclusion of the Algerian War? Certainly the continued French unease about publicly and openly discussing the war and France's colonial heritage seem to suggest some sense of guilt or shame.

This raises the further question then, of how not just the people of France, but all of us, citizens of today's world and inheritors of a history of imperial domination and oppressive force, can go forward to ameliorate current problems and resolve past wrongs. This is a question of what options the citizens of the world today have available to work towards future resolutions that would put an end to the oppression and violence that continue to harm people around the world. These are concerns not only for the people of France, but for all nations and their citizens in positions of oppressive power. I believe that for the people of France particularly, this moving forward must start in

fact by looking backward and acknowledging the past harm done, particularly the Algerian War, that has brought France to its contemporary moment.

For indeed in France today, oppressive systems, inequality, and discrimination continue against ethnic minorities and immigrant groups. Before, during, and after the Algerian War, France received waves of immigrants from its former colonies, including thousands from the Maghreb alone. These immigrants were often housed in camps or HLMs (*Habitation à Loyere Modérés*), housing projects consisting of small scale to vast apartment complexes built on the outskirts of cities, much like Majid's as depicted in *Caché*. Indeed, these HLMs have become like ghettos today, in which immigrants and their descendants live segregated from ethnically French peoples, making any contact between cultures or cultural assimilation on the part of the immigrants much more difficult. Today, unemployment and poverty rates are still higher in HLMs than in other residential areas in France. To understand the large presence of immigrants in France, the French people of today must look to their nation's colonial history, which will further illuminate how oppression and discrimination began and continue to persist.

Additionally, the presence of a variety of groups in France with conflicting interests surrounding the memory of the war – descendants of Algerian immigrants who came to France before the war, *Harkis* and their children, called colloquially *beurs*, war veterans and their descendants, and *pied-noirs* and their descendants – has further made it difficult for France to come to any shared, collective memory or methods of remembering the war. The war is so sensitive for each of these groups in different ways, that any attempt to address the wrongs that one group experienced is met with outcry by other interest groups. For example, in recent years, *pied-noirs* have begun to construct

memorials and open museums, but these efforts have been met with criticism and resistance. According to Michael Kimmelman in his article, "In France, a War of Memories Over Memories of War," many French people from various interest groups have responded to these efforts with "consternation" because they "feel the *pied-noir* story told by some of its more right-wing partisans, is incendiary and not one that anyone needs to hear now." With each group attempting to silence the efforts of any others attempting to open discussion about their experiences of the war, much still remains to be addressed, and any dialogue between groups still seems virtually impossible. However, like Camus, I believe that discussion across borders and ideological boundaries in order to come to common understandings and mutual recognition is essential to moving forward. Thus, common ground must be found.

While the solution proposed by Sartre, Memmi, and Fanon to eliminate the colonizers from the colony, and thereby end the colonial situation itself, seemed to work successfully in the context of Algerian independence in 1962, I do not believe humanity's response to these problems can be so simple today. Nor do I believe that any violent measures, including the furthest extremes of violence such as torture, are justified by the noble end of human liberation. Violence does not liberate, these films show, and neither do suffering and being a victim of this violence ennoble one.

Sartre believed that because the colonizers were "men" at the expense of the colonized, the colonized would in turn become men at the expense of the colonizer (lvii). In his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, Sartre states that as the "offspring of violence, [the colonized] draws every moment of his humanity from it" (lvii). I do not believe, whoever, that one can ever be fully human by relegating another being to a

subhuman position, nor can one draw one's humanity by committing acts of violence against one's fellow humans. The colonizer and colonized, the perpetrators and the victims, are both degraded and destroyed as they engage in cycles of reciprocal violence. And the idea of a unanimously unified force of people, who come together through a communal violent effort against a common enemy is impossible.

Thus, I think that although Camus' proposed solutions led him to be condemned, ridiculed, and ignored from all sides during his lifetime, in fact Camus' calls for open, honest dialogue, for an acknowledgment that all people inhabit a common earth, on which we will all live and die together, ring the most true now with our contemporary situation in our globalized, interconnected world. I believe that Camus' words are perhaps even more useful and important to us now than they were to the people of 1962. Although in 1962, it was indeed possible to banish and remove every person of European descent from Algerian soil – something that surely would have been devastating for Camus had he lived to see it – I believe that today, Camus' solution to the systemic oppression and the cyclical, ever-worsening violence he witnessed, could be the most effective solution to end oppressive relations and move forward together.

Camus was perhaps mistaken about the particular historical situation of Algeria and France, but he had incredible foresight to see that the world is too closely interconnected and interdependent, with cultures and peoples too closely mixed and intertwined to ever truly remove and separate groups of people. In Algeria in 1962, the solution to ending the systematic oppression of the Muslim Algerian colonized by the *pied-noir* colonizers was to remove all Europeans, Jewish Algerians, and *Harkis* from the nation. But I believe we can no longer attempt to apply the solution of ending

oppression by killing or exiling oppressors in today's intricately interconnected, globalized world. Thus, Camus' words are truer now more than ever.

