Cowboys and Indians in Africa:

The Far West, French Algeria, and the Comics Western in France

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Romance Studies in the Graduate School of Duke University

2017
ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the emergence of Far West adventure tales in France across the second colonial empire (1830-1962) and their reigning popularity in the field of Franco-Belgian bande dessinée (BD), or comics, in the era of decolonization. In contrast to scholars who situate popular genres outside of political thinking, or conversely read the “messages” of popular and especially children’s literatures homogeneously as ideology, I argue that BD adventures, including Westerns, engaged openly and variously with contemporary geopolitical conflicts. Chapter 1 relates the early popularity of wilderness and desert stories in both the United States and France to shared histories and myths of territorial expansion, colonization, and settlement. Across the nineteenth century, as the United States acquired territories west of the Mississippi and assembled its continental empire, France annexed and incorporated Algeria as “national” space and expanded its second colonial empire into Africa and Asia. I show that tales of white heroics in dramatic frontier landscapes traveled between and across both empires and served the colonizing and civilizing missions of both. Chapter 2 charts the emergence of the Western genre on both sides of the Atlantic at the turn of the twentieth century and its conquest of French audiences by the interwar period. I demonstrate how Western storylines across media – in fiction, in the arena, in comics, and on screen – responded to shifting sentiment in America and France regarding past
conquests, the livability of the industrial present, and the viability of colonial rule.

Chapter 3 argues that BD adventures from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, including Westerns, worked through the challenges, legacies, and impasses of empire-building and colonization, even as censorship in France during the Algerian war of independence levied content restrictions on the children’s press. Moral referenda on comics in general steered the adventure into “acceptable” territory, which for the overlapping postwar, Cold War, decolonizing periods meant future-oriented stories in which cowboy heroes far from home played out the winning of the “West” across France’s own frontiers in Africa and Asia. My final chapter takes up BD Westerns published in France across the final decades of empire. I argue that tales of cowboys and Indians both circumvented censure and provided adolescents with a variety of ways to think within and beyond empire by displacing contemporary concerns about the wars in Indochina and Algeria onto the mythico-historical context of the settling of the American West. Using key examples from Sitting Bull, Jerry Spring, and Blueberry, I show that realist Westerns invited young baby boomers to envision different futures for France, explore taboo subjects, and work through contested histories and memories of colonial occupation in ways that colonizer tales set in Africa did not.
For Bill, Sam, and Lucy
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Introduction

Mille castors ! Les Algériens se battent pour l’indépendance comme nous....
—Blek le Roc, reimagined by Farid Boudjellal¹

Little Mahmoud, the six-year-old Algerian boy at the center of Farid Boudjellal’s
Petit Polio series, lives his life through comics.² Each month, he feverishly awaits the
release of the next magazine installment of his favorite comics adventures and the
 cyclical reappearance of the heroes whose small victories rhythm his days and give them
meaning. For Mahmoud, stolen moments with the magazine Kiwi alleviate the crush of
living seven to an apartment in the southern French city of Toulon and as a family of
migrants during Algeria’s war of independence from France (1954-1962).³ He dives into
the fictional frontier worlds of Blek le Roc, Davy Crockett, Miki le Ranger, or Tex to
forget the triple stigma of his nationality, poverty, and polio affliction. Reading also
lessens the sting that the mother of his good friend is sick and will die, and the anxiety

² The three-episode Petit Polio series is semi-autobiographical. Boudjellal was born to Algerian parents in
1953 in Toulon, France, and was also a polio survivor. Mark McKinney reports that Boudjellal incorporated
photographs and memories from his own childhood into the series “as a way of drawing himself and the
French-Algerian community into, and as part of, French society.” Mark McKinney, Redrawing Empire in
French Comics (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013), 197-198. Boudjellal was awarded the
Ecumenical Jury of Comic Books Award for Petit Polio at the Festival International de la Bande Dessinée in
³ On debates surrounding the dating of the war “with no name” to 1954 instead of 1945, see Sylvie Thénault,
massacres du Nord-Constantinois de 1945, un événement polymorphe,” in Histoire de l’Algérie à la période
coloniale, eds. Abderrahmane Bouchène, Jean-Pierre Payroulou, Ouanassa Siari Tengour, and Sylvie
Thénault (Paris, Alger: La Découverte, Barzakh, 2012), 502-507. On the naming of the war, see Benjamin
Stora, La Gangrène et l’oubli : la mémoire de la guerre d’Algérie (Paris: La Découverte, 1991), 8-24; Todd Shepard,
The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,
2006), 3-10, 55-81.
that his father will love the new baby best. One day in August 1958, Mahmoud and his friends witness the street arrest and beating of an Algerian man caught riding the trolley without a ticket. The man looks like his father. Mahmoud hurries home to unpack his comics collection and digest the implications of what he saw. As he reads and eats, he moves between memory and fantasy, overlaying the events that he witnessed with a vengeance story starring Blek le Roc conceived spontaneously in his head. Mahmoud writes himself onto the page and into the comics episode, picturing himself securely within the bosom of a resistance led by Blek, the French-Canadian trapper hero of a colonial-era North America. Mahmoud calls on him and his sidekicks to intervene on behalf of the nationalists in Algeria’s own fight against the imperialists. Blek quickly sends smoke signals to raise a small army in the wilderness and they all set off under his command for French Algeria. “Mille castors!” cries Blek. “Les Algériens se battent pour l’indépendance comme nous [...] Partons libérer le pays de Mahmoud!”

Boudjellal draws the sequence to encompass both Mahmoud’s present and the diegesis simultaneously, as a palimpsest that maps the Algerian war onto anticolonial activity in North America without blending the two or fully erasing the meanings of

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either. Mahmoud, drawn in color in short pants and suspenders, does not merge with or disappear into the black-and-white setting of the series. Text alone bridges past and present, and it does so delightfully by exploiting anachronism and out-of-placeness. The eighteenth-century French-Canadian heroes open the segment, for instance, with a hankering for “une horba,” “un chichi-fregi,” and “le bon couscous de Madame Slimani.” But the jarring visual rendering of Mahmoud as contemporary, as himself, forces readers to hold the peoples, places, and events of three continents in their heads at once and to evaluate the compatibilities and similarities between the different colonial projects launched from western Europe to settle North America and North Africa. Is it significant that Mahmoud finds such easy correspondence between an Algeria in revolt and a frontier “Far” West? Does the remoteness of the Québec setting, with its sparse populations of hunters, traders, and settlers, insurgecting bands of natives, and colonial towns and outposts, align in his imagination with the colonized regions and diverse landscapes of French Algeria? The Blek le Roc series, published originally in Italian as Il

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7. Farid Boudjellal, 46.

8. The “Far West” in Jeffersonian America generally signified the northwestern territories closer to the Pacific, and particularly the British-controlled Oregon Territory. Far West mythology since then has fixed the “frontier” zones to points west of the 98th parallel, which elides the fact that all of America, including the easternmost shores, represented an imperial frontier at some point in history. On the shifting frontier in U.S. history, see Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in _The Frontier in American History_ (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 1-38. On early American conceptions of the West, see especially Henry Nash Smith, _Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth_ (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 15-18; Carolyn Gilman, _Lewis and Clark: Across the Divide_ (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2003), 51-81.
Grande Blek and adapted in French in the mid-1950s as *Le Petit trappeur*, chronicled anticolonial activity against British redcoats in a time of Native American sovereignties, but it openly catered to readers’ familiarity with the tropes of Western novels, cowboy comics, and B Western cinema. Co-creator Dario Guzzon recalled:

> J’avais pas mal de souvenirs de lecture d’une des périodes les plus floues de l’histoire des U.S.A., celle où toutes les tribus indiennes n’étaient pas encore découvertes et où les trappeurs chassaient. Ce créneau nous permettait de ne pas trop nous éloigner du genre western qui commençait son appogée.⁹

In *Petit Polio*, however, does it matter to Mahmoud’s understandings of his own present and future that the question of revolt in North America had long been settled, not only in favor of the Anglo-American colonizers, but to the detriment of the native peoples who had once occupied its deserts, forests, mountains, and plains? Did the settings and stories of the American frontiers somehow hold solutions to the “problems” or answers to the “questions” that were gripping the trans-Mediterranean France of Mahmoud’s time?

This dissertation argues that tales of the American frontiers and of cowboys and Indians battling in an unconquered Far West peaked in popularity across the 1950s in France precisely because they explored themes of resistance and repression and vaunted military efforts in geographies that strikingly resembled French Algerian theaters of

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⁹ The series also appealed to a different demographic than did other major series and journals in circulation in France at the time. According to Guzzon: “L’originalité de notre travail, c’est son public: des enfants, des pauvres, des immigrés, un melting-pot de gens sans grande éducation. Nous n’avons pas spécialement cherché à le viser, mais nous étions, nous-mêmes, au départ sans grande culture, des fils de prolétaires.” Quoted in Mourad Boudjellal, “Introduction,” in *Essegesse, L’Intégrale Blek le Roc*, vol. 1 (Toulon: Soleil Productions, 1994), np.
war. America’s histories and heroes, myths and landscapes, reconfigured in hundreds of different ways for French readers and movie-goers after the Second World War, helped the new generations make sense not only of the Occupation, Resistance, and Liberation, but of the new and increasingly violent conflicts unfolding in the colonies and in France’s African departments. The story of the Western’s popularity in France in the mid-twentieth century, however, as the first chapter shows, is rooted in the transatlantic, transimperial exchanges of the nineteenth century.10 As the United States consolidated its territory from sea to shining sea from the 1830s to the 1890s, France founded its second colonial empire with the invasion of Algiers in 1830, incorporated French Algeria as part of France roughly two decades later, and continued its march south and east, into Africa and Asia. The second chapter explores how image- and myth-makers in both the United States and France influenced each other and jostled to place their newly expanded nations in favorable positions on the world stage. National narratives in their respective hands focused attention on acts of valor against the non-white peoples of the outlying regions and on the “civilizing” efforts of their white ruling classes to contain,

educate, care for, or assimilate the newly colonized. From the turn of the century to the outbreak of the Second World War, press coverage, novels, film, comics, and “mass” entertainments such as Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and the world’s fairs had elevated cowboys and colonizers as the heroes of the age and had instilled the causes and courses of imperialist expansion and colonialism within metropolitan popular imaginaries.11

The Franco-Belgian bande dessinée (BD) or comics adventure did much to bring colonial settings and conflicts into view from the interwar years through the collapse of the European empires across the 1950s and 1960s. Chapter 3 chronicles how the adventuring heroes of bande dessinée, in a profusion of stories published across the final decades of the French empire, pressed travel and transportation to their advantage and tested their mettle in the wild and liminal spaces of the planet. Brave and hardy men drawn as cowboys, colonizers, pilots, soldiers, detectives, and the like traversed deserts and penetrated jungles. They waded through swamps, crossed rivers, and scaled peaks. With resourcefulness and fortitude, they survived pestilence, vermin, wild animal attacks, sand storms, avalanches, tornadoes, and fires. They escaped death by bomb, gun, arrow, spear, or knife and warded off hunger and thirst and heat and cold. They matched ruse for ruse and strength for strength against the dark forces of the

11 Recent scholarship has shown that images, illustrated journals, the mainstream press, world’s fairs, exhibitions, zoos, and personal accounts had brought the colonies into European metropolitan imagininations by the turn of the twentieth century. See, for example, Berny Sèbe, Heroic Imperialists in Africa: The Promotion of British and French Colonial Heroes, 1870-1939 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 45, 56-57; William H. Schneider, An Empire for the Masses: The French Popular Image of Africa, 1870-1900 (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 1982), 4-9.
planet, played by Apache or Tuareg, Congolese or Cossacks, Sioux or Islamists, and they learned anew in each successive installment how to escape or pacify indigenous populations even in their most deadly incarnations. Marauders, pillagers, cannibals, megalomaniacs, torturers, and terrorists engaged white European and American heroes in fights to the death – and lost. Adventurers claimed to be on the right side of history, even as nationalist revolutions and independence movements drove the Europeans out of Asia and Africa and as war in French Algeria threatened to break France in two. With few exceptions, as the third chapter shows, the traveling heroes of bande dessinée embodied the arms of state and empire, God, or king in the borderlands of a colonial realm in the making or one deemed worth keeping. Their righteous interventions, momentary though they were, replaced chaos with order and tyranny with the rule of law and left goodwill and gratitude in their wake. Young BD magazine readers across the era of decolonization learned from their weekly heroes how to travel the world and control their fear of the unknown, how to stop revolutions and make alliances for peace, how to comport themselves honorably in battle, and how to cultivate nationalist, patriotic, scoutist, Catholic, Communist, or “modern” outlooks in their everyday lives.¹²

¹² BD magazines and journals across the longer postwar period benefited differently from the patronage of political, religious, or social organizations, and their editorial tones and content generally aligned with the views of their sponsors. See, for example, Thierry Crépin, ‘Haro sur le gangster !’ La moralisation de la presse enfantine 1934-1954 (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2001); Thierry Crépin and Thierry Groensteen, eds., ‘On tue à chaque page’ : la loi de 1949 sur les publications destinées à la jeunesse (Angoulême: Éditions du Temps, 1999).
This dissertation correlates the high water mark of the realist BD adventure in France, and particularly of didactic stories of cowboys and Indians, with escalation in the colonies but also with market demand. BD adventures and the magazines that serialized them transitioned across the 1950s and 1960s in step with the maturation of the baby boomers. Those born around the Liberation of France in 1944 graduated from talking animal comic strips, generally appropriate for the six and under crowd, to the grand adventure by the early 1950s, as reader-viewers reached about seven or eight years of age. The unnuanced tales of good and evil that dominated the adventures of the 1940s grew increasingly unpalatable to baby boomers nearly out of short pants. The mainstay comics magazines of the postwar period, including *Coq Hardi* (S.E.L.P.A, 1944-1963), the *Journal de Spirou* (Dupuis, 1938 to present), *Le Journal de Tintin* (Le Lombard, 1946-1988), and *Vaillant* (1945-1969), a periodical sponsored by the French Communist Party (PCF), reformulated content and layouts to target the needs of their aging subscribers.  

Strips and series began to incorporate more fact-based content related to the contemporary world and to its peoples, places, histories, and conflicts. Editorial rubrics likewise increasingly featured biographies, encyclopedia-style articles, and current events coverage. Within comics themselves, places became locations and landscapes became geographies in the hands of “master” creators, or bédéistes, like

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13 In 1945, the periodical *Jeune Patriote* became *Vaillant*, the magazine of the Union des Vaillants et des Vaillantes, a youth group aligned with the Union de la jeunesse républicaine de France (UJRF) movement and the French Communist Party. Thierry Groensteen, *Astérix, Barbarella & Cie: Histoire de la bande dessinée d'expression française* (Paris and Angoulême: Somogy éditions d’art and CNBDI, 2000), 96.
Hergé (Georges Remi), Marijac (Jacques Dumas), Jijé (Joseph Gillain), and Gir (Jean Giraud). As a divided and war-weary France conceded Algeria in 1962 and the empire with it, the baby boomers, many in their mid- to late teens, gravitated towards satire and innovation, which the new French magazine *Pilote Weekly* (Dargaud, 1959-1989) served up in spades. Bande dessinée in effect had grown up in tandem with and in response to the changing interests of the postwar generations. The expanded market of the 1960s catered not only to children, but to adolescents and even adults, albeit nascently and at the margins. By the late 1960s, as anti-authoritarian and antiwar activism exploded across Europe, triumphalist narratives ceded definitive ground to a mode of adventure storytelling more oriented towards satire, parody, caricature, and ironic heroism.¹⁴

The turn to “documented” realism across the era of decolonization indeed invited readers to seek resolution to the pressing issues or problems of the present in

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and through the fictions that they read. Chapter 4 argues that tales of cowboy heroes in frontier landscapes displaced readers in time and space, invited comparisons with contemporary wars, and authorized counterfactual and counterhegemonic reimaginings of the taboo histories of imperial aggression. These encounters with the text were not simply allegorical; they did not encourage readers to abandon the histories, memories, and settings of the stories themselves, or to read solely for equivalencies and resonances with their own contemporary worlds. They were rather layered, participatory, and embodied readings, constructed frame by frame, page by page, by readers who “filled in” the blank spaces of art, sequence, and text with information drawn from their own experiences and knowledge. The comics form, defined by Scott McCloud as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence” to “convey information” or produce an “aesthetic response” in the reader-viewer, uses the visible as much as the invisible to build narrative. Reading comics becomes an active process of creating “wholes from holes,” as Barbara Postema elegantly put it. Reader-viewers are called on not only to make sense of the visuals, or the drawn elements on the page comprising text, image, and frame. They also determine which actions, feelings, gestures, or

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15 Lee Clark Mitchell argues that Westerns in particular seek to “resolve” or at least address the “immediately pressing issues” of their times. Lee Clark Mitchell, Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 3-6.
17 McCloud, 9.
18 Postema, xx.
enunciations have been relegated to transpire in the “empty” spaces of the between-frame, called the gutters. They account for the passage of diegetic time as they themselves advance through the story panel by panel, page by page. They may also imaginatively endow objects and characters drawn in two dimensions with a certain thingness or flesh and blood. The specificity of the comics form, and particularly its ability to elicit and support contradictory interpretations, in some ways enabled its popular appeal across the middle of the twentieth century. As John Fiske reminds us, popular stories as a rule sketch rather than detail, gesture towards rather than resolve finally, in order to appeal broadly across situations and “allegiances.”\(^1\)\(^9\) Moreover, he continues, “popular culture has to be, above all else, relevant to the immediate social situation of the people,” and it claims relevance most auspiciously by engaging with dominant narratives and existing power inequalities:

A text that is to be made into popular culture must [...] contain both the forces of domination and opportunities to speak against them, the opportunities to oppose or evade them from subordinated, but not totally disempowered, positions. Popular culture is made by the people at the interface between the products of the culture industries and everyday life. Popular culture is made by the people, not imposed upon them; it stems from within, from below, not from above.\(^2\)\(^0\)

BD Westerns, doubly so because of the constructive nature of the comics form, pulled young French readers like Mahmoud into everyday readerly practices of resistance and transgression. Stories of frontier heroes and cowboys and Indians


temporarily suspended the fait accompli of the settling of the United States to upend narratives of conquest and expansion and explore the costs and effects of colonialism on native populations, settlers, soldiers, and peacemakers. As Chapter 4 demonstrates, the fact that the Far West in the 1950s had long since “vanished,” or that the conquest had run its course and U.S. colonialism had naturalized into “easy” rule, diminished the controversy of such propositions under French administrations increasingly bent on culling “demoralizing” content from youth literary cultures and anticolonial sentiment from mainstream media.21 Into the 1960s, as censure and an unwillingness to admit to war curtailed the free circulation of Algeria war images, Westerns provided ways for over half a million French youth to engage weekly with the kinds of violences and complexities that conscripts wrote home about and that family members on all sides of the conflict manifested on their bodies, in their body language, and on their faces.22

What follows pays close attention to the chronologies of the period and to the serial publication of popular BD adventures to contextualize moments of reception and


22 On censorship in France across the Algerian war of independence, see Stora, 25-28, 38-73. Representations of the French conscript or soldier irredeemably altered by war in French Algeria consolidated into one of the leading tropes of Algerian war fiction, memoirs, and cinema. See, for example, the fate of the hero in Florent-Emilio Siri’s blockbuster L’Ennemi Intime (2007), written by Patrick Rotman and starring Benoît Magimel.
nodes of resonance. Other scholars have closely examined the colonialist messages and racist representations of so-called classic or traditional Franco-Belgian bande dessinée. Mark McKinney’s invaluable work, for example, lays bare the colonialist, imperialist, and racist affiliations and convictions of foundational figures of bande dessinée and traces evidence of that heritage in more contemporary works.\textsuperscript{23} Philippe Delisle has likewise uncovered colonialist complicity among the greats of the Franco-Belgian tradition, including Hergé, the father of Tintin, and has rightly denounced the adventure field across the 1950s for promulgating racist stereotypes and paternalist visions of colonized populations.\textsuperscript{24} More recently, McKinney has engaged with the complex nexus of Algerian war stories and memoirs published by French and Algerian bédéistes in the postcolonial and contemporary periods to shed light on the formal, social, and political capacity of comics to explore the fraught histories and legacies of the trans-Mediterranean. Jennifer Howell as well examines representations of the Algerian war of independence by Algerian, Franco-French, and Algerian-heritage French bédéistes, and her most recent study similarly analyzes memory projects produced in more recent decades, beginning in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{25} This dissertation, in contrast, locates BD production

\textsuperscript{23} See, for example, Mark McKinney, \textit{Redrawing Empire}, and \textit{The Colonial Heritage of French Comics} (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011).


relevant to the Algerian war of independence within the timeline of the war itself, arguing against what Benjamin Stora once advanced as “l’oreiller de silence” or the shroud of “secrecy” that descended over the French public sphere across the 1950s and into the 1960s and that shielded metropolitans from the realities of the war and the experiences of its victims. McKinney has written as well of “an almost complete blackout on the representation of the Algerian War in comics while it was unfolding,” arguing that BD production until 1982 largely refrained from direct engagement. Stora’s more recent research and studies by others following his lead, however, have since uncovered a relative profusion of words and images pertaining to the war already in circulation across and between France and Algeria during the war years. This dissertation fits within that vein of research.

Few cultural, historical, or semiological studies examine the BD adventure field as a whole, of which pirate, explorer, soldier, reporter, and cowboy genres represent only some of the declensions possible. And few studies of what is now called historical or traditional bande dessinée, apart from publication histories, foreground the serial publication of adventures in periodicals. Critics and the industry as a whole have for

26 Stora, 70.
27 McKinney, Redrawing Empire, 33, 146.
29 Delisle uses the argument of popularity to justify his decision to restrict his corpus on colonial stereotypes in bande dessinée to just those stories published as albums: “Désireux non pas d’opérer un recensement
decades spoken instead in terms of the “pre-publication” of BD episodes or stories in journals and magazines. The reissue of serialized episodes as bound, stand-alone albums or volumes sold in bookstores has reified the book format as bande dessinée’s rightful or more legitimate manner of publication and method of distribution. Over the past fifty or so years, the determined efforts of cultural critics and producers to purify bande dessinée of its early twentieth-century descent into popular, pulp, and serial literature for children have succeeded in gaining recognition for bande dessinée as the “ninth art” in France. My investigation into “golden age” Franco-Belgian comics not only makes visible how and in what forms BD adventures came to market, but in doing so also unearths a trove of images, popular narratives, national discourses, and print ephemera also in circulation in France at the time, and also seeking to shape the joint futures of
nation and empire. More importantly, paying close attention to seriality reveals the ways in which BD adventures captured and intersected with everyday life and their extraordinary reliance on unfolding geopolitical conflicts for their settings, themes, characters, and messages.

The corpus under examination here includes realist BD adventures published between 1950 to 1965 in high-circulating periodicals targeting older children and adolescents. By realism, I mean those stories drawn more or less deliberately to figure the peoples and places of the world, although I have included several series that foray occasionally into the fantastic, simply because they aligned in important ways with the pedagogism and world-mapping that defined the adventure across the 1950s. Most of the series studied here were Franco-Belgian in production, and all were available for sale in France. I have also focused primarily on narratives and products targeting Franco-French middle-class reading publics in the metropole, mainly for reasons of manageability. Bande dessinée and journal readerships were hardly homogeneous, however, and an in-depth investigation into the reception histories of those same narratives and products among non-Franco-French reading groups in France, its territories, and around the world would complement, and most likely complicate, the findings presented here.

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32 The golden age of Franco-Belgian comics is generally defined as the 1920s or 1930s through the 1950s. Laurence Grove, “BD Theory Before the Term ‘BD’ Existed,” in Grove et al, The Francophone Bande Dessinée, 39-49.
In terms of terminology, I have attempted to distinguish clearly between western
lands, the Western genre, the West as a mappable, historical fact of United States
development, and the “West,” enclosed in quotation marks, as a construct lacking in
justification but one that was in wide use across the period I examine. I have for the
same reason enclosed “Arab” in quotation marks and employed the term “Indian” (not
in quotation marks) only when referring to fictional characters. In general, I have used
“bande dessinée” to mean European comics in the French language and “comics” to
signal either American production or the form itself. Franco-Belgian authors of bandes
dessinées in the 1950s referred to themselves for the most part as “scénaristes” or
“dessinateurs.” I have retained this usage and employed the terms “bédéiste” and
“artist” as well, rather than the more recent term “cartoonist” for artist or author, which,
for realist comics producers, has an unfortunate consonance with humor. I generally call
the stories published serially in periodicals “episodes” of a series, or, if they did not
emanate from series, “one-shots” or “stories.” If publishers later issued episodes or
stories in book format, I refer to those as “albums,” the French term, or “volumes,” the
term in English.

Finally, my analyses for the most part steer clear of authorial intent, particularly
given the many hands required to produce the majority of the BD adventures in
question, and I engage only minimally with style, schools, and the hallmarks and
evolutions of individual artists. I also foreground seemingly inconsequential elements
related to narrative structure and characterization to highlight trends, map patterns, and identify repetitions and recyclings. In other words, rather than provide close readings of exceptional examples of layout and line, I instead reveal how the most basic literary elements of BD adventure storytelling – where the story takes place, the range of ethnicities and nationalities on display, who travels where and how, who speaks what and how well, who perpetrates physical violence and on whom, who wins and how – combine to tell similar tales in similar ways, despite differences of genre, art, author, and publication. By reading across series and journals, and by reading chronologically, issue to issue, year over year, much as little Mahmoud and the hundreds of thousands of children like him had done, I develop a rich understanding of a pervasive and prolific cultural production in its time. More specifically, a diachronic methodological approach to comics and their magazines reveals the comparative frameworks, juxtapositions, and correspondences that serial publication enabled, as well as the increasing prominence in BD adventures of the 1950s of centuries-old, transatlantic, intractable understandings of place, “race,” and power.
1. Transimperial Imaginaries: Landscape Myths of the Far West and French Algeria

The bedouins are the Red Indians of Africa; in the process of the French colonization of Algeria the same fate will be reserved for him as it was for the Red Indian during the Pioneers’ colonization of America; he will disappear from the surface of the earth.

— Courrier de la Gironde, 6 June 1846

Vous savez, les jeunes, que la tâche est loin d’être terminée, que nous n’avons encore mis en œuvre qu’une part minime des ressources du vaste domaine que cette Afrique du Nord offre à l’activité française. C’est bien ici, pour notre race, ce qu’est le Far-West pour l’Amérique, c’est-à-dire le champ par excellence de l’énergie, du rajeunissement et de la fécondité.

— General Hubert Lyautey in French Algeria, 12 July 1907

Across the nineteenth century, as westward expansion and government policy consolidated America’s control over the lands and peoples of North America, the second French colonial empire advanced south and east, into Africa, Asia, and Oceania. The American and French imperial expansions, hailed variously as discovery, progress, and adventure, authorized and incrementally codified expropriation, eviction, subjection, exploitation, massacre, and war. Following the age of revolution, the conjoined notions of empire and nation emerged in both the American neocolonial and the French imperial


2 Lyautey, Louis Hubert Gonzalve, Paroles d’action : Madagascar, Sud-Oranaïs, Oran, Maroc (1900-1926) (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1927), 52. Lyautey, newly appointed commander of the Oran division of French Algeria, was addressing students of the French Lycée d’Oran.

contexts as a dialectic. The accumulated violences of empire-building called forth and necessitated, as justification, the origin stories of destiny and duty so vital to nation-building. In turn, foundational tales of American democracy and of French rights-based liberty themselves relied disproportionately on histories and fantasies of colonial encounters to illustrate national themes and concepts of sovereignty. As Lisa Lowe points out, the “liberal and colonial discourses” of the Western imperialisms in the modern era “represented indigenous peoples as violent threats to be eliminated in ways that rationalized white settlement and African slavery.” She writes that the “emerging world system” encompassing the imperial powers, including Britain, France, and the young United States, held metropolitan, enslaved, colonized, and indentured peoples within “intimacies” that spanned four continents. More importantly, the global imperialisms were propelled by “racial logics” that “discounted native people as

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7 Lowe, 7, 18-19.
uncivilized or non-Christian, conflated the inhabitants with land and nature, imagined them as removable or extinguishable, or rendered them as existing only in the past.\(^8\)

This chapter examines how government reports, popular literatures, and visual ephemera in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France, as well as America, cemented such racial ideas by constructing and refining stories of nation that reenacted, mythologized, but also elided or “forgot” the violences that brought both the continental United States and France’s second colonial empire into being.\(^9\)

In the United States, stories of the settling of the western frontier captured the travails and immediate victories of colonization. They also, more importantly, forged myths of national character that helped to unify the fledgling immigrant nation.\(^10\)

Following the invasion of Algiers in 1830 and the incorporation of Algeria as three French departments in 1848, France as well sought ways of reimagining the collectivities of an imperial nation-state, whether monarchy or republic, that was newly expanded beyond the borders and perceived homogeneities of the metropole.\(^11\) Tales of heroic encounter and agrarian development performed the necessary function of mediating the exigencies of empire-building for vast reading and later viewing publics. Across the

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\(^8\) Lowe, 7-8.

\(^9\) Liberal humanist thinking and the “received histories” of the present, Lowe argues, comprise and circulate within an “economy of affirmation and forgetting” (39). See also Sherene H. Razack, “Introduction: When Place Becomes Race,” in Razack, Race, Space, and the Law, 1-3.

\(^10\) By far the most salient and influential of these accounts is Theodore Roosevelt’s *The Winning of the West*, published in six volumes between 1889 and 1896.

\(^11\) Wilder, 21-22.
nineteenth century, the recounted exploits of actual and fictional adventurers, explorers, and military and religious men increasingly cast the formalized oppression of non-white, non-European populations in the world’s “waste spaces” as the civilizational duty or burden of a superior white race.12 Well into the twentieth century, similar notions of imperial work served as the cornerstone of certain ideas of nation.13

This chapter comes to rest on the Western, the archetypal birth-of-a-nation-out-of-empire fable, but first lays essential groundwork for understanding its rise and resonance in France as products of, and as emerging within, a larger transatlantic, transimperial imagination linking neocolonial America with imperial France.14 Across

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13 Theodore Roosevelt characterized the whole of European expansion as work, as when he wrote in 1889: “When, with the voyages of Columbus and his successors, the great period of extra-European colonization began, various nations strove to share in the work.” In Roosevelt, The Winning of the West, Volume One, 7. Jennifer Pitts, in her discussion of Alexis de Tocqueville’s leftist imperialist politics of the 1840s, notes the “tremendous pressure French liberals found themselves under as they tried to carry out the work of refounding the nation in the post-Revolutionary age,” a pressure that increasingly proposed, and sought, relief in militarized “aggression” towards non-European peoples, their conquest, and their exploitation for the imperial “glory” of France. Jennifer Pitts, “Empire and Democracy: Tocqueville and the Algeria Question,” The Journal of Political Philosophy 8.3 (2000), 301-304. On the work of conquest and the mission civilatrice, see Alice L. Conklin, A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Alain Ruscio, Le Credo de l’homme blanc : regards coloniaux français XIXe-XXe siècles (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1995); Tyler Stovall, Transnational France: The Modern History of a Universal Nation (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2015), 212.

14 On the history and broader dimensions of Franco-American exchange, see Stovall; Jacques Portes, Une fascination réticente : les États-Unis dans l’opinion française (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1990);
the long nineteenth century, the United States and France built their territorial empires concomitantly, at times as rivals, within the global context of British imperial expansion and under threat, for the Americans in particular, of Spanish incursion. Each government faced similar difficulties of conquest and “pacification,” expedition and “discovery,” occupation, settlement, integration, and administration. As Alexis de Tocqueville argued in 1846, America’s strategies for claiming and colonizing its own continent provided an invaluable model for the French, whose “primary concern” was then the colonization of North Africa.16 Pondering how France might settle, farm, and unindoctrinate the vast spaces of Algeria, he wrote in 1846:

How can we attract and above all keep a large European population of farmers in Algeria? We already have 100,000 Christians in Africa, not counting the army, but almost all have settled in the towns, which are developing into large and beautiful cities, while the countryside remains empty. It is impossible to contemplate the colonization of Africa without thinking of the powerful examples set by the United States in this regard.17


17 Letter to Lieber (22 July 1846), in Zunz, 600. Pitts writes as well that “the notion of a proud French presence in Algeria, a vibrant and glorious new America filled with prosperous farms and engaged settler-citizens, played an important if too often overlooked part in Tocqueville’s nation-building project” (316). Tocqueville nevertheless remained strikingly contradictory in his attitudes towards, and writings on, the practices and effects of U.S. expansion. Pitts, 301, 314-316.
This chapter juxtaposes and places in dialogue key moments, narratives, and images that defined the American West and French Algeria as new national landscapes within expanding territorial empires. I draw attention to the similar processes of geographical myth-making that facilitated and attempted to justify the “peculiar” course of American expansion as well as the conquest and integration of French Algeria as French national territory. More specifically, I argue that the mountains-plains-desert algebra that came to dominate the imperial records of both metropoles succeeded in painting the spaces of the “national” frontier, whether in the American West or in French Algeria, as vast and primitive, existing within but also as exogenous to the nation. Finally, I show how nineteenth-century accounts of America’s feats and setbacks on the imperial hunting grounds caught and held the interest not only of French policymakers, but of French readers and spectators as well, themselves coming into closer real and imaginary contact with the peoples, places, and conflicts of their own imperial enterprise. France’s struggles to subdue Africans and Asians, but particularly

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19 “Mass” media, comprising newspapers, the penny press, and illustrated magazines, emerged in France in the late 1800s and brought news and stories of French interactions on the African continent to daily readings. Literacy rates in France had dropped from 43.4% in 1872 to 19.4% in 1901, and to 11.2% in 1912. The World’s Fairs in France across the latter part of the nineteenth century also placed Asians, Africans, Native Americans, and others on display for large metropolitan audiences. Berny Sèbe, Heroic Imperialists in Africa: The Promotion of British and French Colonial Heroes, 1870-1939 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 45, 56-57; William H. Schneider, An Empire for the Masses: The French Popular Image of Africa, 1870-1900 (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 1982), 4-9. On the emergence of print-capitalism in
Muslim Algerians, in landscapes drawn as empty, beautiful, dangerous, and unknowable invited comparisons with the American experience and accounted in part for the appeal of frontier, pioneer, and cowboy-and-Indian stories in France across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

1.1 Territorial Expansion and the New National Space

America and France expanded and consolidated their territorial empires in tandem across the nineteenth century. The shifting western frontier of the young United States engulfed and incorporated the Louisiana territory offloaded by Spain via Napoleon Bonaparte in 1803, the Spanish holdings in Florida and Colorado in 1819, and the Republic of Texas in 1845. British cessions in the North and Northwest, including the valuable Oregon territory, were incorporated by 1846. The United States acquired the vast Mexican territories of the Southwest at the conclusion of the Mexican War in 1848. Alaska, purchased from the Russians, became an American territory in 1868, as did the islands of Hawaii thirty years later. Indigenous peoples had lost rights to their own territories incrementally over the course of the century. The Indian Removal Act signed into law by Andrew Jackson in 1830 had authorized the “voluntary” migration of the Cherokees from Georgia to present-day Oklahoma along what became known as the

Trail of Tears and had sanctioned the seizure of their eastern ancestral homelands by the state of Georgia and its citizens. Skirmishes and wars across the first half of the century resulted in the removal of Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles from other southern states onto the prairies and plains of Indian Territory. In the North, Iroquois, Ojibwas, and other smaller tribes migrated west of the Mississippi or secured portions of their lands as federal reservations.\[^{20}\] Across the century, however, the domination, massacre, and displacement of hundreds of native tribes continued unabated in patterns of treaty-signing and breaking, white squatting, settlement, battles, wars, migration, and death by sickness, disease, and starvation. The years between 1852 and 1856 alone saw the signing of 52 treaties, which, combined, effectively transferred rights to 170 million acres of land from Native tribes to the Americans.\[^{21}\] The spread of European diseases such as smallpox, measles, and diphtheria had decimated the indigenous peoples contained within Spanish missions in California and in other settlements and villages along the Pacific coast, from Washington to California. Across the eighteenth century, disease had spread farther inland as well along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, decreasing numbers within smaller tribes and swelling the numbers of larger tribes, such as the Choctaws, Navajos, and Sioux, with their survivors.\[^{22}\] Into the nineteenth

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\[^{22}\] White, 214-216.
century, new settlers and miners, self-organizing into volunteer militias, in many cases raided and killed those few who remained.\textsuperscript{23} By the 1850s, the remaining resisters among the Pacific Northwest tribes, including fierce bands of Yakimas and Walla Wallas, had been tracked, killed, or removed to reservations.\textsuperscript{24} Several decades later, the Modoc uprising and the armed resistance of a holdout Nez Perce band led by Chief Joseph only briefly challenged the view that the Northwest had been “pacified.”\textsuperscript{25}

Across the Great Plains, the targeted reduction of the buffalo hunting grounds and of the number of herds themselves gravely imperiled hunters and gatherers like the Sioux, Arapahos, Cheyennes, Crow, Pawnees, and Comanches who depended on every part of the buffalo for their survival.\textsuperscript{26} Rail construction as well claimed and cleared land and carried miners, pioneers, prospectors, and traders across the Mississippi and into tribal lands towards the Pacific.\textsuperscript{27} In the decades following the Civil War, intertribal alliances and widespread insurrection transformed the Great Plains and the deserts and mountains of the Southwest into the final bastions of Native resistance. To the south, Kit Carson, a U.S. army colonel, had rounded up the Navajo clans by 1864, destroyed their crops and settlements, and driven the vast majority of them onto temporary reservation lands in southeastern New Mexico. The Navajo treaty of 1868 created a reservation on

\begin{footnotes}
\item[23] Nabokov, 311-312.
\item[24] Nabokov, 315.
\item[25] Nabokov, 343-344, 350-354.
\item[26] White, 223, 243, 279.
\item[27] Nabokov, 308-309.
\end{footnotes}
their former homeland, although many perished along the long walk back.\textsuperscript{28} Across the 1860s, purported delegations for peace flooded the Plains searching for quick military, “civilizing,” or Christian solutions to an increasingly violent “Indian problem.”\textsuperscript{29} To the south, the Comanche had conceded by 1875, but the organized resistance, armament, and retaliation of the northern Plains tribes following the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864 led to victories in Red Cloud’s War (1866-1867) and in the Battle of Little Bighorn (1876), which had notably registered the deaths of George Custer and the majority of his Seventh Cavalry.\textsuperscript{30} Reprisals and massacres in the decade following that battle resulted in the domination of the Arapaho by 1878 and of the Cheyenne by 1879. As subtribes of the Sioux began to filter into the reservations established along the Missouri River, holdout forces campaigned with notable successes against the exterminatory tactics of the U.S. military forces stationed in Apacheria. By 1887, the Apache chiefs Cochise, Geronimo, and Mangus had all surrendered or died. In 1890, the murder of the Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux Chief Tatanka Iyotanka, or Sitting Bull, followed immediately by the devastating massacre of men, women, and children at the Wounded Knee Creek encampment of the Minniconjou Sioux Chief Spotted Elk, put a formal end not only to the Ghost Dance resistance movement but to the so-called Indian Wars themselves.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{28} Nabokov, 336-338.
\textsuperscript{29} Nabokov, 339-343, 354-357.
\textsuperscript{30} Nabokov, 340-347.
\textsuperscript{31} Nabokov, 328-332, 362-366.
In the last decade of the century, white and immigrant settlement had subsumed all of the “surplus” Native lands not already allocated under the General Allotment or Dawes Act of 1887. By 1893, the young historian Frederick Jackson Turner could claim, based on the 1890 census data, that the American frontier was now “closed,” or that European-American settlement, however uneven, had successfully reached the Pacific. As the Yankee saying went, “Westward the star of empire takes its way,” and Jefferson’s empire now extended towards the setting sun across plains, rivers, mountains, and deserts. Total control of the national space and the subsequent foreign land grab of 1898 in turn marked the opening of the “American Century,” a global moment defined by U.S. extranational expansion, or the globalization of American influence and economic power to rival the European domination of the planet.

As American “progress” traveled inexorably westward, the French Bourbon ruling elite, under the pretense of cleansing the Mediterranean Sea of its Barbary pirates, authorized the invasion of the “Arab” and Amazigh or Berber lands of the Maghreb, thus reclaiming mercantile control over the Mediterranean basin and laying the foundations for a second colonial empire on lands represented as a mere “stone’s throw”

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32 Native-controlled territory shrank from 128 million to 5 million acres following the passage of the Dawes Act. Bold, 189.
33 Turner, 38.
34 Cited in Wild Life on the Plains and Horrors of Indian Warfare... (St. Louis, MO: The Excelsior Publishing Company, 1891), 13. The saying is a common misquotation of “Westward the course of empire takes its way,” the first line of the final stanza of Bishop George Berkeley’s poem, “Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America,” c. 1726.
from France. The expeditionary force sent by the unpopular monarch Charles X to take Algiers in 1830 had routed Abd el-Kader’s armies in the plains of the Tell by 1847. Holdout Kabyle populations in the mountain strongholds of the Djurdjura nominally surrendered in 1857 following decades of resistance to the French advance, although revolt continued, particularly in the Saharan Atlas to the south and the Aurès Mountains in the east. Kabyle resistance, which generalized across the period as everyday acts of intransigence, came to organized fruition in the Great Kabyle Insurrection of 1871 under the leadership of Mohammed el-Hadj el-Mokrani. Its violent repression by the invaders signaled to Paris that military domination of all corners of the northern French Algerian territories had been achieved and paved the way for increased settler emigration and a handoff to civilian rule.

The partitioning of the Algerian colony in 1848 into the three French “metropolitan” departments of Algiers, Oran, and Constantine had created a trans-Mediterranean imperial seat from whence France could launch deeper forays into the African continent. Imperial expansion in the early decades of the French Third Republic (1871-1940), viewed by some as a necessary rehabilitation in the wake of defeat by the Prussians, firmed France’s territorial claims across Africa and formalized French

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36 Buheiry, 28, 31. At the time, Algeria was a full day’s steamer voyage from the southern French ports.
commerce and settlement in Asia. Routes into the African interior, especially from the north, were impeded by the vast, unmapped regions of the western Sahara desert, home to indigenous peoples who largely prevented French military and scientific incursions into their domains. Louis Faidherbe’s slow conquest of Senegal between 1852 and 1864 laid the groundwork for expedition and expansion from West Africa inland along the rivers. The establishment in 1895 of l’Afrique Occidentale Française (AOF) agglomerated the French possessions of Senegal, Dahomey (1893) in present-day Benin, the Ivory Coast (1893), the Upper Volta (1893) in present-day Burkina Faso, and the French Sudan (1893) in present-day Mali, and later the colonies of Guinea (1896), Niger (1899), and Mauritania (1902), all of which were jointly administered from Dakar, Senegal. In central Africa, Gabon was established as a French protectorate in 1862 and formalized as a colony in 1886. Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza’s exploration of the Ogooué River between 1875 and 1878 had enabled French expansion into the Congo, and the French Congo, or Middle Congo, was established by 1885. In 1910, the four colonial domains of Gabon, the French Congo, Chad (1900), and Oubangui-Chari (1903) in the present-day Central African Republic were regrouped as l’Afrique Equitoriale Française (AEF) and

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administered from Brazzaville in the Congo. In the North, Tunisia and Morocco were
annexed as French protectorates by the Bardo Treaty in 1881 and the 1912 Treaty of Fez,
respectively. Madagascar had also been placed under protectorate status in 1885 and
named a colony in 1896, following two centuries of French presence on the island.

Earlier in the century, France had also expanded east into the Horn of Africa with the
establishment of the French enclave of Djibouti (1862) and into the South Pacific with the
formation of French Polynesia (1842), New Caledonia (1853), and Tahiti (1880).

As the European powers scrambled to partition Africa among themselves in the
1880s, France formalized its claims to Asian resources and industry with the creation of
French Indochina in 1887. The new colonial entity placed the colony of Cochinchina
(1862) and the protectorates of Cambodia (1863), Annam (1884), and Tonkin (1884)
under centralized administration from Saigon. Laos would be joined formally to
Indochina in 1893. Following the Great War, France acquired the Ottoman possessions
of Lebanon and Syria and the German territories of eastern Cameroun and Togo by
League of Nations mandate, but the French colonial empire had reached its maximum
bounds. On the African continent alone, France, a country one-fourth the size of Algeria,
controlled mountains, plains, deserts, jungles, waterways, railroads, cities, industries,
and peoples across a vast and nearly contiguous stretch of northern, western, and
central Africa. The extent of the French empire was still a far cry from the truly global

40 Stovall, 212-213.
British empire, upon which the sun never set, nor could it rival the continental expanse and sheer possibility of the United States, which had an enormous population of 123 million by 1930, propelled in large part by European immigration.\(^41\) The 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris nevertheless feted the diversity and scale of the French empire, vaunting its occupation of nearly five million of the 57 million square land miles of the planet and marveling at its more or less direct control over 65 million of the world’s roughly two billion inhabitants.\(^42\)

By the mid-1800s, the American West and French Algeria were no longer mere outposts of empire but rather distant regions conceived juridically and imaginatively as national imperial spaces. They formed a part of the “home” territories of their respective empires, provinces increasingly incorporated into the legal frameworks and ideas of nationhood, even if difficult landscapes and indigenous resistance impeded colonization. French Algeria was also one of the few French colonial realms that had over time proven to be receptive to wide-scale settler colonialism.\(^43\) By the 1870s, as military occupation gave way to civilian rule, Algeria became a testing chamber for

\(^{41}\) Immigration to the United States peaked between 1880 and 1914. Immigration quotas were implemented with the passage of The Immigration Act of 1924. United States Census Bureau, “1930 Fast Facts,” <https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/fast_facts/1930_fast_facts.html>.


\(^{43}\) Elizabeth Buethner, Europe After Empire: Decolonization, Society, and Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 136. Although French settlers existed throughout the empire, and although the French population of Indochina grew to around 35,000 by 1954, settler colonialism took root mainly in Algeria and New Caledonia. Stovall, 232.
France’s *mission civilisatrice* and a laboratory for race-engineering, both of which aimed to grow the French population by creating more Frenchmen – out of the indigenous populations through acculturation in the case of the former, and out of intermarriage between European settler populations in the case of the latter.\(^4\) By the turn of the century, and despite support for intermixity in certain quarters, Franco-French administrators, police, and settlers established and maintained a differential and racialized system of colonial domination in which “capitalism, rational bureaucracy, scientific administration, normalizing state practices, technological development, urbanization, and the like” safeguarded French control over the lands and native populations of Algeria.\(^5\) Decades into civilian rule, administrators and policymakers concerned with French Algeria increasingly cited colonial education for failing to overcome or erase perceived linguistic, religious, cultural, and political incompatibilities.


\(^5\) Wilder, 9. Hannah Arendt identifies the “ideology” of “race-thinking” as the key motivator of these kinds of practices. She describes “ideology” as a “syste[m] based upon a single opinion that proved strong enough to attract and persuade a majority of people and broad enough to lead them through the various experiences and situations of an average modern life. For an ideology differs from a simple opinion in that it claims to possess either the key to history, or the solution for all the ‘riddles of the universe,’ or the intimate knowledge of the hidden universal laws which are supposed to rule nature and man.” She continues: “Few ideologies have won enough prominence to survive the hard competitive struggle of persuasion, and only two have come out on top and essentially defeated all others: the ideology which interprets history as an economic struggle of classes, and the other that interprets history as a natural fight of races. [...] Free public opinion has adopted them to such an extent that not only intellectuals but great masses of people will no longer accept a presentation of past or present facts that is not in agreement with either of these views.” Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1976), 159.
between the colony’s Muslim majority and the Franco-French ruling minority. Legal measures enacted over the latter half of the nineteenth century did grant French citizenship to certain categories of the autochthonous, including North African Jews and Christian-converted “Arabs,” yet negative representations of colonial conditions and possibilities within Algeria spurred the gradual shift in French imperial policy away from assimilation towards a politics of association to preserve white Franco-French rule. Julia Clancy-Smith points out that “the legal category ‘European’ was admitted into colonial jurisprudence” as early as 1831, in order to “impose order and construct a hierarchy of privilege and difference based upon access to French law.” She continues:

The term “European” called forth a binary opposite, the indigène, which eventually effaced the older, more intricate taxonomies [...], or the very real taxonomies extant in precolonial usage, such as Kulughli. Indigène evolved into a legal, as well as sociocultural, category signifying and enshrining dispossession, inequality, lack of civilization – indeed, lack of humanity – and encompassed Arabs, Kabyles, Moors, and the descendants of Turks, or Kulughlis.

By valorizing race-based hierarchies and teleological characterizations of native development, associationism succeeded in strengthening the links between the French pied noir settlers of Algeria, French metropolitan politics, and imperial outcomes well into the twentieth century.
In the 1950s, Gaullist sentiment reminded the inhabitants of the French empire that the Mediterranean flowed through “France” – figured as a continuous Franco-Algerian historical, political, and cultural space – as the Seine flowed through Paris.\(^49\) The loss or separation of Algeria, then, could be conceived only in terms of “divorce” or the outcome of “civil war,” just as the loss of the western United States – whether northern forests, plains, mountains, or deserts – would signal the amputation of integral national territory and the dislocation of the sovereign body.\(^50\) Sea-to-shining-sea America and trans-Mediterranean France, like all “home countries,” were each conceptualized as “the source of the empire, both ideologically and pragmatically.”\(^51\) Not only were the regions of the American West and of French “white” Africa conceived, with some difficulty, as spaces constitutive of the metropoles themselves.

\(^49\) “La Méditerranée traverse la France comme la Seine traverse Paris” had become a Gaullist slogan during the Franco-Algerian war and was a favorite among General Salan’s supporters. Jean Lacouture, *Algérie 1962, la guerre est finie* (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 2002), 38.

\(^50\) The OAS and other right-wing movements used legal arguments to claim that denying Algeria’s demand for independence was “vital” to preserving the Republic and keeping “France” integral and whole (Shepard, 83-92). Kristin Ross describes the breakup of French Algeria in terms of divorce in *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 124. Benjamin Stora also qualified the French presence in Algeria as “un mariage mixte” that resulted in a “violent divorce,” although a divorce between partners unequal in stature and rights. The war remained undeclared as such until 1999, he points out, because “‘dire la guerre’, pour la France, ce serait déjà admettre la possible séparation de corps, la dislocation de la ‘République une et indivisible.’” Benjamin Stora, *La Gangrène et l’oubli : la mémoire de la guerre d’Algérie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991), 18-19, 16.

They also, as we shall see, became the lieux d’aventures and, somewhat ironically, the lieux de mémoire that supplied national narratives by the turn of the twentieth century with their foundational landscapes, types, tropes, and images.\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{1.2 Vistas of Conquest: Imperial Geographies and National Ideas}

The motif of landscape emerged as a dominant feature of the imperialist narratives circulating between and within the United States and France in the nineteenth century. Tocqueville, on his journey in 1831 through the forested Midwest “desert” or wilderness of America, was struck by the “immensity” of a landscape without horizon.\textsuperscript{53} He noted the unsettling silences and solitudes of the woods and rivers, the endless repetitions “des mêmes scènes, leur monotonie,” skirting the routes to Saginaw on the Michigan peninsula.\textsuperscript{54} For him and his traveling companion Gustave de Beaumont, upper Michigan represented the true American frontier, the outer limit of “European civilization” and the more desirable tourist destination because of it. Venturing forth by boat, horse, and on foot with the help of Native guides, Tocqueville and Beaumont took


\textsuperscript{53} Alexis de Tocqueville, Œuvres, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 393. In 1831, Tocqueville toured U.S. territory east of the Mississippi River, as well as parts of Canada, with his friend Gustave de Beaumont, ostensibly to research the American penitentiary system. Tocqueville recorded his impressions on their two-week excursion to the Michigan frontier in his travel account, “Quinze jours dans le désert,” which was published postumously by Beaumont along with other writings by Tocqueville in the early 1860s. Zunz, xx-xviii.

\textsuperscript{54} Tocqueville, Œuvres, vol. 1, 393.
pains to reach the dangerous spaces beyond European regulation where fearless
*aventuriers*, like themselves, could encounter a “real Indian” in his “primitive” habitat.\(^5\)

In the wilds, the Frenchmen sought not those wretched remainders of the Iroquois that, as they saw it, blighted the route west from Albany and that were so rendered by decades of American violence and mismanagement, but the noble warriors untouched by the pioneers’ advance.

Tocqueville’s romantic reimagining of the American interior cordoned nature and native off from the effects of history, anthropomorphized the first, conflated the second with it, and elevated both as the very symbol of the struggle for the “New World.”\(^5\) The overrun natural environment marked the first of many degrees of separation between Europe and North America:

> Tout rentre alors autour de vous dans un silence si profond, une immobilité si complète, que l’âme se sent pénétrée d’une sorte de terreur religieuse ; le voyageur s’arrête, il regarde : pressés les uns contre les autres, entrelacés dans leurs rameaux, les arbres de la forêt semblent ne former qu’un seul tout, un édifice immense et indestructible, sous les voûtes duquel règne une obscurité éternelle. De quelque côté qu’il porte ses regards, il n’aperçoit qu’une scène de

\(^{5}\) Tocqueville, “Two Weeks in the Wilderness,” in Zunz, 402.  
\(^{5}\) His descriptions of the North American wilderness were deeply influenced by Chateaubriand on the same in *Atala* (1801). Zunz, xxv. James Fenimore Cooper would similarly describe the terrain around Lake Otsego in the Catskill Mountains – quite near Lake Oneida, which Tocqueville and Beaumont had earlier visited – in his novel *The Deerslayer* (1841). Of Natty Bumppo’s first glimpse of the lake, the narrator recounts: “It was the air of deep repose – the solitudes, that spoke of scenes and forests untouched by the hands of man – the reign of nature, in a word, that gave so much pure delight to one of his habits and turn of mind. [...] He was not insensible to the innate loveliness of such a landscape neither, but felt a portion of that soothing of the spirit which is a common attendant of a scene so thoroughly pervaded by the holy calm of nature.” James Fenimore Cooper, “The Deerslayer,” in *The Leatherstocking Saga*, ed. Allan Nevins (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), 63.
Throughout Tocqueville’s musings, descriptions of “pristine” beauty and ethereal stillness compete with “terrifying” scenes of arboreal death and decay, suspenseful retellings of physical risk and endurance, and admissions of the uneasy fascination that they had felt while in the presence of natives. What emerges from his account is a literary sense of America’s geographical and anthropological difference from western Europe in terms of ecology, scale, and development, the stirrings of a predominantly visual trope that would become definitional to nineteenth- and twentieth-century “Western” fictions, or fictions about the western American frontiers. In such wildernesses as these, Tocqueville writes, only the truly indigenous, or those unspoiled by outside contact, and the American pioneer, himself indigenized through the physical requirements of taming the land, could feel at home and find fragile peace. “Civilized man,” an archaic holdover from across the Atlantic, could not: “Plongé dans une obscurité profonde, réduit à ses propres forces, l’homme civilisé marchait en aveugle, incapable non seulement de se guider dans le labyrinthe qu’il parcourait, mais même d’y trouver les moyens de soutenir sa vie.”

In 1898, Theodore Roosevelt would boast that the European-American’s mastery of the rough physical terrain of the “western” frontier, whether as near as Tennessee or

57 Tocqueville, Œuvres, vol. 1, 392-393.
58 Tocqueville, “Two Weeks in the Wilderness,” in Zunz, 421.
59 Tocqueville, Œuvres, vol. 1, 390.
as far as California, not only assembled the continental Republic piece by piece, but in
the process forged a singular American character out of heterogeneous “backwoods”
pioneer “stock.” American exceptionalism, he suggested, was rooted in the landscape
itself and in the rigors of a physical colonization so strenuous that it succeeded in
regressing the settler to a state of nature:

The men who settle in a new country, and begin subduing the wilderness, plunge back into the very conditions from which the race has raised itself by the slow toil of ages. The conditions cannot but tell upon them. Inevitably, and for more than one lifetime – perhaps for several generations – they tend to retrograde, instead of advancing. They drop away from the standard which highly civilized nations have reached. As with harsh and dangerous labor they bring the new land up towards the level of the old, [and] they themselves partly revert to their ancestral conditions; they sink back towards the state of their ages-dead barbarian forefathers. Few observers can see beyond this temporary retrogression into the future for which it is a preparation.

To Roosevelt, the process of conquest and colonization was transformational, like the
chrysalis stage of metamorphosis, and the glorious imago that emerged was territorial
empire, the logical striving and material due of planetary “race-destiny,” or white
supremacy. As a western hunter and rancher, as a military hero who most notably led
the Rough Riders in the battle of San Juan Hill, as governor, President, and as a land
conservationist, Roosevelt along with his elite East Coast club set played an essential
role in the actual making of the American West. Christine Bold demonstrates how
Roosevelt helped carve the western territories into “enclaves of whiteness,” the

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exclusive domains of masculine, class-derived power.\textsuperscript{63} Conservationist legislation enacted at his behest largely rid the prized expanses of the United States of its indigenous, Black, Jewish, Mexican, Mexican-American, and animal “vermin.”\textsuperscript{64} Figured as “vanishing” anyway, or as subject to gradual extinction by means of Darwinian biological and social processes, certain categories of man, including the indigenous and the darker skinned, as well as beast – predominantly prey – were denigrated as natural forces that marred the beauty of the landscape and strained its efficiency.\textsuperscript{65} The establishment of national park land thereby “salvaged” fertile or spectacular territory from the “wasteful” hands of the native inhabitants and eradicated the “bottom dwellers” of the animal world from what was fast becoming the U.S. heartland.\textsuperscript{66} Roosevelt’s “histories” of the settling of the West, in six volumes, along with his thrilling life story and other writings also helped bring the majestic viewsheds along the Missouri and across the Mississippi, described as worthy and necessary additions to the national territory, into the mind’s eye of the American populace.\textsuperscript{67} By the turn of the twentieth century, the rugged, masculine, “white” topographies of Roosevelt’s West had become the building blocks of the birth-of-the-nation-out-of-empire tale, one of America’s earliest genres.

\textsuperscript{63} Bold, 3.
\textsuperscript{64} Bold, 132, 170.
\textsuperscript{65} Bold, 171.
\textsuperscript{66} Bold, 41.
\textsuperscript{67} Despite his aspirations, the Winning of the West series was nevertheless an incomplete picture of American settlement.
In 1893, Roosevelt had financed the construction of a modest “Hunter’s Cabin” for display at the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition as a living museum to memorialize the lives of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. Staffed by a hunting guide from Montana dressed in period costume to answer questions about the “Old” West, the one-room log cabin was a “sublime still-life of gun and game” lit by fire and candles and featuring the rudimentary crockery, animal skin coverings, and homemade furnishings of early American pioneer life. The era of myth-making, or of rewriting the violences of settlement in moralistic, triumphalist-nationalist terms and elevating the ordinary, rough-hewn American pioneer to the level of national hero, was well underway. Also in Chicago at the time was Turner to present a paper on the American development of the continent at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association. Reception to his frontier thesis was tepid; his expansive ideas, which swept away the “germ theory” of American institutional development, were admired by Roosevelt but would not catch on for another decade. In his paper, Turner argued as Roosevelt himself had that the “wilderness”

masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and

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runs an Indian palisade around him. Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick; he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion. In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails. Little by little he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe [...]. The fact is, that here is a new product that is America.70

America’s “peculiar” history of settlement across a shifting frontier of “free” land could be understood, then, not as the transplantation of Europeans into American soil, where they subsequently propagated in media res, but as the transformation of Europeans into Americans upon contact with the continent’s difficult landscapes.71

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For a time, the Maghrebi annex of metropolitan France was similarly figured as a Petri dish in which a new “Latin amalgam” population would help people the Earth with “100 million Français.”72 French Algeria’s strategic location along the Greek-Roman axis and the shared climate and histories of the Mediterranean basin inspired eugenic proposals to “revitalize” the French population while also increasing its size and spatial distribution. Willful genealogical continuities traced between the French and the pre-“Arab,” lighter-skinned Berber populations of North Africa suggested that a Latin,

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70 Turner, 4. Turner’s “frontier thesis” was published in the year following the AHA presentation in Chicago.
71 Turner, 2.
72 In 1837, Tocqueville had embraced the idea of intermarriage with the “Arabs” of Algeria to strengthen and increase the population of France. Following his visits to the colony in 1841 and 1847, however, he was convinced that intermixing was “impossible” given the violent nature of the conquest. He recommended instead the establishment of European settler communities. Pitts, 300. The vision of a “French” population of 100 million people actually counted the colonized populations, so it was largely seen as a “temporary” solution to France’s population decline. Patricia Lorcin, Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice & Race in Colonial Algeria (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 196.
Roman, Christian, “white” people had flourished there prior to the Muslim invasions of the seventh century. The French colonial takeover of Algeria was widely situated and justified as the progenitor of the Roman imperial occupation of the same lands two millennia earlier.\(^3\) The 1880s had witnessed a surge in support for proposals involving race engineering in Algeria, following the publication of a report by the pronatalist doctor and demographer René Ricoux. Not only had the birth rate in Algeria surpassed the birth rate in France a mere fifty years into the French occupation, but his data seemed to prove “that the French had the requisite racial characteristics needed to thrive” in the Algerian climate.\(^4\) He then prescribed “guided intermarriage” among the European settler groups to produce a more viable, more prolific, “new white race” for France.\(^5\)

By the turn of the twentieth century, Louis Bertrand, future member of the Académie française, had emerged as a leading proponent of plans to create a new “Latin-Mediterranean” white race on French Algerian soil, in an effort to reverse what he and others saw as the startling degeneration of French blood. His call to “rebarbarize” the “weakened” French “race” likewise proposed the intermixing of French colons not with the native populations of North Africa, but with the healthy and

\(^3\) On the “foundation myth” of the second French colonial empire, see Andersen, 42-43.
\(^4\) Andersen, 26.
\(^5\) Andersen, 27, 45-48
virile Italians, Spanish, and Maltese who had also settled there.76 Fin-de-siècle France, he argued, would greatly benefit from an injection into the national bloodstream of what he perceived to be the key traits of an Afro-Mediterranean character: “athletic, ardent and proud, quick to take offence but generous and hardworking, unintellectual but quick-witted and pragmatic,” with an “indomitable zest for life” that the French, waylaid by European wars, divisive anti-Semitism, social change, and the rigors, tolls, and expense of imperial expansion, notably lacked.77 As Roosevelt, Turner, and others exceptionalized the labor-in-place of the American pioneer and immigrant settler, Bertrand and his adherents heralded the new French Algerian colon as the unique product of hard work and advantageous intermixity in the difficult Mediterranean environment. Like the genus Americanus, the result of European transformation on foreign soil, the Algérien was conceptualized as a new metropolitan citizen both French and African, noble in blood because descended from Rome yet re-masculinized by the physical requirements of settler life. The analogy of the American West was not lost on French pronatalists. For them, writes Margaret Cook Anderson, “the development of Algeria into a successful colony and a French version of the American West represented the best means by which to minimize the effects of aging and transform France from an

76 Lorcin, 196-203. See also Andersen, 12; Clancy-Smith, 23-27. Algiers during the time of the French conquest was a multiethnic city housing Spanish, Maltese, Italians, Sicilians, Turks, Muslims, Jews, free people of color, African slaves, and Kulughlis.
77 Quoted in Lorcin, 203-204.
elderly nation into a youthful power.” It was the situatedness of the néo-Latin as simultaneously within and outside of the nation that promised triply to regenerate French metropolitan blood, solidify ethnic white power in Algeria, and restore imperial strength to France. As Gary Wilder points out, the French imperial nation-state in this way was “an internally contradictory artifact of colonial modernity that was simultaneously imaginary and real, abstract and concrete, [...] Franco-African and Afro-French, national and transnational.”

In the end, the proposed laboratory experiment did not come to organized fruition, although the French settler class did grow, and it did appear to some to have developed a new “type” of French citizen. Speaking to lycéens in Oran in 1907, General Lyautey, then commander of the Oran division, declared that the socio-biological process of transforming metropolitans into something different – and something unique – was complete, and a success: “Il me suffit de regarder autour de moi, ici même, pour voir réalisé chez tant d’entre vous le type à l’américaine du self-made man.” And like the American, who combined physical prowess and practical skill with a certain understanding of the world, the French settler in North Africa was, in Lyautey’s eyes, “un modèle d’énergie tenace et de volonté victorieuse.” He was a man of action formed

78 Andersen, 49.
79 Wilder, 21-22.
80 Lyautey, 51.
81 Lyautey, 51. Tocqueville had recorded his surprise at discovering that the American pioneer in the “wilderness” had newspapers and kept up with world events. In a letter to his mother, he remarked:
by “l’âpre lutte pour l’existence” that characterized life in the colonies, but also, thankfully, a man of “culture,” a product of the study of French civilization and so its porteur. And the same was also said of the French woman settler. Colonial emigration literature across the turn of the century had carried through the comparison with the American West, in one instance promoting the Maghreb as a place where “a new type of French woman” could emerge, one molded by “the spirit of independence, enterprise, and adventure” and hardened into a leader of men by labor and entrepreneurship.

Like the American West, where gender norms were perceived as still in formation if not openly transgressive, French Algeria was promoted as a wide open space of possibility and advancement. Middle-class white French women, promised one colonial marketing tract, could nourish their ambitions, exploit their educations, and rise in social standing to become, like their American counterparts, powerful and respected “cattle queens” ruling over the work and livelihoods of their own class of cowboys.

“Quand, par une route affreuse et à travers une espèce de désert, vous êtes parvenu à une habitation, vous êtes étonné de rencontrer une civilisation plus avancée que dans aucun de nos villages. La mise du propriétaire est soignée; son logis est parfaitement propre; ordinairement il a à côté de lui son journal, et son premier soin est de vous parler politique. Je ne saurais dire dans quel recoin obscur et inconnu de l’univers on nous a demandé comment nous avions laissé la France; quelle y était la force mutuelle des partis, etc., etc.” Letter dated 17 July 1831, in De Tocqueville’s Voyage en Amérique, 5.

82 Lyautey, 51.
83 Andersen, 93.
84 Andersen, 92-93.
1.3 Map-Making and Myth-Making, or the Mountains-Plains-Desert Algebra

In the American and French imperial contexts, land itself – claimed, named, and surveyed, occupied and populated, dammed, drained, mined, planted, built up, and then policed – became not only the expression and guarantor of white social and political control, but the very space and subject of the resistances to it. “Imperialism after all,” writes Edward Said, “is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control.” Anti-imperialism under colonialism must, then, he continues, take shape as an act of imagination to restore to the mind an image of the lands – the landscapes themselves – that were stolen. He writes:

For the native, the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by the loss of locality to the outsider; its geographical identity must thereafter be searched for and somehow restored. Because of the presence of the colonizing outsider, the land is recoverable at first only through imagination.

Conversely, the imperial work associated with settler colonialism consists in part in appropriating the visual contours of new and unknown landscapes and incorporating them into the national or at least collective geographical imaginary. This requires eliding the exogenetic divide between metropole and periphery, or in the words of Carl Schmitt,

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the stark division separating the “World-outside” from the national territorial enceinte.\textsuperscript{87} Thus the geologically old and verdant eastern seaboard of the United States became over time conjoined imaginatively to the much younger formations and hotter regions of the American West.\textsuperscript{88} In the same way, France, a countryside of ancient ridges, rolling hills, inactive volcanism, and steep mountains, was discursively reconfigured in the half-century following the conquest of Algiers as a more or less continuous national space comprising the hexagon, the African Mediterranean coastal plain, the peaks and semi-arid plateaus of the Atlas ranges, and, later, the ergs, flats, and southern massif of the western Sahara desert.

1.3.1 “We rush like a comet into infinite space:” Known and Unknown

Narratives circulating within both empires situated the physical geographies claimed by conquest in North America and North Africa as welcome accretions to their respective national territories or, in some cases, as geological exoticisms. Lands newly acquired included the Lebensraum of breadbaskets, rustbelts, oil fields, vineyards, silver, gold, salt, and coal mines, drinking water, and timber but also spaces of the “unknown,” the “unimaginable,” or the “never before seen.” In 1803, the Federalist Fisher Ames


\textsuperscript{88} The West, geologically, was nothing like the East and presented nineteenth-century explorers with many a conundrum. As DeCourten put it, “On a planet with a history encompassing more than 4.5 billion years, any landscape less than 20 million years old is virtually inchoate. The bleakness of the Great Basin, and the luring austerity of its harsh emptiness, are embellishments added to the land during the latest instant of geological time.” Frank L. DeCourten, \textit{The Broken Land: Adventures in Great Basin Geology} (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2003), 17.
warned: “Now, by adding an unmeasured world beyond that river, we rush like a comet into infinite space.”

When Thomas Jefferson that same year commissioned his fellow Virginians Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to locate safe river passage from St. Louis, Missouri, to the Pacific, he like many at the time supposed a topographical symmetry of the newly expanded and expanding United States. The lands west of the Mississippi and the Missouri, however, through the northern Rockies and over the Cascades, presented the soldier-adventurers of the Northwest Expedition with landscapes at times quite different from the tapestry of eroded peaks, plateaus, prairies, and sandy deltas of their own country. Lewis himself lamented his meager skill at capturing the essence of what he saw, whether “noble” rivers, the “sublimely grand spectacle” of the Great Falls of the Missouri, or the snowy heights of the Rockies. To convey the singularity of the “curious scenery” along the White Cliffs of Montana, for example, he abandoned his usual, more scientific register of geographical description for metaphor:

The water in the course of time in decending from those hills and plains on either side of the river has trickled down the soft sand clifts and worn it into a thousand grotesque figures, which with the help of a little immagination and an

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oblique view, at a distance are made to represent elegant ranges of lofty freestone buildings, having their parapets well stocked with statuary.92

Roosevelt would later locate a regenerative freedom in how different the landscapes of the West felt to him compared with the diminished, claustrophobic spaces of the oversettled and industrialized East. He wrote to his friend Henry Cabot Lodge from his ranch in North Dakota: “I heartily enjoy this life, with its perfect freedom, for I am very fond of hunting, and there are few sensations I prefer to that of galloping over these rolling, limitless prairies, rifle in hand, or winding my way among the barren, fantastic, and grimly picturesque deserts of the so-called Bad Lands.”93

Just as the territories west of the Mississippi were as yet uncharted by military expeditions at the turn of the nineteenth century, the southern regions of French-claimed Algeria were until the twentieth century largely untraversed by Europeans.94 The French geologist Justin Savornin remarked in 1931 that even as late as 1848, after military geographers had already begun to record the topographies of the African littoral and the Atlas, “on n’avait encore point de notion sur la géographie physique saharienne.”95 What they did know or surmised about the Sahara came largely from Roman accounts.96

92 Bergon, 143-144. Lewis was describing the White Cliffs along the Missouri River Breaks in Chouteau County, Montana.
96 Savornin, 8-9.
Yet the road south was hardly a possibility when the peoples of the northern territories resisted occupation so fiercely. Until the late 1850s, the Djurdjura mountains, whose reaches and outlooks doubled as a formidable fortress, had hampered French military efforts to subdue, map, count, and classify the Kabyle territories and their inhabitants. “The fact,” writes Patricia Lorcin, that Kabylia “was conquered at all was in itself a credit,” since its rugged hills formed a “natural barrier which even France’s most illustrious precursors, the Romans, had not attempted to breach.” The occupation of Kabylia by French forces was in turn celebrated as the “crowning achievement of the conquest,” as proof of “French military prowess.”

The Algerian Territoires du Sud, christened as such in 1902, presented an equally if not more daunting prospect for French reconnaissance. Well into the twentieth century, the western Sahara was still perforated with pockets of ambush and retaliation along Algeria’s border with Morocco and so remained little penetrated, and little understood, by French soldiers and scientists. Savornin wrote:

La situation restait dangereuse : les attaques de convois, les assassinats d’isolés, se multipliaient, aux abords de la Saoura et de la Zousfana. L’escorte du

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97 Lorcin, 18.
98 The French Territoires du Sud were created by the law of 24 December 1902. It is important to note that the concept of a French Algeria, figured as part of the national territory, applied to the departments of the Maghreb throughout the nineteenth century. In the era of exploration and, later, at decolonization, “Algeria” was figured more broadly in France to include the Sahara. De Gaulle had famously defined a future for France that stretched from “Dunkirk to Tamanrasset” in his speech of 16 September 1959. The Saharan region was a definitive, and iconic, theater of war between 1940 and 1962 and became one of the final points of negotiation in the transfer of power of 1962. See Joseph McGonagle and Edward Welch, Contesting Views: The Visual Economy of France and Algeria (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 42-43; Lacouture, 105-115.
gouverneur Jonnart, en tournée d’inspection au sud de Figuig, fut surprise le 31 mai 1903 par les Kçouriens de Zenaga. Une riposte immédiate amena la soumission du Figuig [...]. La voie ferrée atteignit Beni-Ounif, dès le mois d’août. De proche en proche, on avança dans la région entre Guir et Zousfana ; on établit une frontière théorique, provisoire, entre les territoires marocains et sahariens : ceux-ci placés sous la surveillance exclusive de l’armée d’Algérie.99

Not surprisingly, Savornin’s history of the scientific “discovery” of Algeria, written to mark the centennial of the invasion of Algiers, was also a triumphalist account of the conquest, an adventure story of the risk and peril undertaken by “des hommes d’action” in “des temps héroïques,” in the North, but really in the Sahara.100 The frontier skirmishes described by Savornin also had imperial and visual antecedents in the vaunted struggles of the U.S. Cavalry posted to forts in the unsettled West. Tales of those encounters similarly heroized soldiers’ efforts to protect railway workers, caravans, coaches, forts, herds, and settlements from attack by “dangerous” natives in lands similarly depicted as difficult to know and so impossible to secure.