Camus' proposed solution rests on a foundational necessity of open dialogue and discussion among peoples. I think an important part of this is an acknowledgment of historical, past wrongs done. So far, France has had great difficulty with acknowledging the Algerian War, but I think these films do important work to raise these difficult questions, and could perhaps spur conversation – should the French people take the time to see them.

According to Benjamin Stora, the aforementioned *pied-noir* and preeminent historian on the Algerian War, the problem is no longer that there is not information available about the war; rather, the problem is that the French are choosing to not seek out this information. In "The Algerian War: Memory through Cinema," Stora argues that it has not been state censorship that has led to the popular belief that there is a dearth of films on the Algerian War, but rather self censorship by the French people themselves. For example, Stora explains how commonly, it has been assumed that *The Battle of Algiers* was widely censored by the French government, when in fact there was never any official state censorship. Rather, movie theaters simply didn't show the film, knowing it would be unpopular. Even when the film was finally screened on national television in 2004, it received relatively low viewing rates. The sense that there are not films about the Algerian War is a false public attitude, Stora argues, and a result of decades of the French people choosing not to seek out the wealth of films available.

Very few films were officially censored, Stora writes, and rather it was due to general disinterest and, at times, threats from *pied-noirs* or French military veterans,

that discouraged movie theaters from showing films that were made about the war. Indeed, even the films I have discussed have mostly met indifference and ambivalence in France, despite all of them receiving various awards at the international film festivals where they have been premiered and screened.

While Rachid Bouchareb's film *Indigènes* that I earlier discussed, which tells the story of the Maghrebi and African soldiers who helped liberate France during World War II, was a huge commercial and popular success, *Hors-la-loi*, which is in fact a follow-up film, starring the same three actors, all of whom are popular in France, was a box office failure. Indeed, of all the films I discussed, *Hors-la-loi* is particularly interesting because it was met not with indifference, but with outright vocal protest by right-wing members of the French public, including *pied-noirs* and their descendants, and French military veterans. According to the *BBC*, hundreds of protestors gathered in Cannes, where the film was screened at the Cannes Film Festival, to argue that the film was anti-French and that it falsified history. Protestors displayed signs that said "Palme du Mensonge," a play on the "Palme d'or," the highest prize at Cannes, which translates to "Palm of Lies." Besides this strikingly negative and hostile response to this film, even before it had been premiered, the rest of the films have simply been mostly ignored in France. Both the reactions of indifference and of condemnation and protest before the film has even been screened are deeply troubling and telling.

Stora argues that the French response to films about the war reveals that by and large, the French people are not ready and are continuing to refuse to face up to the reality of their dark history. In a 2014 interview with *The New York Times*, Stora emphasizes the importance of the war, despite the French reluctance to acknowledge it.

Stora says, “We still haven’t taken the full measure of how much this war, this history, this French presence in Algeria, has marked and traumatized French society, like a bitter family secret…Everything — everything — stems from Algeria.” I agree with Stora that one important way the war has begun to be addressed in France is through films. But of course, if no one goes to see them, these films cannot do much.

I hope that the work I have done through this thesis shows the real value that these films have to raise these pressing questions not only in the narrow context of French Algeria and the Algerian War, but in the larger context of our human condition as a whole. The age of colonialism may be officially over, but neocolonial relations and systems of oppression based on economic exploitation, disenfranchisement, and racism still persist in our world today. Exceedingly brutal conflicts still rage in the Middle East, and as recently as in the Iraq War (2003-2011), the United States military has acknowledged using torture. In fact, in 2003 the Pentagon held a screening of the film *Battle of Algiers* for high up government defense officials, when the Iraq War was in its early stages, the violence beginning to escalate. Clearly the questions addressed in these films are still timely and relevant to not just the people of France, but to all of us today.

Even Sartre, who advocated at times so passionately for violence in the revolution as the most effective means for the colonized to achieve their liberation, admitted at last that, “the greatness of a nation is not measured by the quantity of blood it causes to flow, but by the number of human problems it solves” (106). I think that this must be kept in mind today more than ever before.

In the 1950s, Camus wrote of the Algerian situation that,

> "people must live together where history has placed them, at a crossroads of commerce and civilizations. They can do so only if they are willing to take a few steps toward one another for a free and open debate. Our differences should then help us rather than drive us apart. In this as in other things, I for one, believe only in differences, not uniformity, because differences are the roots without which the tree of liberty withers" (153).

Camus' words are still more than true for us today, as we too live "at a crossroads of commerce and civilizations" more connected today than ever before by the global economy and technology that enables instantaneous communication and connections with people around the world. It is up to us now then to choose a "free and open debate," and to embrace differences. So far, Stora states, "even after fifty years, cinema is still unable to bring together all of the wounds, all of the memories" (106). But just because so far, film has not been able to heal the traumatic memories of the war, does not mean it cannot in the future. With an increasing number of films released in just the past few years, the French people are, at the very least, receiving an increasing number of perspectives on the war, an increasing number of opportunities to remember and to discuss. I believe that the honest and open discussion that Camus called for is not so far off, and that perhaps this discussion will be sparked by a film.

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