1.3.2 Mountains and Plains as Boons of Empire

Stories of the American and French conquests reveal, on the one hand, an orchestrated interest in tracing geographical affinities and in declaring advantageous diversities, and, on the other, a tendency to bracket specific regions as bellwether markers of a compelling yet radical geological alterity. In many cases, the appended lands presented formations, biota, and climates similar enough in look and feel to those

99 Savornin, 162.
100 Savornin, 167.
found in the metropolitan hearts of the empires. Their annexation, both literal and imaginative, encountered less resistance to the type of environment accreted to the nation, even if indigenous populations, soil infertility, climate, or disease rendered settler life there difficult.¹⁰¹ In the United States, the provinces east of the Rockies – the low, eroded Appalachian chains and their cultivatable plateaus and the vast interior plains – were over time valorized as worthy investments in the country’s agricultural, industrial, and demographic futures. Such was also the case for the river and timber regions of the Pacific Coastal Ranges at lower elevations and particularly for the fertile growing valleys of California and the rich metal belts of the Southwest.¹⁰² The early expeditioners Lewis and Clark, Zebulon Montgomery Pike, and Stephen H. Long had all reported to the U.S. government that portions of the newly purchased Louisiana territory were well drained, crawling with game, layered in workable sedimentary soils, and patched in verdant vegetation and useful deposits, all of which promised to sustain American settler life once the territories were cleared of “hostiles.” Pike, commissioned by General Wilkinson with President Jefferson’s consent, led an expedition through the Plains and the Rocky Mountains until he mistakenly crossed into Spanish territory and was taken prisoner. His 550-mile march through New Spain placed him and his men in a position to judge the material value and military capabilities of an immense portion of

¹⁰¹ Savornin, Lewis, Clark, and others frequently compared their findings, whether of flora, fauna, or vistas, to what they were familiar with at home.
the Spanish-held territory adjoining the United States.\textsuperscript{103} Despite his conclusions that the Great Plains were largely “incapable of cultivation” by either Americans or the “uncivilized aborigines of the country,” and might one day become as “equally celebrated as the sandy desarts of Africa,” the lands of New Spain presented other possibilities.\textsuperscript{104} Texas, for example, struck him as “one of the most delightful temperatures in the world” and “one of the richest, most prolific, and best watered countries in North America.”\textsuperscript{105} The results of his fact-finding mission held promise for the future of the empire:

I yet possess immense matter, the results of one year’s travel, in a country desert and populated, which have both been long the subject of curiosity to the philosopher, the anxious desires of the miser, and the waking thoughts and sleeping dreams of the man of ambitious and aspiring soul, and in our present critical situation, I do conceive, immensely important, and which opens a scene for the generosity and aggrandisement of our country, with a wide and splendid field for harvests of honor for individuals.\textsuperscript{106}

In 1820, Major Stephen Long, a U.S. topographical engineer sent up the Platte River to explore the Rockies after Pike, had likewise found extensive evidence of animal

\textsuperscript{103} For a concise history of the debate surrounding Pike’s involvement in the Wilkinson/Burr conspiracy to seize Spanish lands and form a new and separate empire, see Matthew L. Harris and Jay H. Buckley, eds., \textit{Zebulon Pike, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012). For a map and discussion of Pike’s route through New Spain, see Jay H. Buckley, “Pike as a Forgotten and Misunderstood Explorer,” in Harris and Buckley, 21-59.

\textsuperscript{104} Donald Jackson, ed., \textit{The Journals of Zebulon Montgomery Pike With Letters and Related Documents}, vol. 2 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 27; Leo E. Oliva, “Enemies and Friends: Pike and Melgares in the Competition for the Great Plains,” in Harris and Buckley, 177; Buckley, 50. Pike’s designation of the Interior Plains as the Great American Desert, a judgment of the territory that Long would reiterate, most likely impacted U.S. westward settlement and contributed to decisions to relocate indigenous tribes to the Plains.

\textsuperscript{105} Jackson, \textit{The Journals of Zebulon Montgomery Pike}, vol. 2, 75, 77.

and human life on the Plains, yet had also dismissed the territory as unsettleable desert. Long’s military journalist Captain John Bell wrote that the plains near the future site of Denver “were covered with a good soil producing fine pasture,” although the scene overall was a juxtaposition of beauty – “the grandest & most romantic scenery I ever beheld” – and futility, “having on our right the range of snow cap’d mountains, on our left an extensive barren prairie, almost as sterile as the deserts of Arabia.”107 Long himself would record that the valley soil of the Rockies near Pike’s Peak was “rich, and apparently well adapted to cultivation,” but he recommended in his final report to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun that the government disabuse itself of the notion of settling what he, after Pike, called the Great American Desert.108 “Although tracts of fertile land considerably extensive are occasionally to be met with,” he wrote, “yet the scarcity of wood and water, almost uniformly prevalent, will prove an insuperable obstacle in the way of settling the country.”109 Like Pike, he argued that the vast interior had merit as a natural barrier, “to prevent too great an extension of our population

109 Bell, 282. Long’s acting botonist and geologist Dr. James had concurred: “We have little apprehension of giving too unfavourable an account of this portion of the country. Though the soil is in some places fertile, the want of timber, of navigable streams, and of water for the necessities of life, render it an unfit residence for any but a nomad population. The traveller who shall at any time have traversed its desolate sands, will, we think, join us in the wish that this region may for ever remain the unmolested haunt of the native hunter, the bison and the jackall” (Bell, 282, footnote).
westward, and secure us against the machinations or incursions of an enemy that might otherwise be disposed to annoy us in that part of our frontier.”

Subsequent expeditions as well as the spill into the Plains of traders, trappers, hunters, and pioneers – “those restless people, who are a sort of determined bandits, armed with carabines, who frequently cross the Mississippi in numbers, with the intention of reconnoitering, of hunting, and if they like the country, of establishing themselves” – disproved over time the “geographical myth” of the Great American Desert. An 1891 handbook on American life and history in the Plains could thus declare:

Instead of what had been regarded as a sterile and unfruitful tract of land, incapable of sustaining either man or beast, there existed the fairest and richest portion of the national domain, blessed with a climate pure, bracing, and healthful, while its undeveloped soil rivalled if it did not surpass the most productive portions of the Eastern, Middle, or Southern States.

On the other side of the Atlantic, early French settlers disembarking along the African littoral discovered a Mediterranean climate, scrub vegetation, and “white” coastal viewscapes somewhat similar to those of the port regions many had left behind in the French Midi. Tocqueville, setting upon Algiers, compared the “charming” view with its “multitude de petites maisons blanches” and green hillsides to the coastline of La Hague in Normandy; of the city itself, which he found bustling with multicultural

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110 Bell, 282.
111 Governor Carondelet complained in 1796 to the marquis de Braceforte at New Orleans about the flow of Americans across the Mississippi River. Quoted in Oliva, 165.
112 Wild Life on the Plains, 13. Expansion accelerated following the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, which officially opened up the lands west of the Missouri to American settlement. Oliva, 178.
and commercial energy, he affectionately wrote: “C’est Cincinnati transporté sur le sol de l’Afrique.” The topography farther inland would have also reminded some of home. The *hautes plaines* of the three French provinces, noted one geographer, offered not only “un sol parfois très riche,” but more importantly “des conditions climatologiques assez voisines de celles qui s’observent dans la Bourgogne et la Lorraine françaises.” French soldiers had been pleased to discover that the agricultural bearing of the inhabitants of the mountainous Dahra region was “un peu à la mode républicaine.” Existing cultivation of crops familiar or dear to the French pointed to France’s future agricultural prosperity in Algeria and incited several officers to question the military’s policy of scorched-earth invasion, since the success of colonization depended largely on the fig and olive groves, orchards, and grain fields remaining intact for future French development and exploitation. In 1842, the commander Lioux wrote of the “beau pays que les Arabes avaient soigneusement cultivé” along the Chélif River: “Durant les jours qui s’étaient écoulés depuis notre départ [...], on détruisit beaucoup de pauvres villages et de riches et abondantes moissons : triste nécessité, cruel moyen pour

113 Alexis de Tocqueville, “Notes du voyage en Algérie de 1841,” in Œuvres, vol. 1, 659. Clancy-Smith writes of the deliberate transformation of Algiers into a European colonial capital in the early years of the conquest: “In 1832 the military began systematically demolishing Ottoman-Islamic Algiers by digging up Muslim cemeteries for road building and converting the Ketchaoua Mosque into a cathedral. The ancient core of the city was ripped open to make way for European structures and monumental spaces.” Clancy-Smith, 26.
lequel j’éprouve la plus grande antipathie.” The following year, while in the central coastal region of Cherchell, he again lamented:

L’on a beaucoup détruit : des villages entiers, de grands et véritables villages ont disparu par l’incendie et plusieurs milliers de pieds de figuiers, d’oliviers et autres, ont été coupés. Je ne m’explique pas ce dernier genre de dévastation si l’on veut réellement occuper le pays ou seulement en exiger des contributions.”

The French under-director of the Constantine region echoed his sentiment: “Si nous appauvrissions le pays d’avance, qu’en ferons-nous quand nous l’aurons, si nous l’avons ?”

Between 1842 and 1844, as war intensified between Abd el-Kader’s troops and the invading army, the French managed to gain a fragile foothold in Kabylia. General Bugeaud, whose motto was *ense et aratro* (“with sword and plough”), framed the success of this latest campaign in a report to the French War Ministry as the advantageous requisition of settleable, cultivatable land for “Europe,” meaning France:

Les résultats de cette courte campagne sont d’avoir étendu de plus de 20 lieues le rayon d’Alger dans l’Est ; d’avoir ajouté à notre domination un territoire fertile et très peuplé qui sera un nouvel aliment pour notre commerce et pour les revenus coloniaux ; d’y avoir conquis de vastes et bonnes terres pour la colonisation européenne.

Although anti-imperialist during his earlier tenure in Parliament, Bugeaud had embraced the conquest as imperative to liberal nation-building and had proven

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117 Lioux, *Campagnes d’Afrique*, quoted in Lacheraf, 94.
instrumental in getting French agrarian settlement off the ground. Following an 1841 decree granting free tracts of land to European agriculturalists, French Algeria experienced “une brillante période de peuplement” in which the settler population increased from roughly 27,000 Europeans in 1839 to 131,000 in 1850. The French, however, were largely reticent to settle the African lands under French military control prior to the total domination of northern Algeria, and even then, debate over whether or not to develop Algeria into a settler colony continued into the early decades of the Third French Republic. In 1828, the National Assembly deputy from Marseille, Pierre Honoré de Roux, had nevertheless extolled the virtues of the Maghreb as a land not only “close” to France but one that was imminently “civilizable.” “The region which is almost within sight of Marseilles,” he claimed, was not only “extremely fertile,” but open to transformation as well: French “civilization” would “turn the bedouin nomads into agriculturalists.” The Bourbon Restoration’s “quixotic” desire to settle North Africa, however, disregarded public feeling on the matter. The general unwillingness to abandon the hexagon for the colonies was borne out across the century by failed

120 On Bugeaud, see Sessions. On Bugeaud’s early career, see also Pitts, 297.
121 Busson, 35. Busson divided the European settlement and development of Algeria into five stages, the second of which, from 1840 to 1851, was under Bugeaud’s initiative. In 1851, the rural population, which he had targeted for growth by promoting the allocation of farmland, accounted for 42,493 of the total European population of 131,283 in the colony.
122 Andersen shows that there was much support in France by the late nineteenth century for settlement in the African colonies, and that it was motivated by many factors, including imperialism and pronatalism. Early advocates for the creation of settler colonies emerged in the 1870s. Andersen, 2-3.
123 Roux’s National Assembly speech of May 1828 is quoted in Buheiry, 28.
experiments in French *peuplement* in Madagascar, Senegal, and Guyana.\textsuperscript{124} Although the Americas received high numbers of French emigrés across the nineteenth century, “Frenchman, unlike Englishmen, did not wish to emigrate, particularly as colons to distant tropical regions” about which they had little practical knowledge.\textsuperscript{125}

To spur interest, colonial tracts in the latter part of the century romanticized life in the colonies and encouraged the middle classes to heed the “lure of riches and glory in far-off places.” Government efforts to recruit emigrants to the colonies were still negligible in the late 1800s. Colonial recruitment lobbies undertook the task themselves and circulated brochures and pamphlets with practical tips for a successful emigration. Newly arrived settlers were still often unprepared and ill-disposed to perform farm work and manual labor in the colony, both of which were readily available. In addition, recruitment organizations found themselves in competition with Argentina and the United States, in which French emigrants settled each year in much larger numbers. To counteract the allure of the United States, a tract from 1899, writes Andersen, “emphasized the harsh weather in the American prairies that were otherwise beautifully presented in brochures, concluding that America was not a promised land where the

\textsuperscript{124} Buheiry, 26; Clancy Smith, 19. Gallieni’s pronatalist policies in Madagascar, although considered a success by many in France, aimed to increase birth rates among the indigenous Merina population and not necessarily the size of the French settler population. Andersen, chapter three, 110-158.

\textsuperscript{125} Buheiry, 26. Recent scholarship has thoroughly demonstrated that the empire figured prominently in the French popular imagination and even in everyday life in France by the latter half of the nineteenth century, even if living conditions in the colonies remained less publicized. See, for example, Sèbe, 6-7.
emigrant could get rich quickly from the abundant and fertile land.” Laws passed in the 1870s to boost lagging colonial emigration were modeled after the U.S. Homestead Act of 1862, which had made small parcels of public lands free for distribution, provided settlers remained on them for five years to work the soil. In the French metropole, economic arguments combined with nationalist social and demographic arguments to draw out support for the development of settler colonialism in Algeria. Simonde de Sismondi’s conclusions were representative of the general trends of the debate in France. The colony’s fertile coastal regions and inland *hautes plaines*, viewed as future penitentiaries by some and as potential sites of a necessary demographic intervention by others, would, as he put it, “soak up the surplus population and excessive economic energies present in French society,” the result of the exhaustive measuring and distribution of all available property. France, he claimed, “resserrée dans des frontières qui ne pouvaient s’étendre,” needed Africa.

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Rising above the North African littoral in folded peaks, snow-capped to the west along the Moroccan border, lush and green in the Djurdjura and separated from the

126 Andersen, 62-71.
127 The French laws of 21 June 1871, 16 October 1871, 16 October 1872, 15 July 1874, and 30 September 1878 enabled free land distribution in return for three or five years of residence. The rural settler population increased dramatically as a result, to 207,615 farmers by 1888. Bussón, 35. In Algiers as well, the European population increased from less than 200,000 in 1881 to roughly 365,000 in 1900, although changes to French citizenship law account in large part for the increase. Clancy-Smith, 51.
128 Quoted in Buheiry, 30.
129 Quoted in Buheiry, 31.
coast by fertile valleys and plains, the Atlas mountains presented a welcome vista to newly arrived French soldiers and settlers. Settlement in French Algeria had spread from the coastal cities out and inland, along a winding nexus of *plaines littorales*, low and high valleys, and steppe plateaus tucked between and among isolated peaks and ranges, marshland, salt lakes, and rivers. Each of the three provinces presented the French with ample farmland to requisition and settle in areas deemed both “secure” – such as the plains of Algiers and the Mitidja, once drained, and the regions around Philippeville, Guelma, and Sétif – and less “secure,” namely the highly coveted but densely populated and protected plains and valleys of Greater Kabylia.130

Tectonic history accounts for the similar landscape formations on either side of the Mediterranean Sea. Roughly 50 million years ago, well after the supercontinent Pangaea had rifted and split and the continental landmasses had drifted apart, subduction underneath the proto-Mediterranean caused the African Plate to slam into the Eurasian Plate.131 The collision further uplifted ranges in the Alps and Pyrenees, “warped” and faulted the sedimentary cover of Western Europe into flats and

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131 Pangaea, the second of the supercontinents, formed roughly 300 million years ago as Gondwana (Africa), Eurasia, and South America collided with North America at the end of the Paleozoic. The supercontinent rifted and the continental landmasses drifted apart in the Mesozoic, roughly 180-200 million years ago. The proto-Mediterranean Sea was the Tythys Sea between Europe and Gondwana. Grove, 3-14; Joyce Ann Quinn and Susan L. Woodward, *Earth’s Landscape: An Encyclopedia of the World’s Geographic Features* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2015), 233-237.
escarpments, and formed a new portion of the Alpine chain – the Atlas Mountains – along the length of the Maghrebi coastline. The rock formations in the southern, northern, and eastern ranges of the Alps contain fragments of the African Plate that pushed up and over the Eurasian Plate on impact. Cultural geographies notwithstanding, and putting aside for the moment the centuries-old French interest in orientalizing the social landscapes of Islamic North Africa, the pinched peaks and hard-rock outcroppings of the Tellian Atlas range and even the scrub to bare hills, gorges, and canyons of the Saharan Atlas to the south and the Aurès Mountains in the east all had geological parenté in France, and vice versa. Barring early difficulties in European acclimatization, the relative familiarity of the Algerian environment played into narratives meant to naturalize the African littoral and the three Atlas sister ranges of the Alps as strategically valuable and agriculturally worthy extensions of the French national territory.

132 The Alpine Orogeny in the late Paleozoic formed the Alps, the Carpathians, the Caucasus, and other ranges in southern and eastern Europe. Quinn and Woodward, 235-236.
135 Grove, 37, 44-45. On acclimatization, see Andersen, 19, 26. Environmental factors, and especially fevers, played a large role in the French military conquest and colonization of Indochina as well. See Jennings, 6-20.
Imperialist narratives circulating within and between the United States and France tended to cast mountains and plains as aesthetic boons to empire and in some cases as divine gifts to a great nation in formation. The trans-Mississippi added breathtaking vistas of sheer expanse to America’s increasingly diverse roster of national landscapes, just as “le pittoresque” of Algerian countrysides, a frequent background of the Scènes et Types picture postcards sent back to the mainland, proved a charming addition to the varied cultural geographies of a newly expanded France.136 Mountains, on the other hand, of the young, faulted, steep, and snow-capped variety rather than the low, eroded ranges found in the eastern U.S. or France’s Massif Central, conveyed to imperial designers a sense of national health, moral rectitude, and righteousness of purpose. They motivated those who toiled in their majestic shadows and stood as awesome reminders of the natural power contained within the national space. Lewis may have described the northern Rockies as an “icy barrier which separates me from my friends and Country, from all which makes life esteemable,” but he was anxious to catch his first glimpse of their peaks.137 To Pike, the mountains represented a formidable boundary and a dangerous wilderness. He and his men had grossly miscalculated the

137 Bergon, Lewis and Clark, 411, 403, spelling preserved. Lewis was so anxious, in fact, that he mistook another range, probably the Bears Paw Mountains in north-central Montana, for the Rocky Mountains. Bergon, 28.
heights and distances of the Rockies, the tallest mountains they had ever encountered, and had nearly perished from overexposure and lack of provisions while wandering the snowdrifted foothills weary, malnourished, and lost and with some among them gravely frostbitten.\textsuperscript{138} The men of Long’s expedition retraced Pike’s steps, scaled several of the peaks in question, and welcomed the “beautiful and sublime” sight of the Rockies “after having been so long confined to the dull uninteresting monotony of prairie country.”\textsuperscript{139}

In France, the “Alpine myth,” a development of the nineteenth century, was still visibly at work in twentieth-century French travel guides like the \textit{Guides Bleus}, which, Roland Barthes pointed out, mapped a “Helvetico-Protestant morality” onto the different features of the European landscape.\textsuperscript{140} “Mountains, gorges, defiles and torrents” – the steeper the better – as well as plains, but only if deemed “fertile,” became the quaint and scenic tourist destinations of a bourgeoisie seeking “regeneration through clean air,” a heady moral cocktail of “effort and solitude,” and a shortcut to “civic virtue.”\textsuperscript{141} Victor Hugo had been one such seeker of national truth in landscape. While journeying through the Alps, he wrote of the peaks near Lucerne:

\begin{quote}
Above Pilatus, far down the horizon gleamed a score of snowy summits; shadow and verdure covered the mighty muscles of the hills; the sun brought out into strong relief the colossal osteology of the Alps; the wrinkled granite crags were
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{138} Buckley, 34-38. \textsuperscript{139} Bell, 142. \textsuperscript{140} Roland Barthes, \textit{Mythologies}, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 74. \textsuperscript{141} Barthes, 74.
\end{flushright}
creased in the distances like anxious brows; the rays raining down from the clouds gave a ravishingly beautiful aspect to these fair valleys [...] It was a prodigious ensemble of harmonious and magnificent things, full of the grandeur of God. I turned round and asked myself to what superior and chosen Being Nature was offering this marvellous festival of the mountains, the clouds, and the sun, and I felt the need of finding a sublime witness of this sublime landscape.  

The sentiments motivating Hugo’s anatomical mapping of the Swiss landscape in 1839 resounded as well in Bruno’s *Tour de la France par deux enfants*, the required reading of French schoolchildren in the early Third Republic. In the book, the traveling orphans André and Julien are likewise confronted with the splendorous sight of Mont Blanc and the surrounding ridges of the Alps “of the Savoie,” which, they are told, not only contained “les plus hautes montagnes de notre Europe,” but were situated within the borders of France itself. The Alpine myth takes pedagogical shape in the textbook in terms of plane, scale, and form – the horizontal subordinated to the vertical, the uniform and smooth to the varied and jagged, and, most importantly, the human to the divine, with France rendered in consequence a great and blessed nation by virtue of her steep, angular heights blanketed in pure white snows. Monsieur Gertal instructs the seven-year-old Julien:

144 Bruno.
Joins les mains à la vue de ces merveilles. En voyant l’une après l’autre toutes ces montagnes sortir de la nuit et paraître à la lumière, nous avons assisté comme à une nouvelle création. Que ces grandes œuvres de Dieu te rappellent le Père qui est aux cieux, et que les premiers instants de cette journée lui appartiennent.\textsuperscript{145}

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Alpine myth found an echo across the Mediterranean in the emerging “Kabyle myth.” Lorcin’s monumental work on the French colonial landscapes of Algeria demonstrates how French military personnel and later colonial administrators and civilians increasingly valorized the Kabyle Berbers, or the northern mountain folk, over the “nomadic” peoples who wandered the semi-arid plains of the High Plateaus situated between the Tellian Atlas and the Saharan Atlas in the provinces of Oran and Algiers.\textsuperscript{146} She traces how military, scientific, medical, ethnographic, historical, and other classifications of Algeria’s native populations and their modes of warfare and habitation converged in the late nineteenth century on landscape-inflected definitions of “tribal” character and physical trait. The Kabyles, who resided principally in fixed settlements tucked away in the Djurdjura, were praised for qualities that approximated them to the French: their immobility and sedentariness; their ability to defend themselves in war; their attachment to earth and family; their civic-mindedness verging on the democratic; their relatively egalitarian treatment of women; their independence of spirit, industriousness, skills in handcrafts, and openness to trade; and their religious “unorthodoxy,” relative to the Islamist proclivities perceived

\textsuperscript{145} Bruno.
\textsuperscript{146} Lorcin, 30-32. See also Graebner, 110-111, and Paul Silverstein, \textit{Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 45-66.
in the “Arab.” Berbers were seen as exhibiting more “European” physiognomies and statures, including lighter hair, skin, and eyes, and strong, healthy, well-proportioned physiques, the latter of which were attributed to the effects of the salubrious mountain environment in which they lived.

Well into the twentieth century, the French inclination to approve of mountains and those who lived in them over “desertic” plains and their inhabitants can be traced again within French efforts to demystify the mountainscapes of the Ahaggar Massif in the southern Algerian Sahara as a geology “like us.” Savornin pointed out that, despite obvious differences in climate, erosion patterns, and vegetative cover, there existed nonetheless certain structural “similarities” between the “cyclopean” volcanic outcroppings of the Ahaggar and the old volcanic rock underlying France’s forested Massif Central:

On notera que le Hoggar n’est pas sans analogie avec l’Auvergne, abstraction faite de la climatérie. La similitude s’affirme par la juxtaposition – dans l’un et l’autre massif – de roches cristallines, plutoniques et volcaniques, les unes anciennes, les autres récentes, avec de vieilles roches sédimentaires profondément métamorphisées.

In ways not unlike the accession of mountains and plains to the United States, the “Berbéria” region and even the southern desert peaks became more or less easily

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147 Lorcin, 233.
148 Lorcin, 122.
149 Savornin, 212.
subjoined to the French national geography as necessary living space, or, in the absence of fecundity, as a high relief providing visual, even moral, interest.\textsuperscript{150}

1.3.3 Desert “Wastes” and “rêves de sable”

The Janus face of the Kabyle myth was the dismissal of the Muslim “Arab” as a barbarian other whose natural environment was not the visually imposing, life-giving mountains or the well-watered valleys, but rather the desertic expanses of the High Plateaus, or, more generally, the dryer, flatter, less “picturesque,” less life-sustaining terrain that made up the rest of the French Algerian territory.\textsuperscript{151} In contradistinction to the Kabyle, the “Arab” was thus characterized negatively, and binarily, as a fanatical, indolent, erratic, unpredictable, thieving, bellicose, polygamous, and despotic nomad.\textsuperscript{152} French colonial stereotype, which hewed closely to the publicized beliefs of Bugeaud and other military leaders, essentialized non-Berber Muslim men as occasional herders with desert harems whose religious zeal and authoritarian social structures rendered their assimilation into French society difficult, if not impossible.\textsuperscript{153} The environmentalist Pascal Duprat, editor of \textit{Revue Indépendante}, was heavily invested in a Kabyle-Arab distinction. The Berber’s “rugged looks and proud, abrupt manner,” he wrote, derived

\textsuperscript{150} Savornin divides the geology of Algeria into two regions. \textit{La Berbérie} in the north encompasses the “rectangle” demarcated by the sea, Morocco, and Tunisia, and by the Saharan Atlas to the south. \textit{Le Sahara} begins at the southern edge of the Saharan Atlas and accounts for the rest of Algeria. Savornin, 6.

\textsuperscript{151} Stereotypes, especially in the wake of Tocqueville’s writings on Algeria, tended to lump the Saharan Berber peoples in with the non-Berber Muslims and designate them all as “Arabs.” Silverstein, 50.

\textsuperscript{152} Lorcin, 221-223.

\textsuperscript{153} Lorcin, 29-32.
from the noble, forested, and stable “rocks and mountains” in which he flourished, while the Arab’s “nervous, active disposition” and “dry, thin constitution” were the result of a life spent ranging the “vast spaces and open horizons” of the “bare, dry plains.”

As the local newspaper in Bordeaux had intoned, the “bedouins” of Algeria would in the end only go the way of America’s “Red Indians,” meaning vanishment by extermination. Tocqueville, “Parliament’s greatest expert on the colony,” had also divided the territory under French control by environmental promise, remarking in 1841 on the first of two reconnaissance missions to Algeria: “Contraste étonnant : le Saël image de la nature cultivée par l’industrie et la civilisation la plus avancée ; la plaine : wilderness.”

His conclusions, written up the same year in his Travail sur l’Algérie, echoed and deepened the French prejudicial thinking that violence was the only language understood by the plains-dwelling Arabs:

J’ai souvent entendu en France des hommes que je respecte, mais que je n’approuve pas, trouver mauvais qu’on brûlat les moissons, qu’on vidât les silos et enfin qu’on s’emparât des hommes sans armes, des femmes et des enfants. Ce sont là, suivant moi, des nécessités fâcheuses, mais auxquelles tout peuple qui voudra faire la guerre aux Arabes sera obligé de se soumettre.

As enduring “images,” as idées reçues, the landscape-based classifications of the indigenous peoples of Algeria resulted in a “moral” othering of non-Berber Muslim

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154 Quoted in Lorcin, 150-151.
156 Alexis de Tocqueville, “Travail sur l’Algérie (octobre 1841)” in Œuvres, vol. 1, 704. For more on Tocqueville’s support for the tactics used in Algeria, see, for example, Pitts, 298-318, and Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, “D’Alexis de Tocquville aux massacres d’Algériens en octobre 1961,” La Mazarine (2001): 57-60.
society that structured Franco-Algerian relations in repressive and violent ways over the next century. Lorcin writes: “Once the environmental categories of mountain and plain had been coloured by positive and negative connotations; once they had acquired a quasi-moral dimension of good and bad,” deeper stigmatization and oppression based on perceived topographical inheritances became possible. The biological determinism undergirding civilian rule in French Algeria after 1870 relied heavily on myths of landscape and deliberate human-environment conflations to stratify French Algerian society still further, the colonialist objective being the exclusion of Muslims, and particularly those identified as Arabs, from positions of economic power in the colony.

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As mountains and verdant plains became encoded within art, life, and politics as capitalist boons and cultural biens, the true desert regions of the U.S. and of French Algeria captivated popular imaginations and haunted the imperialist narratives circulating within and between the two empires. The tide of territorial expansion had “inevitably” flooded the Great American Desert and even the Algerian High Plateaus, transforming by colonial development portions of the “waste spaces” under imperial purview into revenue streams, however meager. The French had also notably

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158 Lorcin, 33-34.
159 By the turn of the twentieth century, French settlement of the Hauts Plateaux had taken root around strategically sited centres agricoles, although the latter served more as posts along routes to the Sahara than as
protected their investment with large-scale afforestation to prevent the encroachment farther north of Saharan aridity. Yet the temperate and subtropical deserts – in the U.S., the deserts located within the enormous intermontane plateau dipping between the Rockies and the Pacific Coastal ranges, and in Algeria, the western Sahara, which extended over more than four-fifths of the Algerian territory – represented in the twentieth century the exotic geologies of the expanded national terrains. The desert topographies were unlike those found in the imperial capital regions and, in consequence, were viewed not only as compelling novelties, but as “aberrant” or “abnormal” geological deviations from the rolling hills and prairies of the settled regions. The deserts were imagined as inedible landscapes, wide and unwatered, in places totally bare, and punctuated by eerie spires, mesas, domes, and canyons, asymmetrical mountain ranges, isolated peaks, evaporated lakes or playas, dune fields, and transient oases. Moreover, they were inhabited by native peoples able to maneuver within weather extremes that tended to kill off the more “civilized” people who

settlements. The Hauts Plateaux were dedicated more to livestock than to crops given the lack of communication to the coast and the low annual rainfall. Busson, 44.

160 Grove, 46.


162 Savornin described the dunes of the western Sahara, with their “accumulations limitées de sables purs,” as a “contrée anormale” (233).
attempted to traverse them. The landscape formations of the American desert basins and 
of the western Sahara also bore witness to cataclysms of seemingly transcendental 
proportion: they were magmatic and volcanic fields of fiery upheaval, collapse, and 
extlosion, testaments to the power of fire, wind, and water to strip, shift, cut, and shape 
the landscape. In the hypermasculine milieux of nineteenth-century science, battle, fort 
construction, town raising, and transportation, the untamable wildernesses, and 
particularly the deserts, effortlessly acquired the traits of a monstrous femaleness, or of a 
female body registering biologically null. Deserts were barren, sterile, unproductive, or 
infertile, unlike the gently rolling, waving, undulating, green lands of home. With their 
chasms, labyrinths, and protuberances, shape-shifting dunes, and impenetrable thickets, 
they became grotesque perversions of a Victorian-era femininity. Even the flat, vast, tall, 
straight, uniform, and sheer features of the desert landscape could be viewed not only as 
reflections and firmaments of masculine authority but also paradoxically as against a 
natural order of things and so transgressively female and frightening. More 
importantly, the imperviousness of the desert regions to the imperial will – the stubborn 
resistance of the hot, dry borderlands to Anglo-American and French efforts to secure, 
colonize, and render productive – meant that vast portions of the enlarged national

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163 The Yellowstone eruption 640,000 years ago was actually larger on the Volcanic Explosivity Index (VEI) 
than a VEI of 4, described as “cataclysmic.” As a supervolcano, its eruptive magnitude was at the top of the 
Index, at 8, and described as “colossal” or “mega-colossal.” Lee Siebert, Tom Simkin, and Paul Kimberly, 
Figure 1: *West Mitten Butte in Monument Valley near the Utah-Arizona border in the United States.*

Figure 2: *The Ahaggar mountains of Algeria near the southern city of Tamanrasset.*

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[165] Photo credit: Miguel A. Monjas, CC BY 2.5, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=355025].
territories remained at odds, held in exocultural tension, with nationalist ideas of
destiny, productivity, and militarized strength (see Figs. 1 and 2).

In the United States, nineteenth-century exploration mapped the cold-ranging,
midlatitude Great Basin and Mojave deserts, which today span much of Nevada and
portions of southern Oregon, Idaho, Utah, and eastern California. Pike himself had
opened up the Southwest to exploration, including the Sonoran desert, which stretches
from southwestern Arizona to southern California, and the Chihuahuan desert, which
extends from western Texas into southeastern New Mexico. Across the century, the
geological marvels of the American West began to enter the broader consciousness as a
silent landscape of natural extremes and sublime beauty, and as a rugged and
spectacular geography befitting a young and vigorous nation. In government reports,
travelogues, sketches, paintings, magazine essays, dime novels, and later cinema, the
American public discovered stunning tableaux of new and old rock formations whipped
and cut by melting ice sheets and erosion into harshlands, bizarre monuments, and
striking depths. The desert West was hardly flat, and hardly limited to sagebrush

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167 Paintings and travel sketches first brought western landscapes into view. Photographs by John K. Hillers, Timothy O’Sullivan, and William Henry Jackson, all government photographers, began to circulate in the 1870s and altered American knowledge of the West. Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 63. Some of the landscapes photographed were deemed so beautiful that legislation was introduced immediately to preserve them as national parks. Lori Oden, *The International Photography Hall of Fame and Museum,* “William Henry Jackson,”
shrubland to the north and burnt earth to the south, the latter dismissed by Pike as “a barren wild of poor land, scarcely to be improved by culture.” Traders, prospectors, pioneers, settlers, and expeditioners uncovered the diversity of the West’s natural wonders, including, among others, the hotspot formations in northwest Wyoming and the lava flows of Idaho’s Snake River Plain; the abrupt rises of the 400 or so fault-block mountains of Utah and Nevada created some 20 million years ago by crust faulting, dropping, and tilting as the basin floor expanded, and without geological equivalent in the East; the sand dunes at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in Colorado, and even the dormant dunes of the Sand Hills of Nebraska; the bare rock faces and gorges of the Colorado Plateau; the mile-deep Grand Canyon, cut by melting glacial ice to reveal billion-year-old granites and ancient metamorphic rocks stacked within the Inner Gorge; the jarringly flat, “near-featureless” tablelands, larger in size than New England, of the Llano Estacado in West Texas and eastern New Mexico; the dunes, canyons, oases, and steep buttes of California’s Death Valley, located 282 feet below sea level and aptly named by the gold-rushers of 1849; the colorful bands of the cliffs and mesas of central Arizona’s Painted Desert; and perhaps of singular importance to American folklore, the


famous vistas of Monument Valley, whose red sandstone sculptures, eroded into masterpieces over the last 50 million years and reaching heights of 1,000 feet above the valley floor, have come to symbolize the Old West in American popular culture. Even if “sterile” across large swaths, dismissed as immune to improvement and unsupportive of settlement, the “desertic” left half of the United States was nevertheless a grandiose platform upon which to raise Jefferson’s empire of liberty, not to mention a valuable cache of silver, gold, natural gas, oil, and uranium.

The Sahara desert presented the French with new possibilities and in some regions with similar vistas. Commencing abruptly along a fault line south of the Saharan Atlas and flowing into the active sand dune fields of the Great Western and Eastern Ergs, the Sahara remained for centuries a natural and thermal barrier whose shifting sands like the surface ripples of an immense sea long prevented invading armies from moving deeper in-continent. The sweep south and east to the southern massif of the Ahaggar likewise presented imperialists with leagues of seemingly unproductive and impassible land. Into the twentieth century, the French discovered and documented a desert surface compounded of “barren” rock plateaus (hamadas), plains of shallow, sandy, pebbly, or stony soil deemed unsuitable for cultivation (regs), and dry or evaporated valleys (wadis) interspersed in places with salt pans (schotts) and seasonal

Although the Saharan landscape was novel to the French in both aridity and scale, nineteenth-century military intelligence and scientific exploration increasingly characterized it as “aisément apprivoisable,” to elicit enthusiasm for a campaign that remained expensive and far from popular at home. Proposals for the construction of a trans-Saharan railway to consolidate French presence on the continent by linking Algeria with the Sudan helped endear the desert lands of Algeria to French industry and policymakers, as did the prospect of oil.

Into the twentieth century, the emerging French Saharan tourist industry similarly attempted to demystify the desert geology to lure French travelers south. The Guide pratique du tourisme au Sahara, co-authored in 1931 by the military director of the Algerian Territoires du Sud and a captain from the Service des affaires indigènes militaires, assuaged a curious if anxious adventuring public with a familiarizing description of the desert environment: “La constitution géologique du sol et la physionomie générale du terrain ne sont pas dans cette région essentiellement différentes de celles des autres parties du globe. On y rencontre des rochers et des terrains meubles, des montagnes et des plaines.”

Moreover, hard-won French military
successes across the turn of the century had readied the region for tourism. Before the Great War, the guide claimed,

seuls quelques touristes intrépides, en dehors des fonctionnaires et des officiers que leurs fonctions appelaient dans ces territoires, osaient s’aventurer dans le désert. Qui allait jusqu’à Ouargla, El-Goléa ou Beni-Abbès, prenait déjà physionomie de chercheur d’aventures, sinon d’explorateur. Il fallait être globe-trotter émérite pour pousser jusqu’à In-Salah ou au Hoggar et la traversée du Sahara, de l’Algérie au Soudan était considérée comme un exploit.175

By the interwar period, the western Sahara was largely mapped and European tourists began to venture from the coastal cities inland and farther south to colonial outposts in the desert. As happened in the American West during the same period, especially in the neighborhoods of Monument Valley and Rainbow Bridge, both of which saw booming vehicle tourism after World War I, the increasing presence in the Sahara of cars, buses, airplanes, and their related industries “[a] rendu facile et accessible ce qui, hier, était inaccessible sinon dangereux.”176

Alongside military, scientific, and tourist endeavors to “depersonalize” the Sahara arose literary and artistic efforts, particularly in novels and travel accounts, to remythologize it as a space of “adventure, of the exotic, of the marvellous, of danger itself.”177 Jean-Claude Vatin commented:

Si le voyageur se perd de moins en moins physiquement dans le désert, l’amateur en son fauteuil aime encore rêver que la chose est possible, et s’accroche frileusement à ses peurs. [...] Lui réduire le Sahara qu’il a en tête à une

175 Meynier and Nabal, 11.
176 Meynier and Nabal, 11.
177 Vatin, 112. Translation mine.
contrée quelconque, c’est le contraindre à une démythification dont il n’a, au fond, nulle envie.\textsuperscript{178}

The Sahara would, then, forever remain “insaississable,” despite the achievements of French scientific exploration, and its seeming elusiveness to penetration and development engendered a surprising multiplicity of “images” that both fixed the Sahara and \textit{disoriented} it, “au double sens de découverte et de perte du sens de l’\textit{Orient}.”\textsuperscript{179} Once beyond the sliver of green earth bordering the Mediterranean, the vast territory of French Algeria became, in the words of Assia Djebar, “un rêve de sable,” but a mythic environment to the French and to much of western Europe signaling death, stasis, and eternity.\textsuperscript{180} The Sahara was the noble domain of the ancients, the phantasmagorical site “des mondes évanouis” and “des royaumes engloutis” and the \textit{demeure} of “aristocratic” peoples of a statelier past.\textsuperscript{181} Literary and artistic traditions represented the Sahara as a dead, even incinerated, landscape that repulsed the passage of time and man. Gautier’s painterly prose in \textit{Roman de la momie} from 1857 could thus reduce Egypt’s Valley of the Kings, the resting place of pharaohs buried over 30 centuries earlier, to a scene of silent “devastation” in which not a “pincée de terre

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{178} Vatin, 111-112.
\item \textsuperscript{179} Vatin, 107. Vatin argues that the mass of French “scientific” scholarship on the Sahara, including works by the geologists and explorers Frelon, de Lapparent, Borocco, Nyssen, Fezzan, Mori, Sattin, Tassili, the Abbé Breuil, Balout, and Lhote, by the “pre-Islamic” scholars Bellair, Pauphilet, and Zohrer, by the geographers Capot-Rey and Perret, by the climatologist Dubief, by the ethnologists Briggs, Cauneille, and Chappelle, by the linguists Foucauld and Motylinski, and also by Robert Capot-Rey, author of a piece on the Sahara for the “Que sais-je” series, all ultimately classify the Sahara as “insaississable.” Vatin, 107-108.
\item \textsuperscript{180} Assia Djebar, \textit{Le Blanc de l’Algérie} (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995), 162.
\item \textsuperscript{181} Vatin, 112.
\end{itemize}
végétale” could be detected, nor a single “frémissement de vie.”182 Outdating entire “civilizations,” “empires,” “religions,” and even “les monuments que l’on croyait éternels,” the Sahara takes shape in Gautier’s imagination not only as a crypt, but as the stark negation of life and history, a burnt and wasted topography resembling “des tas des cendres restés sur place d’une chaîne de montagnes brûlée au temps des catastrophes cosmiques dans un grand incendie planétaire.” The narrator laments:

Tous les détails nets, précis, arides se dessinaient, même aux derniers plans, avec une impitoyable sécheresse, et leur éloignement ne se devinait qu’à la petitesse de leur dimension, comme si la nature cruelle n’eût voulu cacher aucune misère, aucune tristesse de cette terre décharnée, plus morte encore que les morts qu’elle renfermait.183

In 1925, the novelist Zane Grey celebrated a similar image of the American desert West – as monumental, as prior to history – in his love story, Captives of the Desert, set in Arizona.184 “This desert solitude,” narrated the story,

was the storehouse of unlived years, the hush of the world at the hour of its creation. It was solid, grand, incorruptible. It did something to one, something inexplicable; it drew one’s narrow soul from out oneself, and poured in something big, so big it was almost too great to bear.185

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182 Théophile Gautier, Le Roman de la momie (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2008), 42. Gautier chose a writing career over life as a painter. Marc Eigeldinger, Annie Forgeau, and Marie-France Azéma, Notes and Dossier in Gautier, 270.
183 Gautier, 58, 42.
185 Grey, 23. Blake points out that Grey’s literary vision of the American desert landscape, while “place-defining” for his millions of readers, nevertheless varied across his Western novels, becoming the “colorful” icon of the West in Riders of the Purple Sage (1912), a land of wealth and possibility in Heritage of the Desert (1910) and Desert Gold (1913), a “productive” zone in The Desert of Wheat (1919), a “land of enchantment” in The Vanishing American (1925), and a “sandy wasteland” in Stairs of Sand (1943). Blake, 202, 212.
In 1957, the eponymous protagonist of Albert Camus’s *Femme adultère* would likewise recover what had been lost, to herself, sexually, and to the world, while in silent communion with the cold, eternal rocks of the Algerian Hauts Plateaux. Camus’s desert geography, figured as greater than, “ontologically prior” to, and untransformed by the French conquest, offered the *femme* pied noir settler a different and more intimate way of claiming and possessing Algeria:

Aucun souffle, aucun bruit, sinon parfois, le crépitement étouffé des pierres que le froid réduisait en sable, ne venait troubler la solitude et le silence [...]. Devant elle, les étoiles tombaient, une à une, puis s’éteignaient parmi les pierres du désert, et à chaque fois Janine s’ouvrait un peu plus à la nuit. Elle respirait, elle oubliait le froid, le poids des êtres, la vie démente ou figée, la longue angoisse de vivre et de mourir. Après tant d’années où, fuyant devant la peur, elle avait couru follement, sans but, elle s’arrêtait enfin. En même temps, il lui semblait retrouver ses racines, la sève montait à nouveau dans son corps qui ne tremblait plus.186

Not a decade later, Georges Perec famously reprised the analogy of North Africa as a space out of time in his bestseller *Les Choses*, although in pushing the notion to its limit, he both exposed and played with the solipsism that tends to characterize desert tales written by outsiders.187 Built around a series of have/have not binaries, the novel juxtaposed Paris with Sfax, Tunisia, the “desert” outpost to which the young protagonists, Jérôme and Sylvie, have self-exiled to teach. In the hot, white stasis of a Maghreb depicted as lacking in things, greenery, sociability, and mobility, Jérôme pines

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paradoxically for the restless vitality and choice of Paris and for the difficult struggle of being present in and witness to the consumerization of daily life and, by extension, of bodies and human feeling. In Paris, they had congratulated themselves on escaping “a world that justified, all in a lump, money, work, advertising, talent, a world that valued experience, a world that scorned them, the serious world of executives, the world of power.”188 In Sfax, they encounter its opposite, and repugn it: “There was only emptiness, and death: the immense sandy esplanade in front of the hideous cathedral,” the rue Abd-el-Kader Zghal, “naked and deserted, dark and rectilinear;” crowds “going nowhere;” everywhere a “dreary place,” a “universe of sand and stone” that “did not belong to them and never would belong to them.”189 Stranded from the comforts of the center of the world, as they saw it, they felt as if “Sfax did not exist, did not breathe.”190 The “barren” stretches of North Africa in Perec’s hands become not the positively valenced, un tarnished, awful landscapes mythologized by writers before him but the wasteland antithesis of self-aware and future-oriented modernization.191 As with most desert stories written from a vantage point temporally or spatially outside – from a contemporary East looking towards a “vanished” American West, from an imperial-

188 Perec, 75-76.
189 Perec, 105, 101, 98 106.
190 Perec, 99, 106.
minded France seeking forever a magical and grateful Africa – the Maghreb served the dramatic purpose in Perec’s novel of revealing the true desires and trajectory of Paris, here embodied by the faceless Jérôme-Sylvie couplet, to itself.192

It comes as no surprise that the desert regions of the expanded American and French territories, and even portions of the “desertic” plains, became in the twentieth century the terrains d’élécion on which to stage national dramas and heroic epics. Although compelling in scale and the perennial objects of hantise, the deserts quite simply opposed the metropolitan centers in their geologies, climates, and custom. They set off in relief, in their supposed lack, the self-proclaimed virtues of liberal democracy – most particularly its bureaucratic hierarchies, order, and control and its injunction, promoted as a constitutional guarantee, to capitalist productivity. Yet it was precisely to these “unassimilable” desert lands that national and imperial myth-makers in the United States and in France drew popular attention, and more importantly, the eye. As contested political frontiers, the deserts exerted an unwanted contractionary force on the size and power of the imperial nation-state that would inspire campaigns of exterminatory violence. As imperial borderlands, the desert regions appeared to make visible to Anglo-Americans and white Europeans the so-called stages of human and imperial development, and, by extension, the various successes and failures of the

192 On Africa as myth and phantasm, see especially Mbembe, chapter 2, “The Well of Fantasies,” and particularly 48-53.
American and French colonizations, as one moved in “progression” from periphery to center. As liminal spaces both within and without, domestic and foreign, claimed yet undecided, they contained at all times the possibility of their own destruction or the overturning of the logos and the nomos, as each repulsion of the advancing army and each reclaimed bit of ground threatened to undermine the teleological certainties of white supremacy and the global imperialist thrust. And finally, as places made mythic by stories of cowboys and Indians and by accounts of French imperialist heroics, the deserts served most often as triumphalist or cautionary reminders, and material remainders, of the struggles and tenuous victories of white “civilization” over the rendered-wretched of the earth.

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This chapter has placed the second French colonial empire in transnational context with American colonialism, arguing that in both the United States and France, geographical myth-making accompanied territorial empire-building to justify the violences of imperial expansion and the ensuing domination of non-white peoples across three continents. In the nineteenth century, as American military explorers classified the geographies west of the Mississippi and pioneers after them settled what lands they could, French policymakers slowly committed themselves to the

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development of an agrarian settler colony in the newly conquered French departments of the Maghreb. The settling of the American Far West served as an example, and at times a model, for French imperial designers. Advocates increasingly compared the difficult task of integrating the landscapes and peoples of Algeria into France to nineteenth-century American policies of expansion and containment. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the United States spanned the North American continent and France the Mediterranean Sea, yet pockets of both republics resisted incorporation. As the next chapter shows, it was, in effect, these different, lesser, and larger features of the national landscapes – the unwatered Plains, the moonscapes of the American West, the Hauts Plateaux, the dunescapes of the Sahara – that imperialist storytellers privileged as the harrowing yet dignified sceneries out of which only great nations and great men could be born.
2. The Transatlantic Rise of the Western

... being, as you’ll remember, no Indian myself, but a man without a cross.
—Natty Bumppo, as Hawkeye, 1826

I cannot explain the different acts, but if you could see this show it would make you think that cowboys and indians amounted to something.
—a Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show cowboy in Rome, 1890

Across more than a century, Westerns, or at their most schematic stories of cowboys and Indians, have sustained popular interest by fashioning largely nostalgic or progressive versions of a nineteenth-century American past. Literary and film Westerns

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dominated Euro-American genre markets in the first half of the twentieth century and influenced crossovers and original works in other media, including radio and comics.

Despite international market expansions and innovations within the genre, the Western peaked in volume and popularity after the Second World War, as the U.S. entry into Korea spelled the end of American “victory culture” and anticolonial uprisings and independence movements threatened to collapse the European colonial empires. Like all “successful” genres, which “find an integrated way of addressing questions of literature and society simultaneously,” what has passed across time as the Western developed in response to shifting social and geopolitical configurations. Heroic retellings of the “winning” of the American West for this reason have been viewed less as reenactments of historical events and more as panacean attempts to heal contemporary ailments, or to work through the troubles of a twentieth-century urban, industrial present. Lee Clark Mitchell has argued that the genre’s central

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5 Tom Engelhardt, _The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation_ (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007); Maurice Horn, _Comics of the American West_ (New York: Winchester Press, 1877), 84; Paul Herman, _Epopée et mythes du western dans la bande dessinée_ (Grenoble: Glénat, 1982), 57, 75-77.

6 Margaret Cohen, “Traveling Genres,” _New Literary History_ 34, no. 3 (Summer 2003), 482.

7 The genre’s capacity to resonate still today is evident in the popularity and critical success of recent film Westerns or frontier stories, such as Alejandro G. Iñárritu’s _The Revenant_ (2015) and Quentin Tarantino’s _Hateful Eight_ (2016).
preoccupations, or the set of “problems” around which Westerns have always pivoted, have thus been predominantly social in nature. He enumerates them as

the problem of progress, envisioned as a passing of frontiers; the problem of honor, defined in a context of social expediency; the problem of law or justice, enacted in a conflict of vengeance and social control; the problem of violence, in acknowledging its value yet honoring occasions when it can be controlled; and subsuming all, the problem of what it means to be a man, as aging victim of progress, embodiment of honor, champion of justice in an unjust world.\(^8\)

This chapter reprioritizes the imperial relation at the genre’s core, which clarifies why and how stories of the American West conquered Europe, and particularly France, across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is misguided to think monolithically about a popular genre that has spanned an international production in print, art, literature, live performance, film, comics, and television. Hollywood alone produced around 700 film Westerns in the twentieth century, a significant number of which crossed the Atlantic and inspired filmmakers and comics authors in Italy, France, Spain, and elsewhere.\(^9\) Scholars generally agree, however, that the nineteenth-century wilderness fictions of James Fenimore Cooper, the “father of the Western,” and the self-fashioning of actual outdoorsmen such as William “Buffalo Bill” Cody set the contours of the genre as tales of the white man’s encounter with natives and nature.\(^{10}\) Early dime, screen, and comics Westerns framed tales of empire-building as society-building, heralding the establishment of law, domesticity, and agriculture and the incorporation

\(^8\) Mitchell, 3-6.
\(^9\) Liandrat-Guigues and Leutrat, 11; Horn, 137-174.
\(^{10}\) Mitchell, 34.
of the national territory through finance, manufacturing, transportation, and technology. But their storylines most often engaged with and extended the hegemony of European and European-derived beliefs and theories of racial difference. Particularly legible across Westerns have been the white supremacist convictions propelling right-of-conquest policies and the twinned notions of manifest destiny and civilizational duty. If Western storytellers have at times diminished the presence and role of the Indians, readers and viewers may understand their elimination from the plot as proof of their prior pacification or containment, or of their forced or seasonal migration elsewhere. As Jane Tompkins remarked, “Indians are repressed in Westerns – there but not there – in the same way women are.” Whether the subjugation of Indian character groups is accomplished explicitly in the story or left to assumption, it is, however, the claiming and clearing of their lands that makes possible the “white” man’s presence and power – and the nation itself.

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11 Donald Pease underscores the role of “cultural technologies” in maintaining and expanding U.S. imperial rule: “Although the United States’ imperial nationalism was predicated on the superiority of military and political organization as well as economic wealth, it depended for its efficacy on a range of cultural technologies, among which colonialist policies (exercised both internally and abroad) of conquest and dominion figured prominently. The invasive settlement of the Americas provided a vast space wherein were linked as related claims on the “unmapped territories” the imperatives of reason and conquest. In shaping the “New World” according to the demands of the emergent sciences of geography, botany, and anthropology, imperialism understood itself primarily as a cultural project involved in naming, classifying, textualizing, appropriating, exterminating, demarcating, and governing a new regime.” Donald E. Pease, “New Perspectives on U.S. Culture and Imperialism,” in Cultures of United States Imperialism, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 22.

12 Tompkins has argued that Indians exist as caricatures rather than as characters in the 75 or so Westerns that comprise the filmic portion of her corpus (9).

framing pressure on stories of the Far West, even when they are absent in plots, scenes, and settings.

Moreover, the Western’s history of travel and mutation outside of the nation of its birth belies the notion that the genre ever narrated a quintessentially American experience accessible only to domestic national audiences. Rather, as this chapter demonstrates, Far West tales in translation, adaptation, and local production attracted large and diverse French publics across the end of the nineteenth century, just as the French press, and particularly the emerging illustrated press, advertised on a newly “mass” scale France’s own efforts to annex and colonize parts of Africa and Asia.14 Indeed, the mythic figure of the cowboy, proposed first in U.S. media as the embodiment of American determination and imperial might, rose to prominence alongside the apotheosis in France of the legendary figure of the “heroic imperialist.”15 Like his American counterpart, the new strongman of the French Third Republic fought and subdued insurgents and claimed territory for home in harsh frontier terrain similarly depicted as cultural and geological wasteland. Literature, tourism,

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international expositions, traveling circuses, and the solidly transnational film and comics industries increasingly placed representations of American and French systems of colonial domination within a single, comparative context of Euro-American global ascension. This chapter argues that the Western genre’s proven portability across borders makes visible the imbricated, transcontinental spaces of the American and French imperialisms, spaces through which finance capital, people, goods, ideas, and above all images freely flowed. As Amy Kaplan provocatively wrote in 1993,

United States continental expansion is often treated as an entirely separate phenomenon from European colonialism of the nineteenth century, rather than as an interrelated form of imperial expansion. The divorce between these two histories mirrors the American historiographical tradition of viewing empire as a twentieth-century aberration, rather than as part of an expansionist continuum.¹⁶

The rise of the Western in France cannot, then, be characterized solely as the appeal of an American cultural import, nor does Hollywood’s history of foreign market intervention and saturation by the middle of the twentieth century entirely account for the ubiquity in France of Westerns both American- and European-made. This chapter instead situates the genre’s transatlantic hold on imaginations as evidence of concomitant and consciously shared experiences of nineteenth-century “national”

expansion – westerly in the U.S., and into the three French departments of Algeria – and of similarly perceived twentieth-century imperatives to define and advance the nation and to expand and secure the empire amid escalating violence, global wars, and social unrest at home.

2.1 Tintin’s America

In 1931, young Belgian readers of Le Vingtième Siècle’s Thursday supplement followed the adventures of Tintin across the Atlantic, watching as he made a conquest of Al Capone’s Chicago, cleansed its corridors of gangster violence, and played at cowboys and Indians in somewhat jumbled but iconic landscapes meant to signal the American West. In the space of a single volume, Belgian writer-illustrator Georges Remi, known as Hergé, condensed a century of American experience and myth into a fantasy clash between “Old World” and “New.” Unbeholden, by virtue of genre expectations at the time, to the chronologies of the historical record, and heavily influenced by cinema, Hergé combined stock elements of the action-adventure, procedural, thriller, Noir, swashbuckler, and Western into a romp down the halls of democracy, through cities beset by industrial progress and tenement intermixity, and across the middle of a continent still yet to be subdued.17

Hergé’s third installment of the Tintin series became a swift success in Belgium and France. Soon after its serial run in newsprint, “Tintin en Amérique” was republished as a stand-alone volume and has remained the best selling of the Tintin adventures to date. Critics have largely dismissed the story as a boilerplate reactionary critique of Fordist modernization, written at an anxious and contested interwar moment contending with the globalization of American political power and cultural products. The narrative indeed highlights the deleterious effects of unbridled free-market capitalism. Tintin soon discovers that state-of-the-art factories maintain their high profit margins by selling dog, cat, and rat meat as pâté; that the Mafiosi have unionized to protect their criminal activity; and that the print sector is more interested in sensationalism than fact. In the story’s central set-piece, oil prospectors steal native lands through profiteering, drive the native families away at bayonet point, and raise a boom

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19 Hergé drew on George Duhamel’s stark portrait of American capitalism, vulgarity, and decadence in *Scènes de la vie future* (1930) and a special issue on North America of the right-wing satirical magazine *Le Crapouillot*. Peeters, 36; Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Les Métamorphoses de Tintin* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006), 22-23. Baetens put forward that Hergé in “Tintin en Amérique” had “no story to tell – only a space to occupy,” meaning that the creation of original content mattered less to Hergé at this point in his career than the execution of visual storytelling and experimentation with the comics form. Jan Baetens, “Tintin in America, or How to Describe a Place You’ve Never Been,” *Voyages: Sixth International Graphic Novel and Comics Conference / Ninth International Bande Dessinée Society Conference*, June 22-26, 2015, University of London’s Institute in Paris.
town overnight. It comes as no surprise that in the encounter between Tintin and
America, Europe fares best. In swilling, gaming Prohibition-era Chicago, in “desert”
Wests populated by Mexican banditos, freemen of color, and warring braves, Tintin
sticks out messianically as fair faced and law abiding. In a land that worships the
almighty dollar and parades “néo-judéo-bouddho-Islamo-américaine” spirituality as the
religion that pays the “highest dividends,” Tintin’s Catholic scoutisme appears stoic,
enduring, and natural.20 Law itself is frequently absent in America – Tintin is nearly
hanged by a “Negro”-lynching western posse because the sheriff is drunk – and order
returns to the United States, and indeed to the world, thanks only to Tintin’s keen
pursuit and single-handed capture of international criminals.21 Hergé’s America is a
rowdy, swarthy, immigrant, and dangerous landscape pockmarked by hostile Indians,
organized criminals, racists, strikers, hawkers, bankers, bandits, industrialists, moguls,
print capitalists, movie stars, and the poor; his tale is a lesson in modernity off the rails, a
terrifying image of a future destiny – feared to be Europe’s own – that was seized too
suddenly, and too forcefully, in America.

20 Hergé, Tintin en Amérique, 44.
21 Hergé, Tintin en Amérique, 36-37.
2.1.1 The West(ern) as Counterfactual Space

Although not strictly a Western, “Tintin en Amérique” perfectly demonstrates and presses to advantage the time-place fluidity that characterizes the genre.\(^\text{22}\) By the time Tintin sailed for America, treaties and barbed wire had long settled the “question” of Native rights to the “open” Plains. Across the final decades of the nineteenth century, wars, displacement to reservations, induced starvation, the spread of disease, and government surveillance had thoroughly hampered the capacity of the indigenous of North America to ward off total encroachment by soldiers and settlers.\(^\text{23}\) “Les Peaux-Rouges,” Tintin reminds himself, had not only been conquered, but were “pacifiques,” even if the sight of charging Blackfeet – the formidable “Pieds-Noirs” – seemed to him and Milou to suggest otherwise (see Fig. 3). To find drama, Hergé manipulates the historical timeline, as many Western storytellers had done before him.\(^\text{24}\) Nineteenth-century landscapes and practices that, in the 1930s, had long since “vanished” are pictured as coeval with a consolidated, global, interwar United States. The effect is a study in suspension and suspense. The anachronistic presence of war bonnets, war dances, ambush, and torture in deserts and plains depicted as wide open and at war invites reader-viewers into a thrilling counterfactual space located somewhere between

\(^{22}\) Hergé had previously drawn the Far West in “Tim-L’Écureuil, héros du Far-West” (1931), a short series that fed into “Les Aventures de Popol et Virginie au Far-West” (1934). Peeters, 138-139.

\(^{23}\) McVeigh, 4-6.

East and West and past and present. The “reprimitivized” West gives Tintin scope for playing the white Indian, or for showcasing his skill at reading the dangerous environment and escaping death. But it also represents the whitewashing of the West as incomplete, so that Tintin himself can participate in it and possibly bring it to a different, but no less “satisfactory,” close. For the mechanistic suspense of each double panel, or page spread, to enact its magic, reader-viewers must temporarily suspend the weight and burden of history, or put aside for the moment their knowledge of the achievement of the territorial United States. They must “contract” to entertain the possibility that, this time around, the West may not be won (again), or not in the same way.

More importantly, for the purposes of this chapter, “Tintin en Amérique” narrates the “present” as the teleological endpoint of the so-called stages of both human and imperial development. The ahistorical juxtaposition of a twentieth-century “primitive” West with a “civilized” East renders graphically and makes explicit a progression or evolution from unassimilated nomadism to urban industrialization.

Like the Western genre that it spoofs, “Tintin en Amérique” chronicles the American

25 Serial publication of the Tintin adventure at a rate of a page or two per week prompted Hergé to create cliffhangers, to induce readers to return to continue the story. He altered panels and drawings to rework the rhythms of the story before it was published in book format.

26 As Jonathan Culler writes: “The function of genre conventions is essentially to establish a contract between writer and reader so as to make certain relevant expectations operative, and thus to permit both compliance with and deviation from accepted modes of intelligibility.” Jonathan D. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1975), 147.

27 Turner, as Thomas Jefferson and others had done before him, argued that frontier life evolved from hunting, herding, and farming societies to urban industrial and commercial centers. Frederick Jackson
Figure 4: Prospectors first offer Tintin up to $100,000 for rights to the oil, to which he responds: “Je regrette infiniment, Messieurs, mais ce puits de pétrole ne m’appartient pas. Il est la propriété des Indiens Pieds-Noirs qui occupent la région.”

story not only as toil in landscape or the subordination of “free dirt” to the white man’s scrapers but as the Anglo-American predominance over the indigenous of a continent. More to the point, Hergé’s mash-up of the nineteenth-century race wars and twentieth-century modernization gone haywire places territorial empire-building and the degradations that accompanied it at the very heart of the American “success” story. The overt anti-American sentiment behind the oil town vignette establishes the fleecing of natives by unscrupulous prospectors as the very condition for America’s rise and seizure of power on the world stage and a central reason behind the country’s “present” moral corruption (see Fig. 4).

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Hergé, Tintin en Amérique, 29.

Several foreign publishers had requested that Hergé soften the sentiment of the segment, to no avail. Peeters, 36.
Hergé thus carves out a broad theater of action for his hero. Tintin’s interventions contain the miscegenetic threat to Anglo-America by eliminating seemingly foreign-born criminals. In words and deeds, he models for young Catholic readers a bourgeois Christian paternalism towards non-whites, the weak, and the misfortunened.30 In merely surviving the continent and the country, he reaffirms the virtues of self-sufficiency, resourcefulness, perseverance, courage, even-handedness, strength, and restraint as masculine ideals. With the future of the United States thus rescued from degeneracy, Western Europe is invited to contemplate American imperialism and risk not as causes of the fall, but rather as utopic achievements of white civilization. Tintin even debuts the change of heart in the story’s closing frames. Sailing for home, he laments: “C’est bien dommage... Je commençais à peine à m’habituer.”31

2.1.2 A Western’s Work Is Never Done

Hergé’s own “fascination réticente” with the United States – which manifests in “Tintin en Amérique” as a reluctant admiration for what American expansion had been able to achieve despite its excesses and depredations – was influenced by broader

30 Forsdick interestingly compares Tintin to the comics heroine Bécassine, his forerunner, who also visits the United States. He writes: “In terms of plot, Bécassine can indeed become Tintin, travelling across America, mixing with native Americans and overturning the cowboy-and-indian stereotypes she brings with her in order to become sensitive to the decline of their culture.” But whereas Tintin is the march of colonialism into the wild, she herself is wild and unassimilable and thus indigenizes more easily. Charles Forsdick, “Exoticising the Domestique: Bécassine, Brittany and the Beauty of the Dead,” in The Francophone Bande Dessinée, eds. Charles Forsdick, Laurence Grove, and Libbie McQuillan (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 32.
31 Hergé, Tintin en Amérique, 62.
patterns of thought circulating across the turn of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{32} With the publication of Owen Wister’s \textit{The Virginian} in 1902, the Western emerged formally as a means of accumulating the tall tales and histories of the settling of the West, which, in twentieth-century recollections and fictions, became a “disappearing” West, a “vanished” West, or an “Old” West rendered more myth than place with each reimagining of it.\textsuperscript{33} Early Westerns for the most part painted vivid pictures of American life west of the 98\textsuperscript{th} parallel, in stories generally set in the decades between the Civil War and the closing of the century, when the shifting western frontier finally disappeared into the Pacific.\textsuperscript{34} And like “\textit{Tintin en Amérique},” which uses the – a – past to interpret and assuage the present, Westerns from the beginning were driven by presentism. As Mitchell succinctly put it, “Westerns are always written from the East on behalf of values signaling the West’s demise.”\textsuperscript{35} On the one hand, the post-hoc temporal position from which most Westerns are written, or the fact that they revisit a historical chapter viewed as closed or an enterprise considered officially to have been successful, casts American development across the land as inevitable and its means, however violent or regrettable, as justified. In this way, both nostalgic and progressive modes invite readers

\textsuperscript{32} Jacques Portes, \textit{Une fascination réticente : les Etats-Unis dans l’opinion française} (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1990). Hergé had also become interested in Native Americans at an early age through scouting. Peeters, 10.

\textsuperscript{33} Wister’s \textit{The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains} (New York: Macmillan, 1902), is widely considered the first novel of the genre.

\textsuperscript{34} Phil Hardy notes that the genre can accommodate a range of time periods and settings, although the period between 1860 and 1900 “provides the raw material of the Western.” Phil Hardy, \textit{The Western} (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1983), xi.

\textsuperscript{35} Mitchell, 6.
to understand continental expansion as the recognition and seizure of greatness by Anglo-American men worthy of their “race,” albeit in light of considerable human and environmental costs. On the other hand, the Western’s pitch to popular audiences tends to frame nineteenth-century historical events as originary conflicts or the causes of “current” conditions and configurations, in order to stage resolutions to them.36 Hergé’s chronological sleight of hand in conjuring an interwar “Old” West simply visualizes the nonlinear or ahistorical juxtapositions that the genre tends to deploy and exploit.37

Westerns, then, perform a number of cultural and political tasks that seem germane to the American imperial setting but which in fact have resonated at different points in time with more global patterns of annexation, dispossession, and colonization. More specifically, stories of cowboys and Indians took particular hold in France across the apogee of the French colonial empire in part because they helped maintain the signal strength of white supremacist and colonialist narratives. For reasons taken up in Chapter 4, Western storylines in general lent themselves to and even invited comparative readings, particularly in France, which was across much of the Western’s transatlantic rise in popularity itself embroiled in so-called race wars and searching for

36 Fiske writes that “if the cultural resource does not offer points of pertinence through which the experience of everyday life can be made to resonate with it, then it will not be popular.” John Fiske, Understanding Popular Culture (London: Routledge, 2010), 103.
37 James Fenimore Cooper had himself notably played with the timeline of the historical West in his Leatherstocking series, which greatly influenced the development of the Western genre. The Prairie (1827), although set in 1804, was “really […] about the West of 1820-1825.” Allan Nevins, Introduction to The Leatherstocking Saga, ed. Allan Nevins (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), 37.
military and legal solutions to the difficulties of colonization, administration, and integration. As landmark Supreme Court decisions under John Marshall ruled, for example, that Native Americans were “wards” of the state, and as westward-bound settlement further receded indigenous lands and rights, French policymakers concerned with French Algeria similarly turned to juridical and extrajuridical classifications of lands and populations to incorporate Algeria as part of France and to bring its inhabitants under French control. Such hierarchizations both justified the French presence in Africa as the re-Romanization of the Maghreb, ultimately to facilitate exploitation, and emboldened Third Republic imperialists to assume the “burden” laid on the shoulders of white mankind. The biological determinism that infiltrated the civilian administration of French Algeria after 1870 rationalized colonialist rule as adherence to so-called scientifically proven racial hierarchies within the human species, extending upwards from “red” through “black” and “yellow” to “white,” the latter category reserved for certain groups of western Europeans only, including Anglo-Americans and Franco-French.38 Into the twentieth century, racial anthropology as well as legislation demarcated indigenous groups from European settlers, and those from the Franco-French, largely to preserve metropolitan influence in the colony. The imperialist

perspectives embedded within the vast majority of cowboy-and-Indian stories, then, not only naturalized the European right of conquest and its history of global domination, but laid claim in vignette after vignette to the superior fitness of the “white” race to govern and “enlighten” the non-white peoples of the world.39

Second, Westerns enabled the organization, and at times the imaginative unification, of ethnically diverse communities under the rubric of imperialist achievement stories that prioritized belonging to soil over shared heritage or birthright by blood. Although French assimilatory ambition and plans for development varied over time and across the colonial realm, narratives of belonging to France – in whatever capacity – both facilitated and justified the work of colonial administration. Making Algeria French, however, as Chapter 1 showed, required nimble responses to the conceptual difficulties of integrating an African colony as new national territory. For many, conceiving of French Algeria as “France” and its indigenous peoples, whether Amazigh or “Arab,” Muslim or Jewish, as French metropolitan citizens posed considerable legal and cultural challenges, which naturalization efforts and jus soli half-

39 Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831) established the “Indian’s” relationship to the U.S. as one of a “ward” or “pupil” to guardian or master. Similarly, argues Williams, The United States v. Kagama (1886), which upheld the status of Native Americans as wards of the state, “is still regarded as a leading precedent in the Supreme Court’s Indian law.” Robert A. Williams, Jr., Like a Loaded Weapon: The Rehnquist Court, Indian Rights, and the Legal History of Racism in America (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xx, 58-63; Todd Shepard, chapter 1, “Muslim French Citizens From Algeria: A Short History,” The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 19-54; Gary Wilder, particularly chapter 5, “Temporality, Nationality, Citizenship,” The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 118-145.
measures beginning in the 1860s attempted to counter. The utopic vision of the United States as a multiethnic empire united by shared agrarian responsibilities fascinated French imperialists from Tocqueville to Lyautey, although most tended to champion U.S. policies that safeguarded the primacy of whiteness itself. In addition, late-nineteenth-century European migration to the U.S. and French Algeria was generally welcomed as an effective means of increasing “white” populations, despite the different sets of challenges that influxes of non-Anglo or non-Franco-French settlers posed for their respective host countries. French Algeria, which was settled mainly by French, Maltese, Spanish, and Italians but was ruled by Franco-French, presented a mixed ethnic picture not unlike the landscape of the American West. Stories of cowboys and Indians and particularly tales of progress and unity through land transformation appealed to American and French opinion-shapers precisely because, on the one hand, they tended to reify dominant perceptions of the colonizer-colonized divide, and on the other, they at times elided important differences – of nationality, class, or religion – among

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40 Shepard, 20-32.
European-descended character groups in ways that rallied consensus around inclusive definitions of whiteness to maintain power.42

Third, Westerns lifted up legends and demarcated the heroics and landscapes that redefined national spirit and promise. As the first chapter argued, empire-builders in the United States and France valorized the breadbasket plains of their extended national territories, exalted the majesty of their snowy peaks, and focused attention, inadvertently or otherwise, on the stark geographical difference of the true deserts.

“Saharomania” arose in France as Western storytellers in America seized on the hot, dry regions of the Southwest as a final frontier, drawing the territory in imaginations as the last remaining barrier to continental consolidation.43 In popular stories in both countries, the new national deserts, seen as geological oddities, emerged somewhat logically as the proving grounds of imperial might and heroic individualism. National grandeur, or pretensions to it, emerged at the confluence of the two.

42 On the binary thinking that underlay French colonial rule, see in particular Albert Memmi, Portrait du colonisé précédé de Portrait du colonisateur (Paris: Gallimard, 1985); Alain Ruscio, Le Credo de l’homme blanc : regards coloniaux français XIXe-XXe siècles (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1995).

43 Saharomania erupted at a time when readers were becoming more attuned to reports of French colonial raids and expeditions, footholds secured, oil derricks erected, and trans-Saharan crossings undertaken. Saharan fiction, however, tended to revel simultaneously in French conquest fantasies and in the lingering sensation that the Sahara was grander and more dangerous than could ever be imagined. The roman saharien in this way clung to different and earlier visions of the desert as an enchanted and unpredictable landscape survivable only by the truly adventurous, the disciplined, or the indigenized. Sèbe, 84-85; Jean-Louis Vatin, “Désert construit et inventé, Sahara perdu ou retrouvé : le jeu des imaginaires,” in Le Maghreb dans l’imaginaire français : la colonie, le désert, l’exil, ed. Jean-Robert Henri (Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 1985), 115-116; Peter J. Bloom, chapter 3, French Colonial Documentary: Mythologies of Humanitarianism, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); James McDougall and Judith Scheele, “Introduction: Time and Space in the Sahara,” in Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa, eds. James McDougall and Judith Scheele (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 2-3, 9-12.
Finally, stories like “Tintin en Amérique” have served at various points in time as pressure relief valves and salves meant to ease ambivalences about the conquering past, the livability of the present, and the shape of the future. Westerns have generally done so, and still do so today, by addressing “contested agendas [...] simply yet suggestively,” in an attempt to appeal broadly across imperial contexts, national borders, collectivities, political orientations, and genders. In other words, their treatments of history tend to revisit and act out key moments or events in ways that can accommodate contradictory interpretations of agency and accountability. And the work is never finished. At the end of the day, the restless cowboy rides off into the sunset in search of new adventures and different conflicts after having won the Indian skirmish, saved the town, captured the outlaws, or rescued the girl (usually as a favor for another man). The cowboy’s refusal to settle down sends the signal that the fight for the national space continues elsewhere and that the larger “problems” of past and present are as yet unresolved. As the remainder of this chapter demonstrates, publics on both sides of the Atlantic discovered in such open portrayals of the unsettling settling of new lands a proud reminder or a fraught history, a fascinating display of will and difference, a pedagogy, a methodology, or a unifying refrain.

Mitchell, 17. He continues: “This narrative economy encourages a semantic resonance in which alternative readings with mutually exclusive ‘resolutions’ of social issues are seen as equally possible, equally persuasive” (17).
2.2 White Indians for French Readers: Leatherstocking’s Legacy

In 1841, James Fenimore Cooper published *The Deerslayer*, the final novel of the *Leatherstocking* saga, and by some accounts the best of the series, as a sort of prequel to the lives and adventures laid out in *The Pioneer* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Prairie* (1827), and *The Pathfinder* (1840).\(^{45}\) Taken broadly, Cooper’s wilderness series painted the backdrop for the American emergence and helped to define the United States in terms of territorial reach, ethnic and religious orientation, and national “disposition” for millions of readers on both sides of the Atlantic.\(^{46}\) More specifically, the hallmark qualities of the young Leatherstocking, Cooper’s most famous protagonist, and popular attachment to him as a sort of national hero fed directly into the cowboy myth as it took shape around the end of the century. The fifth book of the series takes readers back to the 1740s, to the pristine waters of Glimmerglass or Lake Otsego in the Iroquois territories of today’s Catskills, and to the formative moments in the young life of the titular hero Natty Bumppo, a white hunter living among the Delaware. In a series of walk-and-talks, domestic tableaux, and action sequences, the tale relives Natty’s first

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\(^{46}\) Smith wrote expansively that Leatherstocking was “by far the most important symbol of the national experience of adventure across the continent.” Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 61. Slotkin has argued that Cooper’s intentions were more immediate: “His palpable intention [was] to create a genetic myth that ‘account[ed] for’ the fundamental ideological and social oppositions dividing the society of Jacksonian America by projecting them backward into a fictionalized past.” Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 15.
warpath against the Mingo to rescue his Mohican “brother’s” betrothed. Readers witness Natty’s reluctant first kill in battle, his capture by the Huron, his torture and escape, and his participation in the final slaughter of the Huron band by British redcoats. *The Deerslayer* also, more importantly, chronicles Natty’s efforts to resist the advances of the reformed temptress Judith and illustrates more completely his categorical rejection of “red-white miscegenation,” even as he himself models the benefits of indigenization in manner of craft and dress.

Published to considerable fanfare and critical acclaim in the United States, though not from Mark Twain, who called it a “literary delirium tremens,” *The Deerslayer*, like the previous four Leatherstocking novels, swiftly crossed the Atlantic.47 By mid-century, *Le Tueur de daims* had joined *Les Pionniers, Le Dernier des Mohicans, La Prairie,* and *Le Lac Ontario* in the multiple complete works collections that enthusiasm for Cooper’s adventure tales had sustained in France.48 French reading publics were by then acquainted with both the œuvre and the man. Cooper had been appointed consul to Lyon in 1826 and had brought his family to France for what turned into a seven-year stay. He spent the majority of his time traveling through Europe and sojourning in Paris in fine lodgings and in elite company that included Walter Scott, Eugène Sue, members of the aristocracy, and, briefly, both Charles X and Louis-Philippe. Fiercely antagonistic

48 By mid-century, Cooper’s complete works had been published in at least six separate editions in France. Wolff, 87-102; Gibb, 201-210.
with his critics and bent on exposing his loyalties, Cooper was caught in a scandal surrounding his friend and ally the General Lafayette as Louis-Philippe rose to power. Cooper’s frank defense of Lafayette and of American republicanism, along with the ill-timed publication of several novels criticizing European monarchical politics, strained his reception in Paris and somewhat precipitated his departure from France.49

Cooper’s novels nevertheless continued to attract large adult readerships through the 1860s from among the working classes and the bourgeoisies as well as illustrious admirers, including Balzac, Alexandre Dumas père, Alphonse Lamartine, and Jules Michelet. In revised form, his adventure tales also contributed to the establishment of a juvenile literary market in France by the 1870s. The French writers Gabriel Ferry and Gustave Aimard, inspired by the success of Bas de cuir in France, soon published their own “Western” fictions and touched off an industry of adaptations, imitations, translations, and original works.50 Cooper’s own five novels, however, in illustrated new editions and later abridged versions for children, continued to memorialize the peoples, terrains, and conflicts of the early American “West” for successive generations of French

49 Gibb, 110-123; Wolff, 87-102.
50 Aimard alone wrote 97 novels set in an American “West,” the majority of which were published between 1858 and 1868. Benedict-Henry Revoil wrote 87. Ferry’s hugely popular Le Coureur des bois, which followed the adventures of a French-Canadian in the Mexican territories, appeared in 1850 and went through 14 editions. Works by Paul Duplessis, Louis-Xavier Eyma, Revoil, Aimard, Lucien Biart, and Edmond de Mandat-Grancey appeared across the period alongside translations of works by the Irish-American Mayne Reid and the German Friedrich Gerstacker. The English writer Hepworth Dixon helped to popularize the American West in France as well. The market for American frontier novels peaked in the 1890s as stories of the West shifted into new media. Wolff, 87-102; Gibb, 123-124, 211-212; Portes, 90.
readers. Le Dernier des Mohicans alone went through 46 reprintings across the 1800s. At the turn of the twentieth century, French tourists to America and visitors to the World’s Expositions in Paris, Chicago, or London still tended to measure what they saw of American frontier life against what they had “seen” in the Leatherstocking tales, as Tocqueville had himself done in 1831. And many expressed their disappointment at the real-life facsimiles. The lament in the Birmingham Gazette that the “Indian war-cry” was “a decided failure,” “a shrill and feeble screech, and not at all the blood-curdling yell that Cooper and other writers have led us to believe,” was hardly a unique response in Western Europe to the “Indian” performers in Buffalo Bill’s arena show or to the Lakota bodies and traditions on display in his show camp.

The Deerslayer, then, as the first novel of the series, if adhering to the biographical chronology, but the last written, benefits from terrain already covered to complete the

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51 French publishers began retranslating and abridging versions for the children’s market in the 1850s. Reid’s works, for example, appeared for the first time in Hachette’s Bibliothèque rose in 1859. Wolff, 87-102; Gibb, 123-124.
52 Wolff, 87-102.
53 Tocqueville had written: “Je ne crois pas avoir jamais éprouvé un désappointement plus complet qu’à la vue de ces Indiens. J’étais plein des souvenirs de M. de Chat[eaubriand] et de Cooper et je m’attendais à voir dans les indigènes de l’Amérique des sauvages sur la figure desquels la nature avait laissé la trace de quelques-unes de ces vertus hautaines qu’enfante l’esprit de liberté. Je croyais rencontrer en eux des hommes dont le corps avait été développé par la chasse et la guerre et qui ne perdaient rien à être vus dans leur nudité. On peut juger de mon étonnement en rapprochant ce portrait de celui qui va suivre : les Indiens que je vis ce soir-là avaient une petite stature ; leurs membres, autant qu’on en pouvait juger sous leurs vêtements, étaient grêles et peu nerveux, leur peau, au lieu de présenter une teinte de rouge cuivré, comme on le croit communément, était bronze foncé de telle sorte qu’au premier abord, ils semblaient se rapprocher beaucoup des mulâtres [...].” Tocqueville, “Quinze jours dans le désert,” 361.
54 Other tribes had joined the Wild West as well at various points in the show’s history, although Lakota made up the majority of the native cast. Daniele Fiorentino, “‘Those Red-Brick Faces’: European Press Reactions to the Indians of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show,” in Indians & Europe: An Interdisciplinary Collection of Essays, ed. Christian F. Feest (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 409, 403-405.
transformation of man into hero. The tale in fact reads like a hymn, retrospectively composed, to Natty’s principled vision of the world and uncommon physical abilities and moral strength. Balzac had once noted that Cooper’s singularity and genius lay in his painterly ability to bring the frontier scenery alive for his readers. “Jamais l’écriture typographiée,” he wrote, “n’a plus empiété sur la peinture. Là est l’école où doivent étudier les paysagistes littéraires [parce que] tous les secrets de l’art sont là.”\(^{55}\) In *The Deerslayer*, the famed “peintre de pays et de mœurs” yields important descriptive space to character exhibition.\(^{56}\) As in the prior novels, Cooper refreshes Natty’s caricatural physical traits to draw into imagination his striking height and leanness like the *longue carabine* that he carries as well as his agility, speed, deerskin clothing, long hair, and honest countenance. But the storyline quickly becomes a vehicle for showcasing the encounters that shaped and tested his moral convictions, the latter of which sing like refrains, repetitively and didactically, throughout all five books of the series.

In the fifth book, Natty emerges more clearly as a confirmed bachelor-warrior married only to the wilderness and to adventure. As he tells Judith, his “sweetheart” is in the forest itself, “hanging from the boughs of the trees, in a soft rain – in the dew on the open grass – the clouds that float about in the blue heavens.”\(^{57}\) His intentions, like

\(^{55}\) Quoted in Gibb, 144.
\(^{56}\) Gibb, 142.
\(^{57}\) James Fenimore Cooper, “The Deerslayer,” in *The Leatherstocking Saga*, 125. Natty, who is roughly 23 or 24 here, has not at this point sworn off marriage. He tells the Huron chief Rivenoak: “I may never marry; most likely Providence, in putting me up here in the woods, has intended I should live single, and without a
Tintin’s less than a century later, do not include marriage, which handily frees him to wander and to do hero’s work. In acquiring a *nom de guerre* and coming into his own as Hawkeye, Natty the soldier solemnly embraces and leverages the status that his “color” and “white gifts” as Protestant hunter, warrior, interlocutor, and protector confer on him in the American wilderness setting. The novel in fact frames Natty’s environment as a series of red-white color lines that blur but never disappear, to distinguish his motivations and accomplishments as those of a representative of Anglo-American “civilization.” In war, Natty crisscrosses the differentially controlled spaces of the frontier, waging battle with a mix of European and native tools and methods but as a white colonial backwoodsman foremost and guided above all by his Moravian education. In matters of the heart, the easy understanding between Chingachgook and Wah-ta-Wah, a coupling that is “race” faithful and tribally anticipated, exists to draw out the unsuitability of the novel’s other proposed pairings, particularly between Natty and the Huron widow Sumach, because, as he put it, “I’m white, and Christian-born; ‘twould ill become me to take a wife, under redskin forms, from among heathen;” or

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lodge of my own; but should such a thing come to pass, none but a woman of my own color and gifts shall darken the door of my wigwam” (230). Nevins, 36.

58 Cooper, “The Deerslayer,” 117.
more vehemently still: “My color, and gifts, and natur’ itself, cry out ag’in the idea of taking you for a wife.”

Natty's complex and at times paradoxical set of beliefs, formed in the shifting conditions of the frontier and his encounters across it, can only be understood in relation to his self-understanding as racially pure, as endowed with superior Christian reason, and as guarantor and the very means, however grievous at times, of white domination. His words and actions in *The Deerslayer* spell out for readers why he supports the Anglo advance across North America but opposes massacre and reckless settlement; why he honors hard work, honest dealings, and “masculine” duty but is disinclined himself to domesticate; why he fights to protect native rights and lifeways, and laments their “passing,” but is vehemently opposed to blood mixing as an emancipatory or redemptive future path. Natty as frontiersman witnesses and participates in the Protestant whitening of North America, even as he tries to temper its harsher realities. Like the Westerns that it inspired, *The Deerslayer* tells the story of the “inevitable” Europeanization of the continent, but through the eyes of a measured, just, ordinary man lost between worlds, hardened by survival, thrust among natives, and so made sensitive to the human and environmental costs of colonial settlement. His voice is a

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60 Cooper, “The Deerslayer,” 230, 246.
hero’s voice, but only as it eases or plays into the ambivalences towards imperialist expansion that marked the Euro-American nineteenth century.61

Cooper’s mythic American is an elaborate illustration of the white Indian, a figure popularized in the seventeenth century with the publication and circulation of Mary Rowlandson’s captivity narrative, in which she divulged her torment and coming-to-life while a prisoner of the Algonquians.62 Taken in by Mohicans as an adolescent after his parents die, Natty similarly acclimates to the lifeways of the band led by Chingachgook’s father Uncas.63 Natty embarks on their warpaths, learns their crafts, comprehends their loyalty, courage under torture, sense of justice, and care for the earth, and shares their sorrow at what they perceive to be the coming destruction of their tribe

61 Nash argues that, far from depicting “wild country as a loathsome obstacle to be conquered and destroyed,” Cooper “took great pains to show that wilderness had value as a moral influence, a source of beauty, and a place of exciting adventure.” This enabled Cooper to straddle both sides of a thorny issue: he could uphold that “civilization also had its claims,” while painting environmental—and thus human—destruction as “tragic.” Cooper, Nash continues, “reached the pioneers’ conclusion without using the pioneers’ rationale, without condemning wilderness. For Cooper it was not a case of good versus evil, light fighting darkness, but of two kinds of good with the greater prevailing. The Leatherstocking novels gave Cooper’s countrymen reason to feel both proud and ashamed at conquering wilderness.” Roderick Frazier Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 76-77. Smith as well points out that “the profundity of the symbol of Leatherstocking springs from the fact that Cooper displays a genuine ambivalence” towards issues of nature, sovereignty, law, property rights, and community, although, Smith concludes, “in every case [Cooper’s] strongest commitment is to the forces of order” (62).

62 MacNeil notes that Mary Rowlandson’s Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration, published in the Puritan Massachusetts Bay colony in 1682, was the “most popular and compelling story,” the “first prose bestseller,” and the earliest frontier hero tale published in the Americas. Circulated, read aloud, and reprinted for decades, the memoir chronicled her captivity around 1676 and her “unapologetic” return to the Puritans after living for three months with the Algonquians. Denise M. MacNeil, The Emergence of the American Frontier Hero, 1682-1826: Gender, Action, and Emotion (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 1-2. See also Richard Slotkin, chapter 4, “Israel in Babylon: The Archetype of the Captivity Narratives (1682-1700),” in Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860 (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 95-115. He calls the captivity narrative genre “the first coherent myth-literature developed in America for American audiences” (95).

63 Cooper, “The Deerslayer,” 122.
and their world at the hands of white men. As a white Indian, however, Natty refuses to become aboriginal or to assimilate the “savage” for reasons beyond practical survival and instead acts out his desire to do both by fraternizing with natives and appropriating their traditions. He relentlessly asserts that he is a “man without a cross,” or of blood unmixed, even as he fashions himself to resemble his native “brother.”  

His manner of dress is at one point in the series “so strange a mixture of the habits of the two races, that it required a near look to be certain” that he was in fact white.

Philip Deloria, writing about the cultural appropriation of native dress and custom by American revolutionaries to wage a more unified and symbolic war against the British, argues that, as a metaphorical practice, “playing Indian” always purported to maintain visible clues to “a real ‘me’ underneath.” In this way, white Indians did not represent a “wilderness marriage” synthesis of European and Indian character. Neither were they a schizoid, back and forth confusion of alternating Indian and white identities. White Indians were metaphors come to life, and they allowed colonists to imagine themselves as both British citizens and legitimate Americans protecting aboriginal custom.

Thus in *The Deerslayer*, when others fail to perceive Natty’s whiteness as natural and stable, his own words more often than his gestures, apart from riflery, reestablish the

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66 Deloria, 7.
67 Deloria, 34.
distinction to preserve the ethnic hierarchies of frontier space. Natty subjects Chingachgook, and readers, to this reminder:

Your gifts are for paint, and hawk’s feathers, and blankets, and wampum; and mine are for doublets of skins, tough leggings, and serviceable moccasins [...]. For though white, living as I do in the woods, it’s necessary to take to some of the practises of the woods, for comfort’s sake and cheapness.68

Later in the novel, the Huron chief Rivenoak publicly recognizes the principles of Natty’s own frontier code of honor as Mingo ideals, in an attempt to shorten the perceived racial distance between them:

We know you, Killer of the Deer. You are honest; when you say a thing, it is so. You have but one tongue, and that is not forked like a snake’s. Your head is never hid in the grass; all can see it. What you say, that will you do. You are just. When you have done wrong, it is your wish to do right again as soon as you can.69

Natty, however, has already clarified the distinction: “I’m white in blood, heart, natur’, and gifts, though a little redskin in feelin’s and habits.”70

Leatherstocking’s characteristic disposition towards action and justice borrows heavily from antiquity, making the facets of his persona familiar territory for subsets of European readers. Natty in particular assumes the guise of the “involuntary adventurer” as outlined by Joseph Campbell. Generally a masculine figure, the reluctant hero operates primarily in marginal spaces, often outside of the purview of law and the

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68 Cooper, “The Deerslayer,” 150.
70 Cooper, “The Deerslayer,” 186.
dominant culture and as his own authority. Natty himself lives by frontier law, or what he calls “nat’ral” law – “to do, lest you should be done by” – and also the laws of “Providence.” Scholars have argued as well that his itinerant presence along the imperial edge has more to do with the accidents of his birth and biography, or with his liminal status as the orphaned son of a pioneer, than with an inculcated or overt imperialist agenda. As such, he adapts to his surroundings and survives dangerous encounters by relying on native guides and by developing and leveraging his skills. He may return in possession of what Campbell calls a “boon,” or something gained, awarded, learned, or received whose transmission would alter or save his original community. In this case, Natty-as-Hawkeye saves his own skin from death in battle and from marriage and so safeguards the continued white military advance across the continent. With characteristic ambiguity, however, he returns “home” to Chingachgook with Wah-ta-Wah intact, effectively displacing onto their seemingly protected future his own domestic-agrarian responsibilities as white settler. And so his adventure cycle continues.

72 Cooper, “The Deerslayer,” 245.
73 See, for example, Mitchell, 44-46, on Cooper’s treatments throughout the series of questions of land and possession. Natty’s disappearance into the landscape, as landscape, signals “less a set of principles for choosing one action over another than a series of habitual practices for how to act when a choice has already been made. Ethics come to seem more a matter of improvised style than clear ideal” (47).
What Walter Benjamin writes of the returning storyteller is also true of Cooper’s wilderness hero. The storyteller, or the narration of his exploits, always imparts to listeners something useful. The usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another, in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim. In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers.74

Even as the young Deerslayer, Natty is nothing if not relentlessly didactic on matters both moral and practical. Jules Verne’s Paganel, it may be remembered, when faced with the prospect of fire across the Argentine Pampas, recalls: “On a lu son Cooper, et Bas De Cuir nous a enseigné le moyen d’arrêter la marche des flammes en arrachant l’herbe autour de soi dans un rayon de quelques toises. Rien n’est plus simple.”75 As a sort of precursor to the global Scout movement, the Leatherstocking series modeled for generations of American and European readers how to be, think, and act while white in the wilderness.76 But Natty’s status as an involuntary adventurer who intervenes in larger conflicts as his conscience dictates but who values above all his close life in the woods helped to smooth the rough edges of the British imperial and later the American continental expansions. On a broader plane as well, Cooper’s stories metaphorically framed Natty’s coming of age amid beauty and violence, and as a co-belonging, as the

birth of the United States itself, to be simultaneously celebrated as the reinvigoration of the white “race” through work and encounter and lamented as a European loss of resources and standing. More importantly, Cooper’s most famous protagonist was a blueprint for the white nationalist hero figure that took definitive shape on both sides of the Atlantic in the final decades of the century.

2.3 “Mass” Media Transformations

Hergé’s “Tintin en Amérique” pokes great fun at the white Indian’s becoming-cowboy in the frontier West. In a series of gags meant to lighten and lengthen the volume’s Western vignette, Hergé lampoons the figure of the American man on horseback as a deliberate construction, one part fashion to two parts skill, and the latter easily acquired. In the story, Tintin catches an overnight train from Chicago to the town of “Redskincity” near the Blackfeet “reserves,” in hot pursuit of the outlaw Bobby Smiles. Upon arrival, Tintin changes from investigative journalist into cowboy, trading in his usual knickerbockers and sweater vest for a cowboy’s hat, boots, pistol, holster, handkerchief, and chaps, all in the latest fashion (see Fig. 5). He then procures himself a mount, but not before revealing a margin of unfamiliarity and even discomfort with horses. Across the next few sequences, Tintin proves that clothes do not make the man; he gets caught in his lasso, his horse throws him, his own naiveté leads to his capture.

77 Portes, 87.
78 Hergé, Tintin en Amérique, 16.
and torture by a Blackfeet band, and he stupidly falls off a cliff. As diegetic time passes, however, allowing for the accumulation of humorous reversals and the hardening of resolve, Tintin indoctrinates himself to the perils of the land and sallies forth to get his man. The process requires that he drive a train, cross a desert, rustle back a horse, flee a prairie fire, scale a mountain, survive a rock slide, and otherwise escape a death by dehydration, rope, wheel, fire, dynamite, bullet, and bottle.

Hergé satirizes what Mitchell has identified as a central paradox of the Western genre, namely that in reenacting the “making of the man,” in orchestrating the undoing or breaking of the male body by violence and nature in order to stage its reconstruction within the story as ideally masculine, Westerns succeed paradoxically in valorizing learned behavior. He explains:

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79 Hergé, *Tintin en Amérique*, 16.
The frequency [in film Westerns] with which the body is celebrated, then physically punished, only to convalesce, suggests something of the paradox involved in making true men out of biological men, taking their male bodies and distorting them beyond any apparent power of self-control, so that in the course of recuperating, an achieved masculinity that is at once physical and based on performance can be revealed.\textsuperscript{80}

Tintin’s slow acclimatization to foreign geography and his unwillingness to deploy his telltale acumen at the first sight of native aggression generate laughs. More importantly, suspense obtains as Tintin finds himself beaten up and in multiple near-death situations due to his own ineptitude or bad luck. Initial shortcomings and miscalculations, however, only make his eventual mastery of the surroundings more satisfying, a true cowboy hero’s conquest of the land and its savage inhabitants, or rather a white Indian’s characteristic adaptation to or co-optation of the dangerous qualities perceived as inherent in both. Hergé’s visual dismantling of the cowboy myth also reveals the fragility of the latter’s claims to an American pioneer masculinity generations in the making in the exceptional landscapes of the North American West. The normative Western’s loud insistence on white manliness as essence only draws attention to the underlying fact that ideas of masculinity circulate as so many “cultural fictions.”\textsuperscript{81} In Hergé’s Far West, Tintin reconstructs in body and spirit and prevails, but not before cowboyhood has been exposed as little more than posture and gear and the cowboy’s wisdom and masculine discipline the result of mere practical training in the field. And

\textsuperscript{80} Mitchell, 155.
\textsuperscript{81} Mitchell, 155.
Hergé’s cartoon cowboy can be read as somewhat subversive. In opening up the seemingly closed intellectual property of the American national hero to embodiment by a slender, cultured, adolescent foreigner, “Tintin en Amérique” succeeds in placing the cowboy figure at the intersection of frivolous play, performance, and transaction. Once safely returned to Chicago, Tintin dons yet another costume, his second of five total in the volume, as if in an entr’act, having momentarilly appropriated without consequence and acculturated without loss, much to the delight of reader-viewers.

It must be noted, however, that Hergé’s humorous chronicle of Tintin’s becoming-cowboy is astutely in tune with the nineteenth-century legend-making and self-stylizing that positioned the Anglo-American frontier horseman as central to United States history. The exaggerated life stories of actual frontier figures such as Daniel Boone, Wild Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill, and Teddy Roosevelt encapsulated the “exceptional” if also “peculiar” qualities of American development and helped establish the United States as a rapidly maturing country – and even independent culture – eyeing the international stage. More importantly, Indian-fighting cowboys emerged as compelling specimens in U.S. popular performance and media just as the illustrated press in France focused attention on a new class of French adventurer formed by

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82 Peeters famously characterized Tintin as “probably the strangest character in the history of the strip cartoon” because of his agelessness, but also because of his “sexlessness,” his indeterminate name, his missing and indistinct features, his absence of profession, and his “lack of a personality” (31). Regarding Tintin’s age, he wrote, “has no real age; sometimes he seems to be a child, at other times an adolescent, but generally he behaves like an adult” (31).

83 Turner, 2.
campaigns in Africa and Asia. The expensive and protracted scramble for Africa required symbols that could interpret and embody recent change and forge national cohesion around New Imperialist ideas of a post-Prussian-invasion France. Men like the Generals Marchand, Gallieni, and Lyautey and the Cardinal Lavigerie were increasingly characterized in print and image across the Third Republic as brave expeditioners to the desert or jungle and as winners of hearts, minds, and battles for a reinvigorated France. French military and religious leaders deployed to the colonies formed a new cadre of national heroes, promoted as emblems of an outward-focused, expanding empire.\textsuperscript{84}

Across the same larger period, technological advances in printing migrated east across the Atlantic and facilitated wider promotion of heroic men and deeds within mainstream and the nascent commercial presses. Illustration, photography, and aggressive new forms of promotion and branding, the latter of which launched Buffalo Bill as a war hero and star entertainer on both sides of the Atlantic, enabled the heroicization of colonizers and imperialists on a newly “mass” and transnational scale.\textsuperscript{85}

Into the twentieth century, narratives circulating in and between the United States and

\textsuperscript{84} Sèbe, chapter 2, “Imperial Heroes and the Market I: The Printed World,” 54-89; 105. Sèbe argues that the French popular press before the decisive colonial involvement in the Great War engaged in didacticism more than sensationalism in its presentation of and reporting on the empire, partly to prevent a populist attachment to a hero-figure that might spill into politics (59, 64). See also Tyler Stovall, \textit{Transnational France: The Modern History of a Universal Nation} (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2015), 205-211.

France increasingly exploited the promise of the visual to bewitch international publics with intertwining stories of national unity and imperial wealth. Media images, circus acts, the *tableaux vivants* of human zoos and universal exhibitions, painting, sculpture, and later comics and cinema all played important roles in transforming the reluctant wilderness heroes of Cooper’s age into decisive, conscious, and memorable agents of twentieth-century imperial policy. \(^{86}\)

Michael Nerlich’s schema of the “voluntary” adventurer captures the ways in which growing awareness of and enthusiasm for the empire and for colonial others updated the Natty Bumppo figure for higher-stakes adventures in “wilder” imperial regions even farther from home. Modeled on the bourgeois knight of the twelfth century, the voluntary adventurer, writes Nerlich, carried out missions by vocation as well as intent and viewed chaos and change as “productive” forces. Unlike the Deerslayer, the voluntary adventurer valued the “unknown” and the “new,” recognized the world as more “chance-determined” than divinely arbitrated, and willingly took risks for power. He neutralized threats posed by the other – “other races, other languages, other manners, other societies, other necessities, other desires, etc.” – through the “integration of the other into one’s own,” but also by transforming threat “into a business partner” or destroying it. He also gained an invaluable sort of expertise in the

environments in which he operated and was technologically savvy, meaning that he developed and deployed “search systems” that enabled the “calculation of chances” and the “elaboration of insurances” in the frequent face of death. Margaret Cohen draws out the significance of the last qualification in her work on the seafaring adventurer. The latter’s specific combination of “practice, skills, and technological savoir faire,” what she calls know-how, transformed the danger and hardship of exogenous space or borderland into white advantage. Know-how, she writes,
is needed in future-oriented situations whose outcomes are uncertain, particularly in boundary zones which push existing technologies and knowledge to their limits. The extreme nature of boundary zones aggravates the kind of provisional and shifting conditions that know-how navigates with flexibility, cunning, prudence, foresight, and audacity.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the strongmen lionized in U.S. and French media indeed paired dominant understandings of imperial imperatives with a decidedly contemporary appreciation for mechanized warfare. Accounts across media positioned the exploits of cowboys, colonizers, and even the “noble savages” against whom they fought as proof of the successes and endowments of empire, even as those same accounts often explored the disquieting facts of subjugation and colonialism.

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88 Cohen, 486-487.
89 Warren writes that the “industrial and technological wizardry which both explained and rationalized the triumph of Anglo-Saxon American could be held in one hand.” It was the gun itself that made the frontiersman “the bearer of civilization, the harbinger of progress.” Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 563n48.
2.3.1 Situating the West as All-American

By the early 1900s, popular literature and the arts had witnessed the full blossoming of the wilderness hero in the figure of the American cowboy. Across the mid- to late 1800s, as the settlement lined moved westward, actual adventurers and dime novel heroes – often one and the same – left Leatherstocking’s New York backwoods and Boone’s Kentucky mountains for Buffalo Bill’s Nebraska plains. From there, many crossed the Rockies into the fur trapper’s Northwest or headed west and southwest, into the sagebrush and red sandstone deserts later made famous by Zane Grey, John Ford, and John Wayne. As climates grew hotter, geographies more eccentric and less forgiving, and life more dangerous, those leading the settlers’ march across the continent, and thus those living the closest to “primitivism,” adapted their tools and trades to the new topographies. They took cues for survival from the Spanish, Mexican, and indigenous peoples that they encountered and fashioned new styles of dress suitable for riding, driving cattle, hunting buffalo on an open range, and surviving the elements. Oral and written accounts of soldier and settler struggles to “clear” the land began to converge on certain moments in the settling of the West, which amplified their meanings within emerging national narratives. Stories increasingly returned to the

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90 Buffalo Bill (William F. Cody) and Wild Bill Hickok (James Butler Hickok), whose lives and exploits were widely covered in newspapers and magazines, were also dime novel sensations. Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, 60-61, 64-65.

decades surrounding Custer’s 1876 defeat by Sioux, Arapaho, and Northern Cheyenne forces along the Little Bighorn River, recasting the period as a final moment of territorial openness and possibility. The period also became in retrospect a defining episode of national strife, as reconstruction, domination, and displacement played out across the newly acquired western territories. Dime novelists did their part as well to bring landscapes and heroes into collective memory. Cowboy folklore exaggerated the beauty of the terrain and the horrors of beast and “savage” and fixed so-called ordinary figures, both living and dead, as national legends. In art, painters such as Albert Bierstadt, Frederic Remington, and Charles Marion Russell rescued a “vanishing” West in portraits of western men, their native adversaries, and the environments that formed them both. A new literary and visual “mode,” heir to Cooper’s tales of the eastern and prairie frontiers, was sculpting its heroes and staking out sceneries.92

At the turn of the century, historical feeling shifted to embrace Turner’s 1893 frontier thesis, which had posited a continent’s worth of “free” land as the crux and crucible of American development. Myth-makers in the popular press in turn seized on the figure of the cowhand as a symbol of what had been lost in that process called progress, namely freedom of movement, unbounded virility, and closeness to a nature perceived as uncommonly powerful and as yet unspoiled. By the late 1880s, the increased use of barbed wire that had accompanied the extension of rail and the

92 Mitchell, 7; Tompkins, 179-203.
subsequent rise of Midwest ranching had begun to transform the open range into controlled private property. Fencing diminished the seasonal need for large numbers of drovers to herd Plains beef to the railheads that connected the West to eastern and northern markets. The grand, romantic production of the cattle drive was effectively sidelined. Historically speaking, the cowboy’s day in the sun had been brief; at any rate, the drover or cowhand was rarely more than an “overworked, underfed, poorly paid, ill-educated labore[r],” part of a wandering and ethnically diverse class of men eking a living out of dust, only to deposit it in saloons. With few exceptions, cowhands lived at the margins of Anglo-American society, neither participating in the imperial incursions led by the U.S. Army nor distinguishing themselves as lawmen, agricultural settlers, or builders of cities or rail. European tourists to the Midwest in the 1880s were advised to steer well clear of cowboys; they were represented in tall tales as the “scourge of the West” and “reputed to be more dangerous, armed, and given to drink than even the Indians.”

Cowboys were, however, by and large free men, envisioned as roaming free land, and faced with real challenges of survival, in ways that the increasingly stationary and rote workers of American industry were not.

93 Mitchell, 24-27; Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, 398; McVeigh, 5-6.
94 Mitchell, 25. See also Portes 91-92; Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, 233-235.
95 Portes, 92.
96 Frederic Remington predicted that Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show would appeal broadly precisely because it offered an escape from the confines of modern, industrial life: “It will represent a poetical and harmless protest against the Derby hat and starched linen – those horrible badges of the slavery of our modern social system, when men are physical lay figures and mental and moral cogwheels and wastes of uniformity” (quoted in Gallop, 202). Berthier-Foglar notes that the show’s potent combination of antimodernist fantasy
Rising immigration and overcrowded tenements in the cities did their part to focus Gilded Age yearning on stories of endless skies and white masculine heroics out in the Republic. Massive labor strikes and political instability as the century turned worsened an economy already in decline, despite gains on the world stage in mechanical inventiveness and entrepreneurialship. The incremental mechanization of daily life – at the workplace, in food production and delivery, in transportation – as well as agitation for gender parity sparked nostalgia for the seemingly simpler times celebrated in tales of frontier life. Many welcomed the ways in which those stories preserved Victorian delineations of the public and private spheres and elevated manly enterprise above domestic labor and even familial duty. City-dwellers, among them Zane Grey himself, easily bought into the fiction that western men were liberated from the pressures of home life and work and more able to determine their own fates. Opinion-shapers in politics and the military likewise recognized a certain value in the propagation of Far

97 Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, 212-214.
98 The exhibition pavilions featuring American machinery and inventions were large draws at Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee celebration of 1887 and at the Paris Universal Exposition in 1889. Gallop, 45-49; Berthier-Foglar, 129.
100 Harvey, 61-63.
West mythologies. General Nelson Miles, for example, under whose command U.S. troops had brought down the Ghost Dance uprising and put an end to the so-called Indian Wars with the massacre of mostly women and children encamped along Wounded Knee Creek, gave even fanciful recollections of frontier life his official stamp of approval, especially if they contributed to rehabilitating the image of the Army. Accounts of pioneer life lost to ambush and stories of a breathtaking future glimpsed but not yet won were seen by many as a way of siphoning off negative social energies, particularly in the East, and of dispelling unease about the methods employed to assemble and police the national expanse.

2.3.2 Buffalo Bill and His Cowboys Take the International Arena

Reading the wind, western outdoorsmen from Cody to Roosevelt fashioned themselves in their private and public lives not only as legendary horsemen and marksmen, but as agents of empire, or at a minimum as envoys of metropolitan power to the western territories that were fast becoming U.S. states. Scholars have widely cited Cody and his Wild West show for having revised the historical significance of the “white” cowboy – the non-Irish, Anglo-American, Protestant hunter-horseman jobbing

101 Warren points out that General Sherman, for example, attended Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show at Madison Square Gardens 20 times during its 1887 season. Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 280.

102 In the post-Civil War decades, the popular conception of the U.S. Army was a negative one that tended to view its regulars and auxiliaries as unamerican, immigrant, miscegenated, inglorious, and undisciplined. Desertion was high, with soldiers complaining of low wages, low morale, boredom, bad weather, disease, hunger, danger, and an unwelcome ethnic mix among the ranks. Cody’s “imposture” as a military hero and his Wild West battle “reenactments” both “whitewashed” and polished the Army’s image. Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 94-106, 122-124, 382-384.
alongside Mexicans, Africans, and European immigrants in the near West – by refining his look and comportment and by augmenting his role in post-Civil War attempts to unify the country. Born in Iowa in 1846, Cody got his professional start as a market hunter supplying buffalo meat to Kansas Pacific rail workers. He was then hired as an auxiliary to the Army and sent off to scout Arapaho, Cheyenne, Sioux, and Comanche alongside Hickok, Jim Bridger, and Kit Carson. Yarns of his frontier adventures, yarns that he was eager to spin for notoriety and monetary gain, were soon picked up and augmented by East Coast dime novelists like Ned Buntline, the man responsible for launching the phenomenon of Buffalo Bill on a mass scale in a series of paperbacks inspired by Cody’s own embellished reminiscences. With Buntline’s help, Cody parlayed his growing celebrity in print and his experiences on the battle field into a successful, if brief, eastern stage career, during which he starred in amateur cowboy-and-Indian melodramas for mostly enthusiastic crowds. Through stage work he met veteran performer Nate Salsbury. Together, the two assembled an exceptional team of image-makers and devised a way to capitalize on growing fervor for frontier life, a subject on which Buffalo Bill, already situated in the media as a veteran Indian fighter, expert shot, confidant of Custer, and all-round affable western character, was considered a living authority.103

Buffalo Bill’s Wild West arena show, billed as “America’s National Entertainment,” debuted in Nebraska in 1883. At the head of the whole outfit was Cody himself, living out the Buffalo Bill persona and continuing to cultivate his look, talents, and influence with reference to the self-fashioning he had witnessed among the scouts and the sensationalist accounts of his own life that he and others were in the business to circulate. Riding tall in the saddle, leading dramatic last-minute rescues in the arena, costumed in buckskin, velvet, and crimson and with his hair left long under a wide-brimmed hat, Cody stood out from the crowd as both a star entertainer and a fine specimen of a self-made man. Across the next 33 years, nine of which were spent touring Europe, Buffalo Bill and his Wild West cowboys presented millions of spectators with an embodied vision of a seemingly new, hyper-driven masculinity that compellingly bound up American cowboy culture and landscape-derived virility with ethnic mixity, a sense of military honor, and international prestige.

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"Memory, and Popular History" (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000). Cody and Salsbury went into business with the former newspaper man John M. Burke, who exploited newsprint, promotional images, and connections in innovative ways to shape the legend and celebrity of Buffalo Bill across a 30-year period.

104 Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 241; Gallop, 7.
Between 1883 and 1916, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West,” as Cody called the show, as if it were an actual place and not a 200- to 800-person road show, “reenacted” scenes from frontier history for sell-out crowds across the United States, France, Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Spain, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands. For spectators on both sides of the Atlantic, Buffalo Bill and his show performed crucial conceptual work. At the 1887 Queen’s Jubilee celebration in London, Cody raised the American flag beside the Union Jack in the presence of Queen Victoria herself, who had been widely criticized for coming out of seclusion for American and not English entertainment. Her diary entry describing Cody as “a splendid man, handsome, & gentlemanlike in manner,” echoed the sentiments of journalists, royals, politicians, and other delighted spectators throughout Europe, including the Pope, the French president Sadi Carnot, Kaiser Wilhelm II, Queen Isabella of Spain, and the Grand Duke Alexei of Russia. Many, however, understood the “yankeeries,” “billeries,” and “scalperies” of the Wild West as they had Cooper’s own tales of the American frontier: as history more than fiction, and in this case, as autoethnography more than play-acting. Press packets loudly proclaimed that the “exhibition” had been “witnessed and endorsed by President Arthur and his cabinet, General Sheridan and staff, Generals Cook, Miles, Sherman, Carr, etc. and tens of thousands of well informed people in every walk of life,” and that

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106 Slotkin, “Buffalo Bill’s ‘Wild West’,” 165; Gallop, 155-166, 213.
107 Quoted in Gallop, 101; Reddin, 98; Rita G. Napier, “Across the Big Water: American Indians’ Perceptions of Europe and Europeans, 1887-1906,” in Indians & Europe, 398-399.
108 Portes, 90.
the Wild West program presented a “living picture of life on the frontier” complete with “Indian warfare depicted in true colors” and “a buffalo hunt in all its realistic detail.”

A reporter from The Globe could thus authorize himself to mistake “the Red Indians of the Wild West Show” for the “Last of the Mohicans,” or at least to hyperbolize that they were “one and the same:”

Looking upon the chiefs, braves and squaws, one could not help recalling the delightful sensations of youth – the first acquaintance with the Last of the Mohicans, the Great Spirit, Firewater, Laughing Water and the dark Huron warrior. Here were their counterparts – moccasins, feathers, beaver skins, beads and a fine show of war paint; ugly faces made uglier by rude art; dignified countenances which retained a stamp of high-breeding through ochre and vermillion.

To complete the illusion, the show transported live flora and fauna, including deer, elk, bison, broncos, and prairie grasses, by boat and train along with the show cast, crew, and equipment. Publicity materials passed off props as genuine artifacts of a bygone West salvaged by Cody or his team, such as the replica of the famous Deadwood coach used in a key act of the program. The action also unfolded against panoramic, hand-painted canvas backdrops featuring realist western landscapes to approximate the

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109 Gallop, 63.
110 Quoted in Gallop, 56.
111 The indoor arena show in Manchester, England, introduced a simulated tornado using air propellers and featured a simulated prairie fire as well. The fire was real but controlled by gas jets, with grasses laid out at various heights. Steam doubled as smoke. The realist effect was much praised throughout Europe, as were the technological feats of the production and camp itself. Gallop, 144-146.
112 Warren claims that the Deadwood coach was the show’s greatest fake-out. The stage was not the storied, salvaged 1863 original, as the program claimed, but rather a piece manufactured by the Cheyenne and Black Hills Stage line specifically for the show. Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, 227-228.
vistas and habitats of the “real” West. The playbill enhanced the show’s effet de réel by proclaiming to feature

THE LARGEST SCENERY EVER PAINTED depicting in Seven Animated Tableaux Scenes, Incidents and Episodes in the STORY OF THE SETTLEMENT OF AMERICA forming the Grandest Combination of Art and Nature Known in the World’s History.\(^{113}\)

The show as a whole toyed in good fun with the boundaries separating artifice and authenticity, the copy from the original, fiction from history, and in the process created “such powerful mythic images,” writes Louis Warren, “that one could be forgiven for thinking they were real.”\(^{114}\) Cody himself, who falsely claimed the rank of colonel and aggrandized his role in decisive western battles, “was so attuned to popular longings,” concludes Warren, “and so adept at the arts of imposture that he thought of himself as both a theatrical and a historical actor even when he was not on the stage.”\(^{115}\) Twain himself was sold. He declared the show to be “wholly free from sham and insincerity” and marveled at its ability to conjure scenes that were “identical” to the ones that had marked his own frontier upbringing.\(^{116}\) The foreign press would likewise gush

\(^{113}\) Roland Barthes, “L’Effet de réel,” *Communications* 11, no. 1 (1968), 84-89; Gallop, 140-142.

\(^{114}\) Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 548.

\(^{115}\) Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 120. See also Slotkin, “Buffalo Bill,” 166.

\(^{116}\) Twain’s high praise concluded with an extortion to take the triumph to Europe: “I have now seen your ‘Wild West’ show two days in succession, and have enjoyed it thoroughly. It brought vividly back the breezy, wild life of the great plains and the Rocky Mountains, and stirred me like a war song. Down to its smallest details the show is genuine – cowboys, vaqueros, Indians, stage-coach, costumes and all; it is wholly free from sham and insincerity, and the effects produced upon me by its spectacles are identical with those wrought upon me along time ago by the same spectacles on the frontier. Your pony expressman was as tremendous and of interest to me as he was twenty-three years ago, when he used to come whizzing by from over the desert with his war news, and your bucking horses were even painfully real to me, as I rode one of those outrages once for nearly a quarter of a minute. It is often said on the other side of the water that
in 1887: “Without the slightest effort of the imagination visitors to the exhibition grounds may easily fancy themselves transported to the beauties of the western prairies of America, with its wonderful inhabitants of both men and animals.” And The Times to add: “These men and women are not merely trained circus people; they represent nobody but themselves and their own life in the Wild West.”

At the 1889 Paris World’s Fair, the dominating presence of Guillaume Bison or Guillaume le Buffle and his peaceable camp of “Peaux-Rouges” claimed a place for America beside the great European empires. As Paul Reddin notes, the French had “accepted Buffalo Bill with [an] enthusiasm rarely shown a foreigner” because, on the one hand, his horsemanship and apparent willingness to put “savage people and ferocious animals” to the sword for the advancement of white mankind coincided with French appreciation for the “cavalier” or knight errant who safeguarded white “virtue” for king and country. French media made sense of Buffalo Bill in part as a d’Artagnan figure, as had the British press:

He is a perfect horseman, an unerring shot, a man of magnificent presence and physique, ignorant of the meaning of fear or fatigue; his life is a history of

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117 Quoted in Gallop, 71.
118 Quoted in Gallop, 94.
119 Reddin, 99.
hairbreadth escapes, and deeds of daring, generosity, and self-sacrifice, which compare very favourably with the chivalric actions of romance, and he has not been inappropriately designated the “Bayard of the Plains.”

In France, journalistic commendations of Buffalo Bill’s horsemanship tended as well to revive the image-memory of Leatherstocking, the most famous frontier American then known to the French, but to recharacterize his appeal as that of a centaur. One reporter wrote:

Tall and slim, of irreproachable proportions, his Herculean body is surmounted by a superb head, illuminated by deep set, flashing eyes, and when he appears on his horse, letting his long, shoulder length hair wave in the wind, one experiences an indefinable sensation and one feels oneself transported to another hemisphere.

On the other hand, Cody’s militaristic grace played into desires for a more physically fit and disciplined French army, particularly given the recent defeat by the Prussians. French soldiers were sent to observe show acts as part of their military training. Journalists in turn “admonished the public for becoming soft and urged them to attend the show to foster appreciation for physical exercise, discipline, horsemanship, camping outdoors, and sharpshooting – all necessary in warfare.” Buffalo Bill’s display of controlled strength in the arena, where he and his cowboys triumphantly beat back barbarism, only reinforced the imperialist messages embedded within the show’s Neuilly encampment, where the seemingly peaceful coexistence of cowboys, Mexican

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120 Quoted in Gallop, xi. This description of Cody may very likely have been planted by the show’s public relations team. See also Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 348.
121 Quoted in Reddin, 99-100.
122 Reddin writes that “the French saw the Wild West show as an object lesson in physical force, exercise, and *la jeunesse*” (101).
vaqueros, and Lakota Sioux brought about by Cody himself modeled strict adherence to
the racial hierarchies promoted by French imperialists as natural from a biological
standpoint and desirable from an administrative one. Inhabitants of the larger French
cities were in a position to compare Cody’s control of his “wards” to the French state’s
control of its “protégés” from the colonies.\textsuperscript{123} The Paris Exposition of 1855 had been the
first to incorporate colonial pavillons among its attractions and the following decades
saw the development of Colonial Expositions dedicated to the architectures, peoples,
and customs of the French territories. Algerian villages, Indochinese dancers, souks,
temples, or “local” restaurants, all curated by organizers to “faire vrai,” had dotted the
gardens of the Trocadéro in 1878, the Esplanade des Invalides in 1889, and the bois de
Vincennes in 1931 and had become spectator highlights in the intervening years at
provincial Expositions in Lyon, Rouen, Bordeaux, Roubaix, Strasbourg, and Marseille.\textsuperscript{124}
Other shows and exhibits across the period brought the peoples of the colonies home for
the French as well. Visitors to the Jardin d’Acclimatation in Paris in 1887, for example,
were treated to the sight of several Ashanti. The \textit{Journal de Voyages} mounted a live
exhibit of a Tuareg “campement saharien” on the Parisian Boulevard Clichy in 1909.
And at the height of popular imperialism in France, the centenary celebration of the
conquest of Algiers had notably included a human zoo.\textsuperscript{125} 

\textsuperscript{123} Ruscio, Credo, 145.
\textsuperscript{124} Ruscio, Credo, 141; Stovall, 238-239.
\textsuperscript{125} Ruscio, Credo, 139-146.
At the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Cody and his cowboys laid open claim to their international superiority as they lassoed and careened around the 22,000-seat covered arena at the head of the show’s new “Congress of Rough Riders of the World.” The show set up camp and reconstructed the “bullet-riddled cabin” proclaimed to have been Sitting Bull’s along the Midway Plaisance, just outside the gates of the White City and only a short distance away from a replica Algerian village.126 The program itself, revised for a new run in the United States after a successful tour abroad, invited showgoers to measure American riding prowess against the skill of “expert riders” selected from among French Chasseurs, British and German Lancers, Cossacks, Arabians, Argentinian gauchos, Hawaiians, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and others. The expanded program and show camp appealed broadly to American and international visitors with its frank and good-natured spirit of contest and comparison, not only of nationalities and ethnicities, cast as the “races,” but of abilities, manners of dress, levels of militarization, and by extension of societies, their ongoing wars, their struggles to modernize and urbanize, their class conflicts, and their politics of conquest and development.127 The show’s frontier reenactments, however, whose claims to authenticity were bolstered by Cody’s high-level involvement in the quelling of the Ghost Dance movement, took pains to equate American strength with

126 Reddin, 118-119.
“unmiscegenated” whiteness. In this way, European spectators were invited to understand the skill displayed by “blood-mixed” Eurasians and South Americans as fitting within East-to-West, Rome-to-America progression narratives, or as proof of positivist racial distinctions and as clear justifications for paternalist imperial policies.

Cody, in turn, embraced his new role as “world peacemaker.” The camp itself, in which nations, dialects, and traditions comingled, positioned Cody not only as leader of the “civilized,” able to exert measured control over the colonized and non-white peoples of the world, but as a new Napoleon, both “calmer” and “conqueror” of Europe itself.

For millions, even generations, of spectators, many of whom were middle-class women and children, and many of whom were repeat customers, the Wild West “defined the meaning of American history and American identity” and helped Americans and Europeans alike come to grips with “a host of concerns, including industrialism, colonialism, race progress, and race decay.” For home audiences, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West situated the western half of the United States as integral to American national “character” and augured and even facilitated the country’s global

128 Slotkin, “Buffalo Bill,” 172. Slotkin writes of Cody’s expert manipulation of history and the image: “Cody exploited his connection with Wounded Knee in advertising posters which alternately showed him overseeing the making of the Peace Treaty and charging into a village to rescue White captives.”

129 Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, 356-357, 423-425.

130 Slotkin, “Buffalo Bill,” 172-179; Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, 423.

131 Berthier-Foglar, 140; Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, 423-425; Reddin, 120.

132 One of the show’s more elaborate acts, entitled “A History of American Civilization,” debuted at the 1886 season in Madison Square Gardens and aimed to counter negative sentiments about “progress.” In the act, pioneers, settlers, cowboys, and Indians acted out the four stages or “epochs” of frontier social evolution, beginning with “The Primeval Forest,” going through “The Prairie” and “The Cattle Ranch,” and terminating in “The Mining Camp.” Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, xi, xv, 51.
ascendancy as a vast, imperial power. For Europeans imagining their own empires and encountering their own colonized, the show interpreted the dispossession and containment of the indigenous in the U.S. borderlands as a matter of course for the liberal Christian democracies of the so-called West, whether or not the American experiment could be considered a success.\textsuperscript{133} For European heads of state and policymakers then concerned with their own expansions and with the challenges of direct and indirect colonial administration, the various acts of the two-hour show and especially the show grounds celebrated Anglo-American colonization and the subordination and education of natives as race duty unshirked by a sister “breed” of white men born of revolution, shaped by agrarianism and industry, and admirably hardened in the war against “savagery.”

\textbf{2.3.3 “Savages” Become Sioux in France}

In the 1870s, French tourists to the United States lit off for the Plains from the bigger cities, hoping to catch a glimpse of “genuine Indians” and working cowboys, those “rough men of brusque manners, with muddy boots, who spat all over the place without embarrassment or restraint.” Both American “types,” particularly when captured together in the grandiose frame of the western landscape, constituted the

\textsuperscript{133} The presence of the Wild West in Paris unleashed criticisms of American colonialism as well as praise. Berthier-Foglar, 130.
West’s exotic appeal for many a French reader. French tourists often encountered their first Lakota or Cheyenne at out-of-the-way railroad stops along routes heading farther west, and their reactions upon seeing the descendants of a “race” considered once-noble “squatting next to tumble-down shacks draped in red blankets” ranged from shock and dismay to disgust. Travel impressions of the “Peau-Rouge” tended to highlight the “ugliness” of his features, his “mismatched and incongruous attire” and impoverished filth, his halting speech, his “monkey”-like behavior, or the “expression of bewildered resignation” on his face. Visitors to the reservations did in some cases return to France with altered opinions of the Amérindiens and of U.S. efforts to contain, feed, house, educate, or assimilate them. The general consensus, however, irrespective of political position, held that the “Redskin,” when not given outright to “savagery” and “pillage,” exhibited an “inveterate laziness” that foretold of his Darwinian die-out. Such observations fell easily in line with long-standing French views on the fate of the indigenous populations of North America, such as those published by the anti-Enlightenment reactionary Joseph de Maistre, for whom the natives of America stood as “the example of the degeneration of the human species,” or those upheld by Condorcet,

134 Portes, 83.
135 Portes, 83-84.
136 Portes 95-97.
137 Portes, 96-99.
Tocqueville, and others. Tocqueville had himself expressed disappointment in 1831 at the declining picturesqueness of the Iroquois of New York. He wrote to his mother:

Tout le terrain que nous venons de parcourir était jadis occupé par la fameuse confédération des Iroquois, qui a fait tant de bruit dans le monde. Nous avons rencontré les derniers d’entre eux sur notre chemin ; ils demandent l’aumône et sont aussi inoffensifs que leurs pères étaient redoutables.

A traveler from the late 1800s thus echoed deep-seated feeling when he concluded: “The [native American] type is animal-like and coarse, men and women seem misshapen... This is not a race, but a degradation of the human species.” And another: “These poor, ragged, debased, and mindlessly indolent beings who whine for alms cannot possibly inspire any sympathies.”

In the interwar period, Tintin would in the same manner come face to face with his first “Peau-Rouge” on the outskirts of the “toute petite ville” of “Redskincity,” also with a tourist’s ready curiosity, camera in hand, and also with a measure of disaffection for the human specimen in front of him reduced to squatting in a white man’s world (see Fig. 6). And like his precursors in life and fiction, Tintin searches farther afield for an “essence” of the West, in this case among encamped Blackfeet still dangerous and “primitive” enough to spark his ethnographic interest and to elicit emotions deeper.

138 Quoted in Fiorentino, 404.
140 Quoted in Portes, 95.
141 Quoted in Portes, 101.
than Milou’s knee-jerk prejudicial distaste for the lowest “race of man.” In these images of encounter, Hergé hews closely to the dual nature of European and particularly French understandings of and engagement with U.S. native populations. Towards the turn of the twentieth century, French interest in America was at once literary, firmly rooted in myths of nature, barbarism, and American exceptionalism, and increasingly sociological, attuned to peoples, conditions, aggressions, and policies, and given to imperial comparison. The French by and large formed their opinions of U.S. and settler relations with the indigenous based on the first-hand accounts by French tourists as well as American sources. The latter included news reporting on war outcomes, census data

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seeming to confirm native disappearance, and the legends and mythologies of the West swirling around the grandstands and within popular media. For this reason, French visitors to the United States across the span of the Third Republic generally sought out the “American Indians” as anthropological relics of an earlier civilizational stage. Moreover, as narratives within history, art, literature, and government naturalized their “vanishing” as a byproduct of American expansion, the French increasingly criticized U.S. Indian policy as the sullying of a “noble” people, as their subjugation as slaves or beasts, or, more forcefully, as exterminatory in practice, if not also in objective.\textsuperscript{143} Certain quarters of the French commercial press echoed a mounting sympathy for the plight of the colonized on U.S. soil. The \textit{Petit Parisien} in 1901, for example, declared the Native Americans to be “the most unfortunate and the most disinherited of people,” while more targeted pieces, such as \textit{L’Illustration}’s timely critique of the opening of Oklahoma to colonization, expressed a level of solidarity with the subjugated of North America that was largely absent from French reporting on France’s own colonized peoples in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{144}

The native performers in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West embodied the dualism of the noble savage myth in ways that transformed French perceptions of Native Americans,  

\textsuperscript{143} Portes, 95, 101-102.  
\textsuperscript{144} Quoted in Portes, 100; Fiorentino, 407. Sèbe points out that the popular press in the late nineteenth century was more concerned with developing “the genre of imperial heroes” (56).
Midwest cowboys, and the importance of the American West itself to world politics. Noble savagery, a concept whose rich history runs through the works of Enlightenment thinkers such as Montaigne, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Diderot up through to the present, pivots not surprisingly on a desire-repulsion conjunction that reaches its fullest expression when applied to peoples whose disappearance appears confirmed, and inevitable, whether by death in battle, massacre, assimilation, intermixing, or industrialization and modernization and their attendant ills, including disease, starvation, and stagnation. Once the threat of indigenous insurrection and power reversal is neutralized, however, as it seemingly was in the United States by 1890, the enemy “race” becomes a despoiled and tragic “race,” one whose fate can henceforth be lamented, its artifacts salvaged, its members observed as scientific specimens, their rites, actions, and perceived nature romanticized and celebrated, and their path and plight allegorized. For many French visitors to the Wild West, the visible remains of Native American life on display in the show camp represented the remainders of traditions and communities that were irrevocably altered by European conquest and capitalist development. At the same time, the “savagery” recreated or reenacted in the show program handily encapsulated the argument for the whitewashing of continents as the

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145 Warren argues further: “The Wild West show’s tenure in Europe had a gigantic influence on European perceptions of America. But just as important, its European successes changed the way Americans perceived the Wild West show, the meaning of frontier mythology, and their own history.” Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 297-298.

146 Fiorentino, 407.
destiny and duty of Europeans and their descendant peoples. Noble savagery, writes Deloria, thus draws together “two interlocked traditions: one of self-criticism, the other of conquest,” and they “balance perfectly, forming one of the foundations underpinning the equally intertwined history of European colonialism and the European Enlightenment.”147

The presence of national “enemies” on the show’s roster, including Sitting Bull, Ghost Dance “agitators,” and at least 23 Wounded Knee survivors, heightened the Wild West’s appeal by seeming to authenticate its truth claims.148 Le Figaro in 1890 pedaled the show as more fact than fiction, praising, largely incorrectly as it turned out, the

Sioux Indians, the tribes of the Cutois, Arapahoe, Bruelay, Cheyennes and Comanches, who came with their wild horses, their buffaloes, their prairie-dogs and rein-deers, to give us a real sense of that Indian world we had a chance to know up to now only through the stories of Gustave Aimard and Fenimore Cooper.149

But the show’s main draw in France centered around the native performers themselves. Cody had insisted from the start on hiring members of Plains tribes, whether as actors or so-called reenactors of their own experiences, in order to roadshow the Midwest as a

147 Deloria, 4.
148 Sitting Bull finally agreed to join the show’s 1885 season for four months, with earnings of $50/week, much of which he distributed among the Hunkpapa. He was accompanied on tour by a group of his warriors. In the arena, he presented himself in full war bonnet and was required only to take a turn. In the camp, he agreed to sell photographs and autographs. Gallop writes that “the public flocked to see the country’s number one villain” and “hissed and booed” once he appeared. Cody and Sitting Bull remained on friendly terms and were billed and photographed together (33-34). The native cast in 1891, which included Short Bull, Kicking Bear, Lone Bull, Mash the Kettle, Scatter, Revenge, Paul Eagle Star, Bull Stands Behind, Plenty Wolves, and Black Heart, was described in show publicity as “warriors of the greatest celebrity and all participants two months ago of the last page in the blood-stained history of the white and Indian races in America” (Gallop, 163).
149 Fiorentino, 410.
living, breathing diorama. Cast members over the years included predominantly Lakota Sioux but also Pawnee, Wichita, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Arapaho. Most had volunteered, or rather had allowed themselves to be recruited, given that the show provided for lodging, meals, and transportation, which meant that wage earnings could be distributed among ailing family members on the reservations. In many cases as well, natives agreed to join because they wished to see the world. Still others were placed within Cody’s care by the Bureau of Indian Affairs as prisoners, to disperse mounting tensions in their home territories prior to or following major battles.

Once in the arena, the native performers valiantly embodied the “savage centaurs” of legend, thus satisfying the public’s hankering for both history and the exotic. They also, however, and more importantly, demonstrated an adherence to battlefield and tribal codes of honor that appealed to white audiences, which in turn elevated the courage and skill required of the cowboys tasked with stamping out savagery. The resulting entertainment presented a synergetic and symbiotic, if highly romanticized, view of an American frontier ecosystem in which cowboys earned their legitimacy as national heroes only when pitted against Indian characters played as anti-heroes rather than as true villains, and on liminal turf that contained and conjoined them both. As one cowboy put it, in a letter to his father written from a tour stop in Rome, “if

150 Oglala made up the majority of cast members, although they often played Arapaho, Cheyenne, Pawnee, Shoshone, Crow, or other Sioux. Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 406-407.
you could see this show it would make you think that cowboys and indians amounted
to something.” The versatility of the noble savage conceit as it played out in both the
arena and the camp grounds partly accounts as well for the Wild West’s blockbuster
ability to inspire wholly contradictory interpretations of its embedded “messages” and
overt “lessons” – ideas and intentions that were understood by members of the public at
various points in the show’s history as imperialist, white supremacist, Christian
paternalist, xenophobic, or union-busting, or as apologist, multiculturalist,
internationalist, and even socialist.152

Outside the arena, native actors performed their Indianness variously for French
publics, at times as “colonial mimicry,” but more often with an “expressive agency” that
signaled their intent to lead “culturally meaningful li[ves]” while touring with Buffalo
Bill.153 Once policy had outlawed visible displays of indigenous traditions on U.S. soil,
the Wild West, writes Linda McNenly, became “one of the spaces that facilitated Native
participants’ cultural survival, for they were spaces where they could express, and hence
maintain and create, songs and dances.”154 On the one hand, then, the showcase of native
lives and traditions within the camp, or rather the deliberate life-staging performed by
the show’s native actors, openly catered to rising French ethnographic interest in the

152 For European press reactions, see especially Fiorentino. On allegorical readings of the show, see
particularly Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, 216, 276-278. Karl Marx’s son-in-law, the English socialist Edward
Aveling, for example, was an ardent admirer of the Wild West.
153 McNenly, 78, 89.
154 McNenly, 89.
Amérindiens as “true, uncorrupted, honest primitives fading before the onslaught of modern, industrial commerce.” French journalists on the whole succumbed to their enchantment with signs of a “premodern,” outward difference – articulated in terms of physiognomy, ornamentation, habitation, occupation, religion, and reason – and tended to assess native bodies and attitudes as indicators of the successes or failures of U.S. colonialism. Cody himself, in his autobiographical writings, outlined the show’s mission in similar terms:

A certain feeling of pride came over me when I thought of the good ship on whose deck I stood, and that her cargo consisted of early pioneers, rude, rough riders from that section, and of the wild horses of the same district, buffalo, deer, elk and antelope – the king game of the prairie, – together with over one hundred representatives of that savage foe that had been compelled to submit to a conquering civilization and were now accompanying me in friendship, loyalty and peace, five thousand miles from their homes, braving the dangers of the to them great unknown sea, now no longer a tradition, but a reality – all of us combined in an exhibition intended to prove to the center of old world civilization that the vast region of the United States was finally and effectively settled by the English-speaking race.

Access to the Wild West camp was included in the price of admission and in many cities became the main attraction. Program materials invited visitors to “see how cowboys, Indians and Mexicans live,” to stroll past wigwams and mixed settler families,

155 Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, 195.
156 European press articles on the show’s native actors tended to mix literary stereotypes of the Far West with more “scientific” information on the indigenous of North America. French and British sources appeared overall less reliant on stereotype than German and Italian sources. Fiorentino, 403, 406. American press reactions to native performers tended to describe them as noble, savage, and/or exotic. McNenly, 70-99.
158 Fiorentino, 406.
observe their dress and habits, take tea with sharpshooter Annie Oakley and her husband, view Yellow “Hand’s” scalp and knife on display in Buffalo Bill’s own tent, or watch as camp cooks prepared meals for cast and staff “cowboy” style under the open skies.\textsuperscript{159} The more prominent or experienced native actors consented to host visitors in their wigwams, answer questions, and pose for photographs. Some submitted their skulls for measurement by French scientists. Others sat for portraits by French artists living among them. Native women traveling with the show not only raised their children and prepared meals under the watchful gaze of the public but made and sold handcrafts, primarily for extra income, as part of the living frontier display marketed by show pressmen.\textsuperscript{160}

On the other hand, native performers self-presented in Europe as a forward-looking people thoroughly engaged with the present and curious about Europeans. In towns and cities across Europe, natives joined other members of the cast or staff, and often Cody himself, on cultural excursions to prominent landmarks and renowned entertainments. As a rule, the Wild West cast entered a new town on parade, riding in procession through the provincial streets from rail stations to the show grounds as a marketing ploy to foment interest and generate advance ticket sales. With few exceptions, the breathtaking out-of-placeness of the mounted cowboys and “Indians” in

\textsuperscript{159} Gallop, 63. Yellow Hair’s name was mistranslated in the Wild West show program as Yellow Hand.

\textsuperscript{160} Reddin, 100. Warren points out that the Lakota Sioux had been in the business of selling artifacts, dances, and images to tourists since as early as 1874. Several of the Wild West native performers sold handcrafted goods and artworks to European museums as well. Warren, \textit{Buffalo Bill’s America}, 191-192, 409.
full paint and regalia attracted throngs of excited fans. But native performers also waded into the day-to-day of European life around the camp. In England, they were spotted regularly at the Congregational Chapel in West Kensington as well as at St. George’s Chapel, Westminster Abbey, London Tower, and Windsor Castle. They took in shows and plays and met famous stage actors. Chief Red Shirt, for example, second to Sitting Bull and promoted by show organizers as Chief of the Sioux Nation, took in a play from the royal box alongside Cody and may also have ducked into the Savage Club while he was in London. Natives went boating on the Thames and could occasionally be found in the local pubs. Elsewhere, they visited the Eiffel Tower, took in Venice by gondola, had an audience with the Pope, observed political meetings, gave interviews to the press, or married European women. The native cast received a particularly warm welcome in southern France by the Marquis Folco de Baroncelli-Javon, who likened the plight of the Lakota to that of the gardians of the Camargue and adopted Jacob White Eyes and Sam Lone Bear as his “noble brothers.” Some performers died and were buried abroad, to sympathetic press coverage. Others were born there. The child of

161 Gallop, 225-227.
162 Napier, 386, 389, 396; Gallop 40, 64-65. Standing Bear, a Minnicconju Sioux who had fought in the battle of Little Bighorn, traveled with the show in 1887, 1889, and 1890 and was injured while on tour in Austria. He married his Austrian nurse and together they raised a mixed family on Pine Ridge. Other native performers had French or English girlfriends and a great many foreign admirers. Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, 390-396.
163 Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, 351-357.
164 Chief Long Wolf, a Little Bighorn veteran as well, succumbed to illness during the British season of 1892-1893 and was buried in Brompton cemetery. The toddler White Star Ghost Dog died shortly thereafter following a tragic accident in the arena and was buried in his grave. Paul Eagle Star was also injured in an
Little Chief and his wife Goodrobe was given two names, Over the Sea in Oglala as well as Frances Victoria Alexandra, in honor of the Great White Mother the Queen. The child was also ceremoniously baptized at St. Clements Church, Salford, with 50 natives in attendance. Likewise, when Chief Red Shirt’s wife gave birth in Paris, quarters of the French press proudly claimed the progeny as one of their own, or at least “Parisian in part.”

European encounters with show performers were multiple and contradictory, as images of daily camp life complicated the more “savage” performances in the arena, and as close reporting on natives’ excursions, impressions, and family developments in turn offered more humanizing portraits of members of an ethnic group that had for centuries remained a mainstay of exotic fiction.

Cody had originally set out to win the approbation and patronage of middle-class mothers, a large and coveted demographic that he believed would transform Buffalo Bill into a household commodity and guarantee him prestige on a national scale.

In structuring the Wild West as both a reenactment and a circus, or as both a history lesson and an anthropological display, Cody made it possible for showgoers to revel momentarily in the Wild West’s rehearsals of bloody insurrection and imperialist domination, knowing that the show camp itself told a very different story – not of

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arena accident and died in the hospital following an amputation. He was also buried in Brompton cemetery. Gallop 197-199, 170.

165 Gallop, 147.

166 Reddin, 101.
genocide, but of the protection or salvaging of indigenous power structures, traditions, and handcrafts by one, the Hon. Col. William F. Cody.\textsuperscript{167} The “savages” paid to “re-enac[t] their demise” twice daily under the lights took on multidimensionality as individuals in the camp environs and in the streets, where they were seen living out their everyday lives among tribe, family, and foreigners, albeit under the watchful eyes of the camp matron, the camp policemen, the chiefs and sub-chiefs, and Cody himself.\textsuperscript{168} It bears repeating, however, that the cast and camp milieu were ethnically mixed by design, to provide a meaningful backdrop against which Cody’s own projection of “distilled whiteness” – his “artful deception” as military hero, colonizer, and “white defender” – could be discernable by both patriots and middle-class mothers, the moral arbiters of American national and family entertainment, respectively.\textsuperscript{169} By living and working among the Lakota and others but also determining their freedoms, Cody played the white Indian as effectively as Leatherstocking had, always with an eye to leveraging the power affordances embedded within his massive renown, his war record, and his whiteness.

\textsuperscript{167} See Deloria, 118-119, on “salvage ethnography” and Harvey, 34-36, on archaeology and the American West.
\textsuperscript{168} Berthier-Foglar, 135. The presence of Ma Whittaker, the camp matron, ensured that the camp projected positive images of family, virtue, health, and order. Her presence also diffused fears of uncurtailed Indian sexuality and violence by situating the native performers and their family members as “wards” within her care. Warren, \textit{Buffalo Bill’s America}, 448-451.
2.3.4 The Cowboy President Lectures at the Sorbonne

Across the same period, Roosevelt, Owen Wister, Frederic Remington, George Bird Grinnell, Henry Cabot Lodge, and others, in their own publicized lives and in their respective literary, artistic, and scientific works, elevated the perceived social status of the national hero from arena cowboy to a man of some standing in the professions or in politics. Roosevelt and his hunt club set played a key role in the promotion of the American masculine ideal as a man of will and integrity and as a fighting man, even a pioneering figure. The American cowboy type that Roosevelt in particular personified was a gentleman hunter-horseman and a connoisseur of the West keen on conserving western lands as ethnically exclusive playgrounds and national and cultural treasures.\footnote{170} Like Buffalo Bill’s transcontinental sphere of influence, Roosevelt’s own political arena extended outward from the metropolitan heart of the country into Europe, and particularly into France. His 1910 European tour to collect the Nobel Peace Prize was seen as an occasion to cultivate his, and by extension America’s, “Old World” cultural ties and further extend the “New World” power grid from east to west and around the globe.\footnote{171}

\footnote{170} Bold, 14-54.
\footnote{171} Roosevelt was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906 for his role in brokering an end to the Russo-Japanese War. The French press reaction to Roosevelt, particularly from the Left, had softened, given the softening of Roosevelt’s own imperialist agenda following the land grab of 1898. Portes, 223.
Cody and Roosevelt brought complementary visions of American intention and strength to international audiences.\textsuperscript{172} In France, Roosevelt was a little-known figure of American political life before his sudden ascendency to the presidency in 1901 following McKinley’s assassination. French media of all political stripes had registered concern about Roosevelt’s early imperialist ambitions, although his outsized persona, plain talk, and extensive literary body of work, which began to appear in French translation as early as 1903, earned him a cult following and a handful of French biographers within the first decade of the century. Press biographies and pamphlets heralded Roosevelt as more than an adventurer full of life and a westernized Yank of fiercely independent will. To the French, the former governor of New York emerged as an effective statesman in his dealings with American unions and trusts and in his brokering of international crises.\textsuperscript{173} He represented a thoroughly “modern man” whose calls for national unity particularly appealed to a French public then mired in the Dreyfus affair.\textsuperscript{174} Barring certain members of the Leftist press, who found nothing of a Poincaré or a Clemenceau in the former American President, Roosevelt was widely viewed as an exceptional leader for which there was no French equivalent, although favorable comparisons to the Cardinal Lavigerie did circulate.\textsuperscript{175} And in an about-face for members of the middle

\textsuperscript{172} Roosevelt never publicly acknowledged Buffalo Bill’s influence on his own acquired westernness and fabricated cowboy image. Warren, \textit{Buffalo Bill’s America}, 464.

\textsuperscript{173} Portes, 214-227.

\textsuperscript{174} Portes, 217, 219.

\textsuperscript{175} Portes, 220.
classes and professions, who were at the time beginning to descend on the bigger U.S. cities as tourists and fairgoers to experience the “salutary shock” of American life first hand, Roosevelt was also, somewhat paradoxically, embraced as an authority on “matters of philosophy and morality.” One of his translators had cleared the way for French hagiographers to appropriate Roosevelt as one of their own by painting him as European and by attributing his more controversial qualities to an inherited Gallicism. He wrote:

To Holland, Theodore Roosevelt owes his sedate habits and his solid attitude; to Scotland, his subtility; to Ireland, his combative and generous aspects; to France, his vivacity, his imagination, and his boldness. Such a mixture of blood is bound to produce a virile, original, sincere, and balanced being.

Accusations of anti-intellectualism, chauvinism, imperialism, and recklessness aside, French writers across the political divide, writes Jacques Portes, viewed Roosevelt at the turn of the century not only as the “very incarnation of American energy,” as a leader “endowed with nobility of vision as well as practical wisdom,” but as a “shared” French and American hero.

In April 1910, the former American President received a hero’s welcome in France. L’Opinion summed up the feelings of many with its assessment of the beloved “Teddy” as an honnête homme: “impetuous, as brave as a buccaneer, as cultivated as a

176 Portes, 158, 218.
178 Portes, 219.

does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great
devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the
end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least
fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and

The Western’s rising popularity across the following decades owes as much to
Buffalo Bill’s highly crafted cowboy self-image – and to Cody’s and Thomas Edison’s
proto-cinematic recordings of Wild West performances – as it does to Roosevelt’s
indebtedness to the American West for defining his early career, fleshing out his public
and private personae, and shaping his national and foreign policy. As Buffalo Bill had
done among Plains scouts and cowhands, and as Zane Grey would do in the 1920s,
Roosevelt consciously appropriated the lands and attitudes of a harsh, beautiful, “free”
West in a deliberate attempt to transform from an eastern gentleman of weak
constitution into a successful western rancher and man of action at home in the storied
American wilderness. The prolific novelistic, journalistic, artistic, and scientific
production of the members of Roosevelt’s Boone and Crockett club bolstered the
credentials of the emerging Western genre by offering up elite pursuits – big game
hunting, discovery, conservation, politics, a certain anthropology of the West – as reason
enough to gaze longingly westward and to adopt the history of the West as the relevant
story of America. Christine Bold goes further, situating the wealthy, eastern, cultured
hunter-horseman at the very origins of the genre: “Change the rifle to a six-shooter, the
hunting grail to the dusty main street and you have what has become the classic western scene in print and on film.”

2.3.5 The French Celebrate Their Own Colonizers

Across the turn of the twentieth century, as Cody and Roosevelt beguiled Americans and Europeans with white supremacist histories of the youngest empire among the “Western” powers, Third Republic hero-makers in France mined French campaigns in Africa and Asia for leaders whose successes and qualities would both elicit support for continued imperial expansion and reflect the image of a dynamic France onto growing readerships at home and in the colonies. The Second Empire’s fall to the Prussians had been interpreted as proof of the weakening of ties and blood in France and attributed in part to fin-de-siècle political volatility and economic instability. Increasing competition with the British on the African continent, or the scramble to expand and consolidate territories, secure resources, and control lines of communication, threatened as well to curtail the impact of the imperial project begun in the French departments of Algeria. Such times of “trouble” in France, argues Didier Fischer, have historically witnessed the elevation or ascension of an “homme providentiel,” usually from the political realm or the upper ranks of the military, and ideally from both, but one viewed as uniquely able to “rassembler les Français désunis,

182 Bold, 43.
réformer l'État et incarner l'avenir.” 183 The partisan beatifications of such wise men, statesmen, and warriors as Thiers, Boulanger, Clemenceau, Poincaré, Pétain, and De Gaulle points to a robust French appetite, he argues, for masculine public figures seemingly capable of shaping, leading, and crafting the meanings of national undertakings. 184

As in the United States, the advent of mechanical reproduction in France simply expanded the platform and facilitated the work of legend-makers and national storytellers. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, the emergent illustrated press increasingly showcased the difficult landscapes of the colony and uplifted the *hommes providentiels* who had mastered the mountains, deserts, rivers, jungles, and peoples of other continents for the grandeur of France. 185 The inclusion of engravings and illustrations and later photographs alongside press articles sparked interest in the places and customs of the expanding empire. 186 Illustrated journals like *Le Petit Journal*, whose mainland circulation reached one million in 1890, and *Le Petit Parisien*, which had attained a daily circulation of 1.4 million by 1910, enabled readers to attach faces, costumes, and attitudes to the heroic men that they otherwise read about in black and white.

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184 Fischer, 10-11.
185 Sèbe states that colonial “propaganda” and “attempts to shape public opinion” in Third Republic France “underwent a Copernican revolution” following the solidification of print capitalism. Communication at that time became multidirectional, providing new ways for “audiences to react to material.” Sèbe, 4.
186 “Realistic” images appeared in French newsprint in 1890, although images, and not only illustration, had been used in magazines since 1842. Sèbe, 55. See also Stovall, 238.
By the turn of the century, those marching at the heads of successful colonial campaigns, many of whom were Saint Cyr graduates, represented a “new type of hero,” one that was now marketed by mainstream and commercial presses in color, and on a national scale. No longer positioned as Joan of Arc-type domestic saviors, the heroes of the French twentieth century were soldier-expeditioners, hardy adventurers formed by the rigors of conquest and occupation in the African or Asian fronts, or by the dangerous labor required of the mission civilisatrice. Like the emerging cowboy hero, who at the time was increasingly cast in fiction and history as a conqueror, knight errant, and justicier combined, France’s growing cadre of “heroic imperialists,” writes Berny Sèbe,

led local soldiers, braved indigenous resistance and an inhospitable environment to carry out their explorations or to convert native populations, playing the role of pathfinders propagating the ideals of Christian service and sacrifice, progress, Republican universalism, patriotism or its more acute forms, jingoism or chauvinism.

The partitioning of Africa produced a number of colonial heroes for France. The military men Jean-Baptiste Marchand, Joseph Gallieni, and Lyautey, the explorers Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza and Henri Duveyrier, and the religious men Charles de Foucauld and the Cardinal Lavigerie all became larger-than-life figures and moral examples in the

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187 Illustrated magazine covers across the period generally featured military men in their colonial milieux. Sèbe, 57, 64, 105.
188 Sèbe, 3.
190 Sèbe, 1-2.
hands of Third Republic hagiographers working in journalism, literature, art, and later film. They also shared similar traits and orientations. While not all French colonial heroes were military commanders in the mold of Napoleon Bonaparte, they did, as the pamphleteering went, all possess “highly specialized qualities” as leaders of men and winners of indigenous hearts and minds, through decisiveness or skill or by living off the land and among the foreign. They also displayed “superior moral values,” as evidenced by their “religious fervour, fairness or even in certain circumstances forgiveness.” They were wily and “charismatic” men endowed with the “self-discipline” to fend for themselves and invade unknown quarters. Accounts credited their “intelligence” and “empathy” for earning the compliance or support of the dominated and the colonized. And like their American counterparts, they were specimens of “sheer physical strength” who paradoxically offered invaluable lessons to French men in the cultivation and use of “self-restraint.” In a France facing depopulation, changing gender roles, xenophobia, rising anti-Semitism, and threats of European invasion, French imperial heroes modeled a particularly desirable form of white, Christian, masculine success, and one that proclaimed a place for France among the global powers. Across the next half century, popular literatures in France, and particularly bande dessinée, would solidify the white colonizing hero as a national ideal.

191 Sèbe, 10-11, 27-35. Rampant Third Republic commemoration solidified the “heroic reputations” of the chosen few.
192 Sèbe, 176-177.
2.4 Western Aesthetics, From Arena to Screen

Across the middle of the twentieth century, the exemplar of slow-gaited, sharp-witted, masculine restraint on screen was undoubtedly John Wayne. His breakout role in John Ford’s Stagecoach from 1939 signaled the start of a decades-long film career that would fix him in the minds of moviegoers in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere. In France, he remained a reliable draw among youth until the 1960s, well after his appeal at the U.S. box office had begun to dissipate. Wayne’s particular brand of cowboyhood – for the most part wholesome and straight-shooting yet intimidating and unapologetic – resonated widely with audiences in part because his characters were nearly always good at heart, if in small ways flawed. With his formidable physicality, Wayne, writes Mitchell, “offered a smile, a forthright manner, and assurance – all establishing masculinity as at once proudly self-contained yet stumblingly responsive, both stiff and faltering.” Wayne’s rise to stardom, however, and the appeal of his on-screen personae owed much to the moral ground already tilled by the cowboy actors of the silent film era. Tom Mix, one of the more bankable silent screen actors of the 1920s, got his start performing cowboy tricks in Wild West-styled arena shows alongside Will

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193 Marion Mitchell Morrison’s career as John Wayne spanned more than four decades and produced 162 films, among them nearly 90 Westerns. He was also the only Western actor to cross from B films into features. Mitchell, 158; Hardy, xv.
194 Mitchell, 158; Hardy, xiv-xv. Hardy writes that the “psychological dimension” introduced and explored in fifties Westerns changed its broad appeal by “deforming” the genre, such that, “from the sixties onwards, the Western has been a genre in search of heroes” (xiv).
195 Mitchell, 158.
Rogers and others who also had moved to Hollywood. Mix was picked up in 1909 to film small-budget Westerns and war films and had signed on with Fox Studios by 1917. By that time, he had also perfected his look and fabricated an appealing backstory as a tried-and-true westerner and war hero. As had most early Western screen actors, Mix coattailed on the success of Cody’s flamboyant and decisive westernness as Buffalo Bill, whom Mix admired greatly. But Mix knew enough to “streamline” his own cowboy aura in ways that could respond to the exuberant, modernist, nervous years of the interwar period, and resonate with children and their parents especially.

Mix reached superstardom by the late 1920s, having cultivated his celebrity across platform by occasionally rotating back into Wild West shows and rodeos and later crossing into children’s comics, both in the United States and in Europe.

Following the Great War, Mix and other arena performers became valuable commodities within a film industry seeking to establish a national cinema to challenge French and German innovation. The success of the early silent cowboy stars embedded Wild West show traditions and Far West mythologies within the American film vision, which

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196 Buffalo Bill’s Wild West was not the only show of its kind. Other frontier-themed arena shows at the time included The Zack Mulhall Wild West Show, the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch and Wild West show, the Wilderman Wild West Show, Will A. Dickey’s Circle D Wild West Show and Indian Congress, and Tom Mix’s own, briefly. Reddin, 190-191. See also Rebhorn on Native-led Western shows and Western minstrelsy.

197 Reddin, 188-217.

198 Comics starring Tom Mix appeared in newsprint and were distributed in the United States by the Ralson Purina Company in exchange for boxtops. Tom Mix stories had also crossed into radio and headlined a comic book beginning in the 1940s called Tom Mix Comics. François-Edmond Calvo created a French-language Tom Mix comics series in 1940. Horn, 72-75, 144.
makes the history of cinema in some ways also a history of the Western, and vice versa. Film technologies, industries, and “star systems” developed internationally in conversation and exchange with frontier-themed live performance. Studios and production companies borrowed performers like Mix, Rogers, and Buck Jones, implemented arena and theater mechanisms for use on film sets, and carried over Wild West sequences into the new visual medium. Cody as well had been tempted by the lure of moving pictures and larger audiences and had made the leap from arena to screen with the help of Thomas Edison. Edison’s recordings of Wild West performances, which were little more than action shots edited together with a minimum of narrative, represented some of the earliest film Westerns and some of the earliest examples of American-made cinema. Cody by then was an aging showman struggling to reinvent himself in the age of the machine. He decided to produce a film of his own in 1913, which he personally screened for U.S. audiences in a bid to drum up excitement for the new medium and forge a new path for himself. His cinematic foray flopped, having failed to translate the lively colors and deafening thrills of the arena to the screen. Other filmmakers elsewhere met with more success, including Joë Hamman in France, whose

200 Reddin, 191-193.
201 Edison began filming portions of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West around the time that The Great Train Robbery, one of the first Western films, was released in 1903. Warren, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, 525-526. See also Hardy, x; Tim Scheie, “Genre in Transitional Cinema: ‘Arizona Bill’ and the Silent French Western, 1912-1914,” French Forum 36, no. 2/3 (2011), 202.
experimental *Cowboy* from 1907 was also a Western. Hamman went on to shoot additional film Westerns, some in the marshy plains of the Camargue using local *gardians.*

By 1930, Mix had reached a level of wealth and celebrity that warranted a victory lap around Paris and London. Although critics in both cities faulted his taste, culture, and social graces, children flocked by the thousands to catch a glimpse of a Hollywood movie star and to get his autograph. Mix, however, had earned his international fame deliberately, by cleaning up the figure of the American cowboy for export to regions of the world where morality mattered. Mix and his studio understood the financial potential in filmic entertainment for children. At the time, the film medium was seen by some as little more than a showcase for bad language, violence, sexuality, inanity, and unpatriotic values, and cinema itself as a sensory experience that preyed on the vulnerable. Mix’s early films were replete with all that morality leagues warned against: alcohol, brawling, gambling, violence, death, criminality, ethnic ambiguity,

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202 Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 352-353, 525, 537-540; Scheie, 213-216. Cody’s film *Indian Wars* was shot in 1913 and did poorly at the box office, despite Cody’s presence on tour with it for three weeks in 1916, the year before he died. “Joë” Hamman had worked on a Montana ranch in 1904 and had been an admirer of Cody and Buffalo Bill’s Wild West since 1889. Hamman made an early film of the show in 1909 called *Les Aventures de Buffalo Bill.* His *Cowboy* and other films like it produced by Pathé caught the attention of American critics, who somewhat ironically disparaged French Westerns shot in the Camargue for being “inauthentic.” De Grazia, 297.

203 Reddin, 206-209.

204 In series Westerns, actors often played the cowboy hero ambiguously or with a touch of villainy, particularly when portraying historical figures that could be painted either as heroes or as villains, such as Wyatt Earp. See Hardy, xiv.

205 De Grazia, 300.
meager scripts, spineless protagonists unmotivated by romantic love, and a general disregard for authenticity, given the industry’s reliance on “grease paint, costuming, and role playing.”\(^{206}\) After the Great War, Reddin points out, Mix embodied the glamour and nightlife of the Jazz Age but also internalized its “mood of disquietude and nostalgia.” His interwar films respected “the nation’s revulsion for bloodshed” and eschewed overt portrayals of killing and gore.\(^{207}\) Buffalo Bill had sold violence as historical reenactment; Mix furthered the distance between history and representation by launching full-force into a Hollywood-inflected aestheticism that dictated the outrageous, the ornate, the colorful, and the trademark, which for Mix meant large white Stetson hats, diamond-studded belt buckles, custom-designed boots, and intricate costumes unbesmirched by wrinkles or bloodstains and wholly divorced from notions of actual use or salvaged artifact.\(^{208}\) But taking cues from Cody, Mix further transformed the screen cowboy from an “ornery sort of cuss” into a “pretty nice feller” for mixed audiences.\(^{209}\) His silent films “softened and simplified” Wild West themes in ways that crystallized the American national hero as a comforting and predictable Christian ideal, or as Reddin writes, a “whitewashed stereotype largely aimed at youths.” Fox Studios even reached out to theater owners, urging them to inform Boy and Girl Scout leaders that Mix “represented the traits they taught: patriotism, courage, kindness to animals, personal health,

\(^{206}\) Reddin, 193.
\(^{207}\) Reddin, 195-196.
\(^{208}\) Reddin, 193-205.
\(^{209}\) Quoted in Reddin, 198-199.
cheerfulness, courtesy, and honor.” For Mix, the marketing strategy took on the contours of a personal mandate. “We’ve got to convince the boyhood of America,” he said, “that drinking and gambling are bad, that physical fitness always wins out over dissipation, that a good life brings rewards and evildoing brings punishment.” Across a dozen or so years in film, Mix had effectively “recast the image of the cowboy, minimized bloodshed, emphasized morality over historical accuracy, amplified the importance of villains, and marginalized women and Native Americans” in B Western cinema.

Mix’s retooling of the cowboy myth and his impact on screen aesthetics in the 1920s oriented not only the Western genre, but also the transatlantic film industries and the ancillary fields like comics that looked to Hollywood for visual inspiration and “good recipes” of genre. Across the first half of the twentieth century, the synergy between the American and French film industries and later radio and comics was vibrant and productive. American cinema had pushed its way into projection tents on the European fronts during World War I, and by the early 1920s, the Hollywood system had expanded its hold on European entertainment markets by outproducing local

210 Reddin, 202.
211 Quoted in Reddin, 202.
212 Reddin, 197.
213 Thomas G. Pavel, “Literary Genres as Norms and Good Habits,” New Literary History 34, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 202-209. Mix was hardly the only cowboy film star to shift the genre onto more wholesome ground. Singing cowboys like Gene Autry and series Western stars like Hopalong Cassidy presented family-friendly storylines and heroes that helped sell B or series Westerns throughout the 1920s and 1930s.
industries, setting up satellites to service the American export business, and capturing hearts and minds with its personalities, displays of consumptive wealth, relatively high production values, and constantly renewing catalogues. These latter increasingly comprised series or B Westerns, which introduced generations of foreign youth to American stars, legends, and histories, however aestheticized. France had developed the medium in the late 1800s but had seen the global lead and clout of its nascent film industry cede important ground to American business logic by the 1920s. French production picked up during the Vichy years given lax censorship, only to reemerge after the war largely as a Marshall Plan-funded Hollywood submarket. Unabating American hegemony in turn spurred on renewed efforts in France to establish a specifically French national cinema. The expansion of the ciné-club network of the French Cinémathèque, which screened “acceptable” films to children at centers in Paris and the provinces, went far in resurrecting and transforming the French film industry and building support for national products. French baby boomers as a result grew up around the cinema (youth made up 43 percent of the movie-going public in France in 1954), devoured Hollywood adventures and B Westerns, and encountered a surprising number of visual references to American cinema and crossovers from the film world in the weekly comics magazines that they read.214 The postwar injunction in France to

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develop original content also posed particular challenges to bédéistes who relied on
Hollywood aesthetics and storylines to draw in readers. As Jean Giraud noted,
“N’importe quel dessinateur de bande dessinée western a des problèmes terribles avec
les mythes fabriqués depuis un demi-siècle par Hollywood. On ne peut pas en
réchapper, tout juste jouer avec.”\textsuperscript{215}

From the 1930s, when Hergé wrote “Tintin en Amérique,” which itself copiously
riffed on cinematic style, to the 1950s, when John Wayne Westerns began to shift onto
less certain moral terrain, the stylized, “clean” violence of serial and singing cowboys
like Tom Mix and Gene Autry continued to dominate Western storytelling. Years later,
Wayne would explain his famed gentleness in terms of an artistic choice, although Mix
and his generation had largely made that choice for him.\textsuperscript{216} As Wayne saw it, stylized
violence made it possible to reference America’s war-time realities, past and present,
and even to impart lessons about them, without at the same time failing to deliver on his
– and the genre’s – implicit promise to provide wholesome entertainment. He mused in
1971:

\textsuperscript{215} Quoted in José-Louis Bocquet, preface to Jean-Michel Charlier (art) and Jean Giraud (text), \textit{Blueberry L’Intégrale 2} (Paris: Dargaud, 2013), 14. Paul Herman writes of the West-ern as well: “Jamais un thème traité
par la bande dessinée n’a autant suivi le cinéma” (18). The following chapter of this dissertation expands on
the legal imperative in France to produce “100% française” comics content for children.
\textsuperscript{216} Violence had returned briefly to the screen during the Depression years. In the 1960s, Westerns by Sam
Peckinpah, such as his \textit{Wild Bunch} from 1969, and Sergio Leone, including the \textit{Dollars Trilogy} (1964-1966)
starring Clint Eastwood, took violence in different directions.
Perhaps we have run out of imagination on how to effect illusion because of the satiating realism of a real war on television. But haven’t we got enough of that in real life? Why can’t the same point be made just as effectively in a drama without all the gore? The violence in my pictures, for example, is lusty and a little bit humorous, because I believe humor nullifies violence. Like in one picture, directed by Henry Hathaway, this heavy was sticking a guy’s head in a barrel of water. I’m watching this and I don’t like it one bit, so I pick up this pick handle and I yell, “Hey!” and cock him across the head. Down he went – with no spurting blood. Well, that got a hell of a laugh because of the way I did it. That’s my kind of violence.

As the final chapters show, the BD adventures circulating in postwar France relied on similar modes of storytelling and on a similar aesthetic, in part to model an ethics of engagement with the world that recognized its violences but safeguarded white power above all.

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In more ways than one, Hergé’s “Tintin en Amérique” was a product of its time. It was a popular text, one that earnestly contributed to and benefited from the climate of “self-confident popular imperialism” that characterized interwar Europe. It quickly became a mass-produced produit de librairie sold on a burgeoning transnational market with crossovers in radio, advertising, and merchandising, which helped to solidify European comics as a phenomenon of some considerable breadth. In terms of style and storytelling, the Tintin series seemed also to harness, and perhaps even impel, the

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218 Sèbe, 205. He also points out that more adventure stories were published in the interwar years than in the period between 1850 and 1920 (203).
219 Thierry Groensteen, La Bande dessinée, 15.
twentieth-century rise of the image over the printed word. By this point in his career, Hergé was well on his way to developing what became retrospectively his characteristic *ligne claire* or “clear-line” style. By favoring outlines over shading, he sought to declutter the frame and shift the burden of message-bearing from the text itself, which in prewar comics tended towards a wordy didacticism or vernacular speech, to the image, conceived by Hergé as a conduit for unambiguous or “legible” meaning. With “clear lines,” as Numa Sadoul put it, one got “clear ideas.” More importantly, however, for the purposes of this chapter, Hergé’s decision to include an Old West in his portrayal of Prohibition-era Chicago in “Tintin en Amérique” reveals the primacy of Far West mythologies to interwar understandings of American power and place, both in the United States and in Europe. His slim volume crystalizes the fundamental interconnectedness of American territorial expansion, the European imperialisms, and modernization, all three of which enterprises, hailed as the hallmarks of modernity yet recognized as fraught with losses, roadblocks, and contradictions, nourished and shaped the preoccupations of the Western genre as it consolidated around the turn of the century. By casting a cosmopolitan Belgian in the role of the American cowboy, and by situating Tintin’s cleansing of America as a collateral boon for the “Old World,” Hergé simply makes explicit the larger, transatlantic, transimperial contexts within which

print, arena, film, and comics Westerns, and indeed adventure tales more generally, have circulated. The next chapter picks up in postwar France, when national attention shifted onto the physical rehabilitation and moral education of *la jeunesse*, to chronicle how the cowboy and colonizer myths both substantiated and played against each other within the vast field of the bande dessinée adventure.
3. Cowboy Colonialism: Postwar Adventure Comics for the New Generation

Il vous est arrivé quelquefois d’entendre ou de dire : « La terre est vraiment bien petite ». L’avion supersonique ne bouclera-t-il pas en 24 heures les 40 000 kilomètres de ceinture de notre planète ? L’Amazone est à notre porte ... il n’y a plus rien à découvrir, l’exploration se meurt, dites-vous ! Et vous tournez les yeux vers Mars et la Lune. Et pourtant ! Il y aura encore de beaux jours pour les audacieux, pour les découvreurs, pour les savants, sur notre vieille terre : brousses inextricables, marais, massifs montagneux, fleuves sauvages [...]. « Les Grandes Aventures » vous conduisent dans ces domaines interdits. Faites votre profit du voyage ....

—Vaillant magazine¹

In the crowded postwar marketplace for *histoires en images*, *récits dessinés*, or *histoires imagées*, all of which became known as *bandes dessinées* (BD) only in the 1960s, genre tales featuring the adventures of cowboys, pirates, knights, and the like dominated the pages of French-language periodicals for children.² Between the era of the Great War, which saw Bécassine rise to public notice as one of the first recurring hero(in)es of French comics, and the foundering of the European empires, the episodic

¹ Marginalia in Roger Lécureux (text) and Paul Gillon (art), “Aventures dans la brousse” in *Lynx Blanc : Tome 2 - Aventures dans la brousse* (Soissons: Lécureux Productions & Le Taupinambour, 2008), planche 42.
away adventure in its many forms retained a remarkable hold on imaginations. In France, the popularity of the high or grand realist adventure peaked in the 1950s and declined across the following decade, as social and political sea changes demanded more “ironic” approaches to selves and others. The realities of the postwar decade, however, not only of reconstruction, modernization, and European realignment, but more particularly of uprisings in the colonies, had ushered in a period of anxiety and reckoning that seemed to call for more didactic modes of adventure storytelling. The violent and ultimately humiliating defeat of the French in Indochina, followed by a conscripted war in French Algeria carried out by assassination, ambush, bombing, torture, and massacre, brought questions of race and rights again to the fore and shifted focus onto the moral education of the new generation as a means of regenerating the old. Popular children’s literature, including comics, was widely seen across the French

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Fourth Republic as a way of molding la jeunesse, and, by extension, of clawing back a proud future for France.

At the time, the comics market was inextricably tied to the children’s illustré market, and both comics and the magazines that featured them increasingly catered to a new and fast-growing consumer segment: the baby boomers. The more successful magazines of the period, including Vaillant, the French edition of Le Journal de Tintin, which debuted in 1948, the Journal de Spirou, and Pilote Weekly, survived a volatile industry pressured by government oversight and the disapproval of educators, parents, and religious leaders by embracing a dual mission to entertain and teach. Magazines incorporated more world-based content for their maturing subscribers, while their flagship comics adventures transitioned into a more “documented” realism that mapped cities, countries, and empires, displayed and explained foreign peoples and cultures, and often claimed to teach history. Editors and authors cleverly devised ways of appealing both to aging adolescents – the oldest of the not quite “douze millions de beaux bébés” born in France after the Second World War – and to the younger publics, perennially self-renewing, that had long been the market’s bread and butter.6

This chapter examines the proliferation, reformulation, and subsequent retrenching across the 1950s and 1960s of the realist BD adventure as a production arc cannily in line with both changing postwar demographics and crises in the colonies. Aging readerships cannot alone account for the mimetic turn within the postwar adventure landscape. I argue instead that uncertainties about the methods and future of colonialism, the various outbreaks of war in the French colonies, and deep social changes at home pushed comics authors and magazine editors to adopt a more worldly pedagogy, or what amounted across format to a self-conscious tutelage by vetted mentors on how to be in the world and how to see the world, its histories, its conflicts, and its peoples. In the late 1940s, French opinion-shapers and politicians from left to right had seized on graphic literature as an effective means of vitalizing and focusing French youth and, by extension, of rehabilitating France by shaping the worldviews of its future workers, professionals, and leaders. As a result, serial adventurers, the most popular of the comics heroes on offer, cleaned up their language, adopted a screen cowboy sense of justice, championed security and discovery, and promoted scientific and technological advances as a national good, provided they could be adequately controlled.\textsuperscript{7} BD adventures of the period were by design transcontinental in scope, 

futurist in outlook, blustering, and expressly analogical. They drew freely on – and freely drew – other peoples, eras, and contexts to address the rigors and complications of Fordism, reinstate French masculinity as duty and action, and reclaim a place for French culture and power on the world stage. As “open,” popular texts, and despite regulation verging on censorship, BD adventures adroitly infolded the “palimpsestic” memories of war and occupation – in Vichy France, in Indochina, in French Algeria – and the deep-seated anxieties that mired the French Fourth Republic and beset an early Fifth Republic contemplating the uneasy task of “bringing the empire back home.”

It was the hero’s mastery of transportation, however, that made the BD adventure a particularly useful teaching tool across the 1950s. The format, in all its genres, seized the dog-eared notion of travel and recast it as the hallmark of power and progress within a new global order in which France – or Francophone Europe or a white “West” – held prime of place. The adventure’s aggressive embrace of the ideas and machineries of late modernity helped fashion a postwar generation able to leverage


what Kristin Ross called the “French lurch into modernization.”9 The adventure showcased distance, depth, difference, and speed; it prioritized the transcultural and intercontinental over the domestic national, the new and forward-looking over the old and provincial. Postwar French society, notes Richard Jobs, was “enchant[ed] with all things ‘new.’” The same period, he points out, birthed the New Wave, the New Look, New Cuisine, the New Novel, and, quite literally, the New Generation.10 In the comics frame, “society’s fascination for speed” translated to a newfound obsession with “jet-planes and racing cars.”11 Seen from another angle, the adventurer’s singular ability to cover massive surface area and survive all of the excitements and dangers that dramatic bodily displacement entails pictured the remotest corners of the planet as imminently knowable and conquerable. At a moment in France plagued by stark dissension and onsetting political “paralysis,” particularly over the handling of the anti-imperial and nationalist movements building in Indochina and Algeria, the adventure presented its heroes as agents of history rather than as victims of it, and often unabashedly as imperial agents.12 The format captivated readers, then, not by offering “mere” escapism, and not by retrenching into quieter storylines of domestic life during the breakdown in

national unity and the breakup of empire. Adventures instead lauded far-flung travel, future science, outsized accomplishments, and global dealings to sell the image of a reconstructed and reinstated France – or Belgium, or Europe, or “West” – to hundreds of thousands of weekly reader-viewers.

3.1 Reading, Seeing, Learning

More specifically, the BD adventures of the 1950s helped grow literacies of at least five kinds in France. First among them was a basic cartographic literacy. World-mapping within the adventure increased the geographical knowledge of young reader-viewers and diegetic maps drawn within the stories themselves recalled and reinforced the state-provided maps that hung on classroom walls.\(^1\) Second, many of the magazines in which adventures appeared were themselves organized as a sort of mapping-eye, meaning that they repackaged social and historical phenomena – bodies, concepts, narratives, places, events – in predominantly visual ways that invited comparison, discussion, display, collection-building, sharing, and ultimately learning. Pilote Weekly’s “Pilotoramas” or educational centerfolds, for example, diagrammed and explained

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\(^1\) The Jules Ferry educational reforms of 1881-1882, which secularized primary education and made it mandatory and free, standardized geographical and other types of learning across a French territory far from literate or unified at the time. The French state began distributing wall maps of France after the Franco-Prussian War and most classrooms featured at least one by 1881. Educators, however, had to teach French children how to read them. Weber writes that maps “inculcated all with the image of the national hexagon, and served as a reminder that the eastern border should lie not on the Vosges but on the Rhine.” They were also “powerful symbols, not only of the asserted fatherland, but of the abstractions young minds had to get used to” (334). Eugen Weber, Peasants into Frenchman: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 301-338.
contemporary and historical phenomena, events, and places such as the new Orly airport, the Gare de Lyon, or the Paris metro; the battles of Troy, Austerlitz, Waterloo, or La Marne; the lives of Pharaohs, Tuaregs, Vikings, Native Americans, farmers, miners, or corsaires; the technical production of cinema; the latest models of cars or airplanes; the history of the printing press; the sinking of the Titanic; the construction of the Panama Canal; and much more. In addition, magazines sponsored contests and special events for their readers, encouraged them to organize into comics clubs, and ran pen-pal, stamp-trading, and album-swapping classified advertisements. Letters to the editor were often published with names and home regions listed and with accompanying headshots supplied by the letter writers themselves. Readers saw each other in print, in some instances met or communicated, and were invited to place each other on a map of France, the empire, or the world. Magazine cultures in this way built conscious subscriber communities that spanned the territories of the French-speaking world, from Louisiana to Québec, Togo to the Belgian Congo, French Algeria to New Caledonia.¹⁴

Third, adventures increasingly promoted tourism as a way of learning first-hand about the world. Tourist narratives were at times overt, placed within or around the comics themselves as meta asides or didactic interstitials. *Vaillant*, for example, took care to educate its young readers about the peoples and places featured in its adventures, or

at least to situate them on the world map. The authors of a *Lynx Blanc* episode, for example, took time out from the plot to promote the setting – Oceania – as a tourist destination by pairing a hand-drawn map of the region with brochure-style copy and enticing pictures of islanders fishing and dancing:

> Malaisie, Mélanésie, mille et une îles étranges et inconnues qui s’étendent de l’Océan Indien au Pacifique... Au sud de Malacca, au nord de Java, et à l’ouest de Bornéo, se situe la plus grande des îles de la Sonde : Sumatra ! Sumatra ! Un nom qui chante, un nom qui résonne comme les tam-tams de ses villages enfouis dans les jungles....

Many adventures, however, inculcated a tourist literacy in the second degree, simply by painting foreign or colonized lands as tantalizingly exotic yet *franchissables* – as easily accessible by modern transportation and as open to and safe for foreigners because of a pacificatory European or American presence, which the fictional heroes themselves embodied.

Fourth, serial adventures promoted a degree of colonial literacy, as their intrepid heroes fanned out across a planet largely dominated by imperial powers, and as their interventions stabilized, and often naturalized, European or American control over the world’s seven continents and seven seas. Globetrotting in early BD adventures furthered the work of the Jules Ferry laws of the 1880s, which had not only made schooling mandatory in France, but had also restructured primary education in ways that

15 Roger Lécureux (text) and Paul Gillon (art), *Lynx Blanc : Tonnerre sur les îles* (Soissons: Le Topinambour, 2008), panel 10B.
consciously situated France as an imperialist republic, or a republican empire. Achille Mbembe notes that a Third Republic “national colonialism” in the school textbooks authored by Ernest Lavisse and others aimed to instill “nationalist and militaristic values” to mold French youth into the “citizen-soldiers” of a more promising imperial future. “Civic pedagogy” under the Ferry reforms was for this reason paired with a “colonial pedagogy” that introduced all French twelve-year-olds to the country’s colonial expansions. BD adventures for children beginning in the early twentieth century in many cases further enmeshed geographic learning with nationalist and imperialist objectives. Martin Green, in his partial “taxonomy” of the modern adventure, locates both nation-building and empire-building at the very heart of the format. Adventure stories, in essence, he argues, are “about killing, conquering, dominating other people and countries or about building up hierarchies and empires of power.” What the castaway tale, or what he calls the “Robinson Crusoe” story, did for industrializing England, for example, the Viking “saga” did for Germany from the Second through the Third Reichs. Likewise, the “Three Musketeers” story expanded the

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18 Martin Green, Seven Types of Adventure Tale: An Etiology of a Major Genre (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 28.
foothold of nationalism in post-revolutionary France, just as the “Frontiersman” story provided the United States with a beloved “foundation epic” by the late nineteenth century. Different adventure “types” emerged and developed across the modern period in relation to one another, and each circulated comforting origin tales of “freedom, force, and growth” in their targeted attempts to soften and justify the naked ambitions of the imperial nation-state.19 Early into the second half of the twentieth century, BD adventures with few exceptions were still mapping the world as a white man’s province and its denizens as his burden.

Finally, and most importantly, readers of illustrés acquired a new kind of literacy – a visual literacy – that interwar and postwar lawmakers, religious leaders, parents, and educators in France recognized as powerful and potentially subversive. The comics form possessed the ability to suck young readers in; stories were riddled with bad grammar, spelling errors, unwarranted violence, and idiocies; illustrations were often monstrous or sexually suggestive, or too amateurish to understand. Moreover, the willy-nilly

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19 Green, 80, 26. Green’s categorization reveals the difficulty in mapping the unwieldy network of transformative and derivative works produced across time and space that in some aspect or another may have been taken as adventure. In the mid-twentieth century, adventures, and particularly comics adventures, took shape within a vast and dense field of “association,” to use Alastair Fowler’s term, one that constructed itself at various and multiple intersections between comics, caricature, novels, feuilletons, folklore, cinema, nascent television, pedagogy, art, and politics. Fowler rejects the definition of genre as a set of “fixed classes” that perdures over time and instead shifts focus onto the ways in which writers and readers rely on “shared [...] contexts” to recognize, make sense of, use, and transform genre. David Duff has argued more broadly still that genre is simply “a restrictive model of intertextuality,” and his conclusions are perhaps more useful for teasing out the interconnections and distinctions between the different genres of the comics adventure. Alastair Fowler, “The Formation of Genres in the Renaissance and After,” New Literary History 32, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 189-190; David Duff, “Introduction,” in Modern Genre Theory (New York: Routledge, 2014), 17.
combination of text and image offered readers no preferred path through the story, which hampered clear and consistent messaging. Comics theory today shows us that reader-viewers do indeed make sense of comics dialogue, art, sounds, and ideas in singular ways, mainly by correlating them with what they know, what they have seen, and who they are. In many cases, the greater the cognitive or affective spark between the visuals on the page and the reader’s own knowledge and experiences, the more likely they are to invest in the story. As Will Eisner put it, “the success or failure of this method of communicating depends upon the ease with which the reader recognizes the meaning and emotional impact of the image.” In the same vein, cartooning, or the handcraft that transcribes humanness and object materiality into two-dimensional lines or shapes, deals necessarily in reduction, abstraction, and simplification, the objective generally being to signify or represent for the purposes of storytelling, and perhaps to elicit a response in the reader-viewer.

Graphic storytelling by its very nature is an art of selection and juxtaposition – it shows and omits, details and links, skews, magnifies, and exaggerates – and the uninitiated into the form quickly learn to “fill up” what may be schematically represented, “fill in” what may not be pictured, and approach distortion and reduction

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as pertinent to meaning, enjoyment, or both. Scholars have also drawn attention to the high level of reader input necessary to generate narrative flow across the seemingly extra-diegetic “blank” or “white” spaces located between the frames on a comics page. Individual panels in comics represent moments or sequences of moments “frozen in time,” usually arranged in meaningful relation to each other, and with vertical and horizontal lines or gaps, called “gutters,” spaced in between (see Fig. 7). The act of reading sequentially across the grid, one of the more common layouts in comics, moves narrative time forward, but it also necessitates a series of imaginative interventions on the part of the reader, to supply, in order to take as read, all the intermediary movements, scenes, actions, displacements, emotions, or expressions that are omitted from the text or the visuals. In the example above, reader-viewers are called on to make

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23 Eisner, 39-40; McCloud, 66-67.
a number of inferences concerning the passage of time, emotional states and motivations, and why new characters appear and disappear. They must also forge their own paths through the story, given the absence of directional arrows, although the standard grid structure that dominates Hergé’s *Tintin en Amérique* generally encourages readers to read from top to bottom and left to right. In the first panel of the sequence, time moves from second to second in dialogue as the “businessman américain,” arriving by car in the region a mere ten minutes after Tintin accidentally discovers oil, attempts to negotiate oil rights with a Blackfoot chief. The wigwam in the background, however, suggests that the encounter takes place in the native encampment itself, which underscores the predaciousness of the prospector and his haste and willingness to travel some distance to buy up or steal seemingly prosperous land. Text and image in the second and third frames work in tandem to generate humor and critique the onrolling of American capitalism. The larger size of the second panel offers more detail for the eye to take in and slows the reading process, but it also augments the panel’s importance within the narrative itself. Reader-viewers work out that the Blackfeet have refused the prospector’s offer of twenty-five dollars as well as the latter’s injunction that they vacate their lands within half an hour. The gutter separating the first two panels disguises not only a significant passage of time, but also a considerable flurry of coordinated activity. Reader-viewers assume that by the one-hour mark the prospector has requested military assistance, that the soldiers have improbably arrived at the remote location armed and at
the ready, and that the angry Blackfeet have indeed packed up their camp and begun to march to new lands. The central panel captures and conveys the violence and chaos of the scene by picturing a single, isolated moment only, and it is this image of soldiers driving a Blackfoot father and young son away from their homelands at bayonet point, in fact, that encapsulates the album’s trenchant critique of U.S. Indian policy. The caption of the final panel likewise uses humor to link terror, land seizure, and displacement with the manner and course of American development, and to condemn them both. Readers are asked to believe that, within two hours of oil discovery, engineers and laborers have arrived on site with building materials, heavy equipment, and architectural plans, and that construction on both an oil derrick and a new city has commenced as well. The final frame of the page pictures a fully built and functional city complete with skyscrapers, roads, and automobiles by the very next morning. Tintin, out of place in his flannel and kerchief and gawking at the accomplishments of progress, inadvertently stops traffic. “Faites attention aux autos!” yells the traffic cop. “Vous vous croyez sans doute au Far-West!”

In the example pictured above, Hergé provides reader-viewers with a three-panel chronology figuring three different sets of characters captured at the same location but at different moments in time, and the sequence as a whole is joined together with very little visual or verbal connective tissue. To build narrative, reader-viewers must reconstruct the actions, reactions, gestures, and emotions understood but not pictured,
and they do so by drawing on their own knowledge not only of American history, but of physiology, human nature, machines, industry, war, and the city. They mentally translate the visual “language” of comics – its icons, symbols, cartoons – into the semiotics and tangibility of real-world phenomena, and vice versa. They account for the presence of “absences” in the layout, script, and art. They build bridges between the “fragments” of time and space captured, framed, and juxtaposed on the page, in ways that make coherent visual and verbal sense. As Barbara Postema writes, “comics creates wholes from holes,” and the participatory process of “connecting these fragments, filling the gaps involves numerous different kinds of reading, only one of which is the reading of words.” The French law of 16 July 1949, which regulated, and still regulates today, all literature sold to children and minors in France, aimed in part to control how young readers read comics – how they saw the world and themselves in the visuals, how and where they perceived messaging on the page, and how they could relate the words to other literary forms.

3.2 Planet-Ranging as Moral Reconstruction

At the Liberation of France, Charles de Gaulle famously called upon French families to procreate, citing “la nécessité pour l’avenir national d’appeler à la vie les

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25 Postema, xx.
douze millions de beaux bébés qu’il faut à la France en dix ans.”26 War had reduced the French population to levels not seen since the late nineteenth century, and continuing deprivations, until the late 1940s for some, threatened the recovery of both bodies and country. Under the Vichy regime (1940-1944), the pétainiste “National Revolution,” which rallied under the slogan “Travail, Famille, Patrie,” had carried over family planning initiatives implemented in 1939 and had further promoted public duties for husbands and familial duties for wives. Fertility rates, whether due to war, government assistance, or the effects of propaganda, began to rise as early as 1942. Improvements in sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, and medical services after the war combined to achieve a drastic reduction in the infant mortality rate, which lifted the metropolitan population of France from 40 million in 1946 to 44.5 million in 1958. De Gaulle’s mandate was not quite met – there were only roughly 9 million births by 1955 and only 11 million by 1958 – but the government’s natalist focus and the broad cultural commitment to babies and la jeunesse made France one of the most “dynamic” nations of western Europe.27

By 1958, roughly a third of the population was under twenty years old and fast consolidating into and self-identifying as voracious consuming publics.28 The profusion

26 Quoted in Jean-Claude Gégot, La population française aux XIXe et XXe siècles (Paris: Éditions Ophrys, 1989), 76.
28 Jobs, Riding the New Wave, 24. He writes as well: “In these postwar years, young people became a commercial, cultural, political, and social force, a postwar phenomenon that exploded in the sixties and has remained viable ever since” (11).
of illustrés that featured comics targeted a growing segment of seven- to fifteen-year-olds, give or take, and were distributed weekly in church or school, at kiosks, or by mail usually on Thursdays, the traditional mid-week day off school (hence their moniker, les journaux de jeudi).29 And combined, they attracted close to a million weekly views. Le Journal de Tintin and the Journal de Spirou had each expanded into the French market in the late 1940s, once paper and ink rationing had eased. Across the 1950s, the circulation of Le Journal de Tintin climbed to around 250,000 copies a week, and Spirou’s reached 200,000.30 Both increasingly vied for the adolescent market alongside native journals like Vaillant, with a circulation of around 200,000, and later Pilote, whose early print runs ranged from 200,000 to 300,000 copies an issue.31 Together, they rivaled Paul Winkler’s Le Journal de Mickey (Opera Mundi, 1934-present), which printed predominately American syndicate comics in French translation or adaptation and whose circulation in France hit a formidable 633,000 copies a week in 1957.32 Print runs and official circulation numbers, however, fail to capture the velocity of single issues, since kids often shared

29 There were exceptions. The French edition of Le Journal de Tintin, for instance, came out on Tuesdays. Lerman, 11.
30 The rivalry between Le Journal de Tintin and the Journal de Spirou heated up over the course of the 1950s. The Journal de Spirou entered the French market in 1946 with slight editorial and content changes. See Brun, Histoire de Spirou, 15. In the early years of the decade, both journals had circulations hovering around 100,000 in France. Thierry Groensteen, Astérix, Barbarella & Cie: Histoire de la bande dessinée d’expression française (Paris and Angoulême: Somogy éditions d’art and CNBDI, 2000), 132-146; Filippini et al, 85.
31 Grove, Comics in French, 141; Gaumer, Les Années Pilote, 63. As early as 1951, Vaillant had an average circulation of 182,500 copies a week. Crépin, ‘Haro sur le gangster !’, 131.
32 Grove, Comics in French, 127.
magazines with friends at school and with family members. True circulation numbers were most likely higher by a factor of two or three.\textsuperscript{33} The urban areas of mainland France alongside French-speaking Belgium made up the largest markets for bandes dessinées and their magazines, with distribution extending to select colonial capital regions as well.\textsuperscript{34} Readerships in general comprised predominately white, working- to middle-class boys, although girls made up a growing percentage of both subscribers and casual readers. \textit{Spirou}, \textit{Tintin}, \textit{Vaillant}, and \textit{Pilote} often acknowledged their female readers, by printing their pictures and letters to the editor and by honoring their wins in reader competitions. Girls did, however, have additional options on the market. Gender-exclusive illustrés included, among others, \textit{La Semaine de Suzette} (Éditions Gautier-Languereau, 1905-1960), which ran \textit{Bécassine}; \textit{Lisette} (Montsouris, 1921-1973), which carried the popular adventure series \textit{Les Jumelles}; \textit{Âmes vaillantes} (Fleurus, 1937-1963), a sister version of the Catholic journal \textit{Cœurs vaillants} (Fleurus, 1929-1963), in which Tintin made his French debut; and \textit{Line} (Le Lombard, 1955-1963), “le journal des chics filles” launched by Raymond Leblanc, the publisher of \textit{Le Journal de Tintin}, and headlined by a fierce international adventurer who, like her male counterparts, frequently battled and aided “savages” in the wilderness, among

\textsuperscript{33} Michel Pierre, \textit{La Bande dessinée} (Paris: Larousse, 1976), 98.
\textsuperscript{34} Pierre, 98-99; Dandridge, “Producing Popularity,” 32-38.
them the “Pai-Pai” of Borneo. By the late 1950s, the more mainstream BD magazines actively targeted older, adolescent, mixed-gender reading publics.

Illustrés were often the primary source of regular entertainment for schoolboys and schoolgirls, and judging from reader mail, BD adventures largely accounted for subscriber loyalty. Porret speaks for a generation or two of readers when he writes of *Le Journal de Tintin*:

> Il m’est difficile d’oublier la jubilation hebdomadaire liée à l’attente, à la réception postale sous pli et à la lecture fébrile in extenso de l’hebdomadaire *Tintin* soigneusement conservé pour constituer l’archive illustrée de l’aventure toujours recommencée.

In metropolitan France, postwar crises in housing and wages had hit urban families with children the hardest. Waiting periods for renovated and new housing often lasted years, which forced larger families to make do in cramped quarters. School was often no better. Proposals for national education reform, which included the provision of adequate facilities and sufficient teaching staff per precinct, had failed to make inroads in any of the 21 administrations of the Fourth Republic, despite an “influx of the masses” into the school system. Leisure travel as well remained unfeasible for most French households until well after reconstruction. Charles Lindbergh’s successful flight across

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37 Rioux, 242, 328. François Truffaut’s first film, *Les quatre cents coups* (1959), is a good representation of postwar housing and schooling conditions.
38 Jobs, *Riding the New Wave,* 69-70.
the Atlantic in 1927 had nevertheless cultivated the idea of international tourism in France, and Marshall Plan-funded expansions of French tourism sectors, along with postwar advances in the aeronautics industry, had made commercial jet travel a more reasonable prospect. Yet in 1956, the year French law instituted three weeks of paid vacation per year per salaried employee, only 16.7% of the household spending of the well-off, which included executives and the professions, went towards “transport holidays,” as opposed to only 6% of spending in workers’ households. By the time Air France launched its own jetliner, the Caravelle, in 1959, the average household expenditure in France on away vacations still hovered at around 8%. Desires to rebuild and modernize had instead taken firm hold in terms of household items. The majority of families elected to spend meager postwar disposable incomes on radio sets and coffee grinders – and eventually on cars and televisions – instead of on long-distance travel.

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39 On the importance of Lindbergh’s flight in France, see Vessels, 38-41. See also Christopher Endy, Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1-12. Endy argues that French travel and service sectors, with the help of Marshall Plan funds, worked with their American counterparts to build a “transnational travel constituency” that could handle the explosion of American tourism in France (4).
40 Rioux, 280, 373.
41 Rioux, 373. Sourced from household consumption data for 1956. Across the same period, only 12% of Belgians went abroad for holidays. Pascal Lefèvre, “Travelling Belgian Protagonists for Non-Travelling Young Readers (1945-1965),” Voyages: Sixth International Graphic Novel and Comics Conference / Ninth International Bande Dessinée Society Conference, June 22-26, 2015, University of London’s Institute in Paris, conference paper in absentia, delivered by Jan Baetens. Lefèvre argues as well that low immigration in Belgium into the 1960s meant that Belgians’ first-hand knowledge of life outside of western Europe remained very limited.
42 The number of cars in France doubled between 1951 and 1958, when one in seven owned a car. Television sets likewise invaded French homes across the decade, increasing from 24,000 in the early 1950s to nearly a million by 1958. Richard F. Kuisel, Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization (Berkeley: University
BD adventures served the needs of children and adults alike. They offered the younger generations respite from the lingering realities of war and reconstruction, or simply from limited means, as the French bédéiste Christian Perrissin fully recognized:

[Les aventures de Tintin] autour du monde étaient pour moi de formidables moments d’évasion. Je viens d’une famille nombreuse : longtemps nous avons habité dans un petit appartement sans possibilité de partir en vacances, alors les voyages de Tintin me procuraient un sacré dépaysement.43

And they constituted a sanctioned avenue for dreaming of freedom, mobility, consumerism, exoticism, violence, and empire. They also helped children contextualize the war they had just lived through, as Didier Daeninckx well remembered. Reading Vaillant, “à plat ventre sur le lit, les pieds sur l’oreiller, les coudes plantés dans l’édredon, la tête vers la fenêtre,” he saw his own world in the struggles of the medieval chevalier Yves le Loup:

Il y avait autre chose dans les aventures d’Yves le Loup, au cœur de ces années cinquante. Nourri de récits de résistance, je sentais confusément que cette solitude orgueilleuse inscrite dans son nom, et qui ne cessait d’entrer en conflit avec cet impérieux besoin de rencontrer le peuple, avait quelque chose à voir avec ce qui s’était joué, en France, quelques années auparavant. Il n’y avait pas si loin de la figure récurrente de l’usurpateur à celle de l’usurpétain !44

For adults, comics and their magazines emerged as a handy way of reaching children on a national scale on a regular basis. Precisely for this reason, Fourth Republic legislators along with clergy, parent groups, and educators viewed the restriction and regulation of comics sold to children in France as vital to postwar recovery. The law passed on 16 July 1949 aimed in particular to excise violent and sexualized content and “demoralizing” storylines – largely of American provenance – from comics products sold in France and from children’s literature more broadly.\(^4\) The law also paved the way for “100% française” comics to flourish by establishing legal grounds for stripping the market of comics of “foreign” origin (Belgian comics were seen as exempt from foreign status, since the majority of “acceptable” creators and periodicals at the time were in fact Belgian, and because the sustained patronage of Belgian Catholic organizations tended to circumscribe what were identified as American styles and Americanized content). The central tenant of the law, contained in Article 2, stipulated that all publications, serial or other, sold to minors eighteen and younger (“aux enfants et aux adolescents”) ne doivent comporter aucune illustration, aucun récit, aucune chronique, aucune rubrique, aucune insertion présentant sous un jour favorable le banditisme, le mensonge, le vol, la paresse, la lâcheté, la haine, la débauche ou tous actes qualifiés crimes ou délits ou de nature à démoraliser l’enfance ou la jeunesse.\(^6\)

\(^4\) Loi No. 49-956 du 16 juillet 1949 sur les publications destinées à la jeunesse. The proposal was voted into law on 3 July 1949 with 422 for and 181 against, although the censure body did not begin its work until 2 March 1950. Crépin and Groensteen, 237-244.

\(^6\) Crépin and Groensteen, 237. The law is reproduced in its entirety in Crépin and Groensteen, 237-244.
A 1954 revision added to the list any content that “inspired” or “maintained” ethnic “prejudices.”\textsuperscript{47} Not surprisingly, the law took central aim at American adventure, crime, and science fiction comics and their magazines, which, since the late 1930s, had dominated the BD market in France and had inspired a profusion of translations, adaptations, and pastiches by European creators.\textsuperscript{48}

The language of the 1949 manifesto of L’Union des Femmes françaises, the Communist women’s league, reveals how the concept of youth was mobilized to frame a larger argument against the increasing pervasiveness of American consumer culture in France:

Nous demandons que nos écrans soient épurés des films pernicieux de gangsters d’outre-Atlantique et que nos librairies soient débarrassées des publications immondes dont nous abreuve l’Amérique, et qui risquent de ternir la fraîcheur et la pureté de notre jeunesse.\textsuperscript{49}

Conservative Catholics largely agreed with the writings of l’Abbé Bethléem (Jean de Lardélec), editor of the national Catholic bulletin \textit{Credo} and author of the influential handbook \textit{Romans à lire et romans à proscrire} from 1904, which was in its eleventh edition

\textsuperscript{47} Loi no. 54-1190 du 29 novembre 1954. The law added the clause, “ou à inspirer ou entretenir des préjugés ethniques.” Crépin and Groensteen, 237.

\textsuperscript{48} Filipini et al, 17-26. American syndicated content was also more affordable to publish in France than native comics. Pascal Ory, “Mickey Go Home! La désaméricanisation de la bande dessinée (1945-1950),” in Crépin and Groensteen, 74. See also Jobs, “Tarzan,” 696.

\textsuperscript{49} Quoted in Groensteen, \textit{Asterix, Barbarella}, 80. It is interesting to note that members of the PCF abstained rather than voted in favor of the law. Many feared that it would be applied disproportionately against their own publications, including \textit{Vaillant}, which had fierce opponents among conservative Catholics.
by 1932. Secular educators in France sought guidance from Raoul Dubois, who himself was influenced by the recommendations of children’s librarian and interwar activist Mathilde Leriche, who had lamented the ubiquity in France of comics “si nocifs, que lentement, ils salissent, abrutissent, abêtissent l’enfant.” The proposed law of 1949 passed into legislation for a variety of reasons that found common ground in the conviction that youth represented France’s greatest asset and surest means for national recovery. The protectionist reorientation of the comics market away from American monopolistic business practice and pulp cultural values presented an opportunity for broad-scale rehabilitation, not only of the comics hero himself, but of the young minds that looked to him for inspiration.

3.3 Comics and Being: Readers as Heroes

As French legislators and regulators were swift to realize, “reading” the hero on the comics page involved a different kind of participation, one that was often more

50 Jean-Yves Mollier, “Aux origines de la loi du 16 juillet 1949, la croisade de l’abbé Bethléem contre les illustrés étrangers,” in Crépin and Groensteen, 18-32. L’Abbé Bethléem was a staunch critic of Le Journal de Mickey, Jumbo, and Hurrah! but supported the values presented in the Bécassine and Tintin series and in the confessional journals that ran them (La Semaine de Suzette and Cœurs vaillants, respectively). His life’s work, for which he was tacitly recognized by Pope XI, had consisted in reading all children’s literature sold in France and publishing recommendations and warnings – the latter against American and German content especially – for interested parents and educators. The Abbé’s thinking was shaped and hardened by what he perceived to be the cultural “invasions” of the interwar years. He placed American comics on the same plane as Hollywood cinema, Communism, atheism, Nazism, and Freemasonry, and classified all as social and political ills worth removing from France. After the Abbé’s death in 1940, the mantle of his crusade was taken up in part by the Christian democrats of the Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP), who played a central role in debates on the proposed censure law. See also Crépin, “Haro sur le gangster !” 255-296.

51 Françoise Levèque, “Mathilde Leriche, une bibliothécaire d’influence et la presse enfantine,” in Crépin and Groensteen, 35-42.
embodied and less consciously undertaken, and one that many were convinced worked formatively on young imaginations. In mid-century adventure comics, two different but related facets of heroicization pushed reader participation into the realm of identification or “inhabitation” and thus situated readers themselves within the stories as a sort of being-eye. The first element has to do with the hero function as it relates to seriality. BD adventures were for the most part doubly serialized: stand-alone stories, ranging in collated length from about 32 to 48 to 62 pages, usually appeared in the illustrés at a rate of a planche (page) or two a week, and most were also part of long-running or multi-volume series. In the 1950s, the series was predominantly a market phenomenon driven by the needs of publishers and by the overwhelming popularity of the format among magazine subscribers. For this reason, series tended to conform to strict convention, namely that of making desired situations, arcs, and outcomes – the expected – feel satisfyingly new and different – or unexpected – in subsequent episodes. Despite market pressures, seriality did, however, foster a certain creativity within constraint. As Thierry Groensteen points out, the format in general “ouvre à l’auteur un

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52 McCloud, 36.
53 Bande dessinée in this way developed differently from the American “funnies” or the American comic book, although the Franco-Belgian petit format was similar to the comic book format. The more popular of the serial adventures were reissued in album format of variable lengths. Fred and Liliane Funcken, for example, on staff at Le Journal de Tintin, at times limited their episodes to around 32 pages, such as with the Howard Flynn series. Jacques Martin’s Alix adventures are each roughly 62 pages in length. The episodes of the Astérix series by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo stand at about 48 pages each. Authors like Hergé also slimmed down, redrew, (re)colored, or otherwise streamlined their adventures for album publication. Pierre, 14; Benoît Peeters, Tintin and the World of Hergé: An Illustrated History, trans. Michael Farr (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1988), 18.
espace d’expérimentation, un champ d’investigation, elle autorise les tâtonnements, elle libère la possibilité de reprises, de variations, d’enrichissements.”

Yet heroes themselves did not change. For the sake of memorability, and thus marketability, and to cement readers’ emotional attachments to them, the adventuring heroes of bande dessinée generally remained static while casts, conflicts, and locations changed across iterations. The suspense built into the serial format, writes Laurence Grove, is not “whether the end is near […], but rather how the approaching finale is to be achieved;” in other words, “we ask not who are the heroes and what shall be the final outcome, but how they will arrive there.”

The common trope of disguise proves the rule that serial hero appearances and personalities remain for the most part fixed. Occasional alterations to his clothing, hair style, or gear are generally not understood in terms of character psychology, but as contrivances that move the plot forward. They allow heroes to blend in with their

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54 Thierry Groensteen, La Bande dessinée : un objet culturel non identifié (Angoulême: Éditions de l’An 2, 2006), 60. For Groensteen, however, the “tyranny” of the serial format across the middle of the twentieth century stunted bande dessinée’s creative growth by subjugating artistic expression to the demands of profitability. Market favor of the series since the turn of the twentieth century, what he describes as “l’empire qu’exerce la série sur l’ensemble du média,” succeeded in reducing the bande dessinée “art form” to “la production à la chaîne.” He argues that, until the late 1960s, the popularity of the series “ghettoized” bande dessinée as a children’s paraliterature organized around the cheap-thrills figure of the serial adventurer. Groensteen, Un objet culturel, 59-61; Thierry Groensteen, “L’Empire des séries,” Neuvième Art 4 (1999): 78-87. Also accessible at <http://neuviemeart.citebd.org/spip.php?article86>.
55 Grove, Comics in French, 23, 36, emphasis mine.
56 A notable exception was Tibet’s Chick Bill Western series, which started out as an animalier. Hergé refused to sign off on the art for publication in Le Journal de Tintin, telling Tibet: “Si l’on veut intéresser les lecteurs, il faut être crédible.” Tibet later sold the series to Raymond Leblanc for publication in the junior kids’ section of Chez Nous and slowly redrew the characters as humans across the first three episodes. Preface to Tibet, Chick Bill l’intégrale, v. 0 (Bruxelles: Le Lombard, 2010), np.
surroundings, demonstrate know-how, gain trust, infiltrate a group, ferret out a rat, or otherwise escape danger, and the conceit thrills readers precisely because adventure heroes are, fundamentally, immutable. Moments of disguise are both supererogatory and counterfactual, meaning that they provide the digressive latitude for readers to imagine heroes as other than they are. Compounding the “a-psychologism” of the adventurer in general is the tendency of his actions to conform to patterns of cause and effect.\textsuperscript{57} If the hero is chased, for example, he runs; if he is kidnapped, he escapes; if he is tipped off to a villain’s location, he hastens to that location. The predictability of his responses to plot conflict frees readers to focus their attention not on him, but on the people he meets and the worlds in which he operates. Readers can slip into his shoes and see what he sees, experience what he experiences, and imaginatively act as he acts without having to deal with barriers to identification in the form of uncharacteristic attitudes and behaviors, such as cowardice or defeatism, physical degeneration, moping, bullying, or villainy itself. The unchanging hero in the ever-shifting landscape provides a bimodal reading experience, one that is both scopic in nature, trained on seeing others, settings, and backgrounds, and affective, offering readers a means of escape into the story itself via the hero character. As Scott McCloud explains it, adventure art can provide “one set of lines to see” (the world), and “another set of lines to be” (the hero).\textsuperscript{58}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{McCloud} McCloud, 43.
\end{thebibliography}
The second element of heroicization that facilitates identification has to do with
the ways in which many adventure heroes are drawn. Across the period, as BD artists
committed more fully to documented realism for rendering objects and settings, serial
heroes were for the most part drawn as they originally had been or in styles that were
often simplistic, caricatural, or both. Bécassine, for example, usually lacks a mouth;
Tintin has black dots for eyes; Spirou and Fantasio are comically lean of leg and bulbous
of nose. The elimination of certain features, and the amplification or distortion of what
little is drawn, situates each as an idea of character, rather than as an individual rooted
in time and space. Unlike the photographic portrait, which indexes a single person and
tends to capture their idiosyncrasies for the viewer’s scrutiny, cartooned or drawn
characters in comics omit the particular and the chronotopal to communicate more
universal ideas of personhood or disposition. Composed of simplified lines and sharp
outlines, cartooned characters only gesture at full existence; they beg to be filled in or
filled up during the reading process with biographical data specified in the text or

59 I have written elsewhere on the effects on reception of realist backgrounds paired with cartooned
protagonists. See Eliza Bourque Dandridge, “William Beckford’s Comic Book, or Visualizing Orientalism
60 On the photograph’s relationship to time, history, and the real, see in particular Roland Barthes, Camera
reproduces to infinity has occurred only once: the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be
repeated existentially. In the Photograph, the event is never transcended for the sake of something else: the
Photograph always leads the corpus I need back to the body I see; it is the absolute Particular, the sovereign
Contingency, matte and somehow stupid, the This (this photograph, and not Photography), in short, what
Lacan calls the Tuché, the Occasion, the Encounter, the Real, in its indefatigable expression” (4).
imagined by readers. At their most iconic or reduced, cartoons may even operate as “empty shells” that readers can disappear into or “inhabit,” like their own skin. After all, “the more cartoony a face is,” writes McCloud, “the more people it could be said to describe,” and the quest for broad resonance and appeal, via reader involvement with recurring heroes, lay at the very heart of the postwar BD market. Magazine subscribers, for example, were regularly asked to rate series and heroes in order of preference, and those coming in on the bottom were sometimes cut from production altogether. As the next chapter details, official pressures on comics authorship ensured that white adventurers provided consistent, if sparse, interiority and streamlined exteriors, in order to facilitate readers’ abilities to see the world and its conflicts with and through them.

3.4 Mapping White Space: Geography, Empire, and Adventure

The mutual dependencies between nineteenth-century French imperialist expansion, cartographic practice, particularly within the military, and the coalescence and institutionalization of geography as a discipline in France have been thoroughly excavated. In the mid- to late 1800s, political factions that expressed support for

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62 McCloud, 36.
63 McCloud, 31.
64 Oumpah-Pah, an early series by Goscinny and Uderzo, ranked near the bottom in a Journal de Tintin reader poll, in eleventh place. The authors themselves promptly offered to abandon the series. Preface to René Goscinny (text) and Albert Uderzo (art), Oumpah-Pah l’intégrale (Paris: Les Éditions Albert-René, 2011), 26.
overseas annexation and colonization, for a variety of reasons, helped found and staff geographical societies throughout France. Geographical fieldwork in many cases directly supported French ambitions around the world by filling in critical gaps in knowledge concerning foreign peoples and their topographies, economies, customs, and war-making capabilities. By the turn of the twentieth century, data published by the travelers, professionals, statesmen, tradesmen, and other parties who had self-organized as practitioners and promoters of geography had also helped to elicit a more generalized support for French imperialism and its motivations. That moment as well, long after the establishment of the Paris Geographical Society in 1821, marked geography’s expansion within the French university system as a discrete discipline. Across the broader period, however, geographical engagement with the world came in a variety of forms and emanated from very different quarters. Michael Heffernan points out that French geography, as it consolidated between the Franco-Prussian War and the Great War, in fact “embraced everything from the ‘heroics’ of overseas exploration, the technicalities of mapping and cartography, the ‘rational’, scientific analysis of the human


*Heffernan, 99. Schneider points out as well that popular journals like the Petit Journal contributed to sustaining interest in colonial expansion from the 1880s on (71-72), although Stovall and others have stressed the “general indifference” to imperial matters among the French population until the twentieth century. Stovall, 216, 230, 237-240. See also Alain Ruscio, Le Credo de l’homme blanc : Regards coloniaux français XIXe – XXe siècles (Paris: Éditions Complex, 1995), 146-148.*
and physical resources of different localities and the almost poetic description of the regions and landscapes of different parts of the world.” 67 Within both imperialist and republican nationalist geographical undertakings, bande dessinée had its role to play.

The European comic-strip form emerged in the 1830s and 1840s in the “picture stories” of Rodolophe Töpffer (1799-1846), a Swiss teacher, artist, and author who experimented with text and image to lampoon “the stupidity of the industrial world.” 68 Although Töpffer hand-copied his illustrated volumes to ensure a limited and somewhat personal distribution, his satires went on to influence generations of writers and artists, including Gustave Doré and Cham, and hammered out a “visual language of progressive action” that comics authors in Europe and elsewhere would pick up and develop. 69 If European comics proceeded from Töpffer’s works, as many scholars claim, we can argue that bande dessinée, from its earliest days, took shape largely as a récit de voyage, and that its traveling tales participated in the mapping of the world and of its situated problems, if only obliquely at times, given authors’ varying degrees of attention to the details of place. 70 Groensteen highlights the uses of travel in Töpffer’s away adventures, including L’Histoire de Mr Cryptogame (1845), and home adventures, such as

68 Smolderen, 40, 47.
69 Smolderen, 47, 50-51.
70 On the long-standing debate on the origins of comics, see Laurence Grove’s engagement with Thierry Groensteen and others on the subject in Comics in French, 59-88. The concept of the journey, whether physical or psychological, very much remains at the heart of bande dessinée today. Laurence Grove, “Töpffer’s Travels,” Voyages: Sixth International Graphic Novel and Comics Conference / Ninth International Bande Dessinée Society Conference, June 22-26, 2015, University of London’s Institute in Paris.
Voyages et aventures du Docteur Festus (1840), to state broadly that “le voyage” constitutes one of the three “original” pillars of bande dessinée (the other two being “la bêtise” and “le merveilleux”). Porret makes a somewhat obvious, if perhaps overlooked, point about the world-building and world-mapping potential of bande dessinée, when he writes: “Planche, strip, vignette, bulle ou phylactère, scénarisé comme des moyens ou des longs métrages de papier, le code narratif de la bande dessinée figure le monde. Littéralement, en l’illustrant!”

In the early decades of the twentieth century, globetrotting in the form of aventure or mésaventure had become a structuring trope of the more popular comics published in France. By the time Tintin made his French debut in the 1930s, the bonne Bretonne Bécassine, or “Tintin in drag,” as Charles Forsdick has aptly called her, had already traveled far and wide, from Brittany to Paris to the Ottoman empire and beyond, in the pages of La Semaine de Suzette. Christophe’s La Famille Fenouillard had made the improbable journey around the world by 1893. The Pieds Nickelés band, whose misadventures debuted in 1908 in the kids’ weekly L’Épatant, had also gone

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72 Porret, 19.
73 Charles Forsdick, “Exoticising the Domestique: Bécassine, Brittany and the Beauty of the Dead,” in The Francophone Bande Dessinée, ed. Charles Forsdick, Laurence Grove, and Libbie McQuillan (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 23. See also Cone, 181-197. Cone interestingly argues that because Bécassine’s Ottoman adventure, the fourth volume of the series, marks one of the heroine’s last trips outside of the metropole, the series in a way “anticipated” the post-imperial “new smaller France” (197).
continent hopping, from France and Spain to America and elsewhere. In 1927, Alain Saint-Ogan’s Zig and Puce had similarly bumbled their way through Europe, Africa, the North Pole, Asia, and Russia on their misguided way to strike it rich in the American West. Tintin himself mastered the art of international travel over the next four decades in adventures published in Belgium’s Le Petit Vingtième until 1940, in Cœurs vaillants beginning in 1930, and in Le Journal de Tintin’s Belgian edition from 1946 and French edition from 1948. Even today, official language on the Tintin phenomenon stresses the series’ original value as a lesson in world geography:

The Adventures of Tintin were a veritable initiation into geography for entire generations. At a time when television didn’t exist, the international expeditions undertaken by the young reporter opened young people’s eyes to countries, cultures, landscapes and natural phenomena which were still relatively unheard of. From the sands of the Sahara to the glaciers of the Himalayas, from the Amazon rainforests to the Scottish highlands, Hergé’s pictures overflow with details revealing a world full of wonder, danger and excitement – a passionate introduction to Planet Earth.

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25 Louis Forton, Les Pieds Nickelés. The series first appeared in le Petit Illustré in 1908 and made the move to L’Épatant (Offenstadt/Société Parisienne d’Edition) a month later, where it remained for decades. After Forton’s death in 1934, the series continued in other titles and at the hands of other bédéistes, including Pellos, until the 1990s. See Gaumer, Larousse de la BD, 627-628.


27 Publishers began reissuing certain “episodes” of serial comics as albums, or stand-alone volumes, in the 1930s, although the album market did not take off until the 1950s. It is common practice to refer to the original press or magazine publication as “pre-publication,” which has the unfortunate effect of privileging the album (book) format of bande dessinée over its serialized publication, and so deprioritizing how most readers across the period encountered, read, and reacted to comics in their daily lives.

Adventure authors and illustrators on the whole, however, would not embrace a mimetic or indexical realism until the 1950s, when aging readerships and government intervention focused attention on the usefulness of comics as a world-teaching tool.

### 3.4.1 BD Cultures and the World

Across the 1950s, the leading BD magazines succeeded in large part by opening up a market for teens. Prior to the passage of the law of 1949, illustré readers were conceived more or less homogeneously as jeunes or la jeunesse, patrons of la littérature destinée à la jeunesse, or of la presse enfantine. The language of the law, however, striated the postwar market into different reading publics differentiated by age. Article 14, a law unto itself, forbade the sale of “pornographic” and “licentious” material to “des mineurs de dix-huit ans,” thus legally defining “children” or dependents as those eighteen and younger. Article 1 of the law, however, had already delimited la jeunesse as both “enfants” and “adolescents,” which recognized and allowed for the emergence of tweens and teenagers as new consumer categories.79

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79 Crépin and Groensteen, 237-244.
Prewar magazines and new entries after the war targeted the demographic bump or “wave” of children turning between five and eight years old in 1950. Half a decade later, as those same readers approached or entered adolescence, loosely defined as the period between the onset of puberty and physical maturity, their interests shifted away from animal stories, physical humor, and fantasy towards news of the world, encyclopedia-type articles, realist fictions, and satirical humor. The traditional illustré format of comics, games, limited reader participation, and serialized illustrated novels – popularized by *Le Journal de Mickey* – no longer spoke to them specifically. They sought line-ups and formats designed for their changing interests and editorial tones that treated them as trend-setters, future leaders, and global citizens. The magazines themselves struggled to remain competitive in a BD market now thoroughly “conditioned” by “l’acquiescement (de préférence rapide) du public.” Marijac’s *Coq Hardi*, for example, a mainstay French illustré after the war, sought to attract readers slightly older than its base of boys aged six to ten and had ventured into name and format changes in 1955. The journal failed to transition into the adolescent market and had disappeared for good by 1963.

The more successful periodicals walked a difficult line between retention and innovation and hedged their bets by offering a range of comics and content that could

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80 Groensteen, *Un objet culturel*, 60.
appeal to readers on either side of puberty. *Le Journal de Tintin*’s tongue-in-cheek tag, “Le journal des jeunes de 7 à 77 ans,” with its wink to casual (grand)parent readers, openly acknowledged its embrace of the strategy, although its core readership by the late 1950s was boys aged roughly ten to fourteen years old.\(^8^2\) In 1954, the French edition of *Le Journal de Tintin* had introduced “Tintin Actualités,” a double spread on current events that readers could remove, store, and collect. The supplement helped to attract the desired adolescent age group and circulations skyrocketed.\(^8^3\) Wide-ranging content in *Vaillant* had likewise drawn in boys aged nine to fifteen. *Spirou* used humor, world-based content delivered through rubrics like the *Belles Histoires de l’oncle Paul*, and an increase in comics – from 40% of the magazine’s total surface area in 1938 to 60% by 1955 – to retain teen subscribers.\(^8^4\) *Pilote* had entered the market in 1959 with a conventional mix of more realistic adventure comics (*Tanguy et Laverdure*, *Bison Noir*, *Jacques Le Gall*, *Le Démon des Caraïbes*), more humorous comics (*Pistolin*, *Astérix*), pedagogical spreads (the famous Pilotoramas among them), and reader participation (games, contests, clubs, and

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\(^8^2\) Pierre fixed *Le Journal de Tintin*’s target age range at 10- to 14-year-olds (102). Groensteen revises it to 7 to 14 (*La Bande dessinée*, 13). The journal modified its format across the 1950s, however, to attract older readers.\(^8^3\) Lerman writes: “L’apport majeur fait au Journal, contribuant par là à lui donner sa véritable dimension et l’impact recherché, fut sans conteste les ‘Tintin Actualités’ qui apparurent au no 289 [6 May 1954]. […] C’est cet écart, qu’il était possible aux lecteurs de séparer de *Tintin* pour le classer à part, qui ‘accrocha’ les lecteurs qui trouvaient enfin dans leur Hebdomadaire ce qu’ils désiraient y trouver (tout du moins à cette époque)” (10). Greg did away with “Tintin Actualités,” which had since been incorporated into the journal, when he became editor in 1965.

\(^8^4\) The Belgian Catholic nun Marie-Émilie advised her readers that *Vaillant* should appeal to boys aged 9 to 15. Michel Defourny, “La Bien-pensante Belgique face aux illustrés du jeudi,” in Crépin and Groensteen, 179. On the *Journal de Spirou*, see Brun, 12. Pierre writes that *Spirou*’s median reader age had climbed to 14.5 by 1972 (101).
reader mail). National educational reform, finally implemented in 1959 under Jean Berthoin, the French education minister, had raised the minimum age for leaving school from 14 to 16 years old. *Pilote* capitalized on the extended educational requirement by signaling its reader age as “les moins de quinze ans débrouillards” but appealing to older students as well with its *Mad*-style humor and generalist features.\(^8^5\) René Goscinny, BD author and co-founder of the magazine, was particularly adept at writing for *plusieurs niveaux*, and his series were among the first to gain older, and finally adult, followings in the mid- to late 1960s.\(^8^6\) François Clauteau’s letter from the editor in *Pilote*’s inaugural issue had, moreover, masterfully crafted a message for the age (in both senses of the word). In a single paragraph, he glorified the machineries, men, and know-how of modernization; he responded indirectly to political pressures to promote, even build, national character by promising that his magazine would both teach and entertain; and he vowed that *Pilote* would take young people “seriously,” not only as a powerful and growing consumer sector, but as a mature reading public and thinking citizens:

Pourquoi Pilote ? Oh ! c’est bien simple. Un pilote, c’est celui qui conduit les autres. Souvent, il le fait par l’intermédiaire d’une machine : auto, avion, bateau, locomotive. Parfois, il passe le premier en faisant le chemin : c’est le guide, le chef

\(^8^5\) *Pilote Weekly*, no. 2 (5 November 1959). See Michallat, 84, on educational reform under De Gaulle and the “parent boom” that resulted from it. Goscinny was greatly influenced by *Mad*’s Harvey Kurtzman. See Marie-Ange Guillaume and José-Louis Bocquet, *Goscinny : biographie* (Paris: Actes Sud, 1997), 67-70. The “revolutionary” aspect of *Pilote* was in large part its deliberate appeal to older audiences, which bridged the gap in the late 1960s between bande dessinée for children and bande dessinée for adults. *Bédéistes* associated with *Pilote*, such as Claire Bretécher, branched off to create some of the first bandes dessinées for adults. For an overview of the consecration of bande dessinée and its more contemporary forms for adults, see Grove, 234-243, 155-204; Peeters, *La Bande dessinée*, 53-59.

\(^8^6\) Dandridge, “Producing Popularity,” 56-78.
de caravane, le passeur. Souvent il donne les consignes, il commande, il dirige comme le capitaine, le chef d’équipe ou le chef de chantier. Pour être un vrai pilote, il faut d’abord des connaissances. Mais il faut également beaucoup de travail et beaucoup de courage et notre souhait, c’est que vous soyez, avec nous, de vrais pilotes ; c’est pour cela que nous voulons avant tout, vous prendre au sérieux. Bien sûr, « Pilote » sera un journal souriant, qui vous amusera pendant des heures mais vous y trouverez également des articles signés des noms que vous trouvez habituellement dans les grands magazines de vos parents : Lucien Barnier, Raymond Kopa, Pierre Véry, pour n’en citer que quelques-uns.87

BD adventures, meanwhile, courted the tween and early teen demographic by transitioning text and art into a more documented realism. Topographies, dress, language, gear, equipment, attitudes, and relationships began to tell more authentic or verisimilar stories about the places, peoples, and objects of the world. Hergé, for example, while preparing Le Trésor de Rackham le Rouge and Le Secret de la Licorne for republication, redrew the fictional ship “La Licorne” to “correct” errors of anatomy and ornamentation. He based the revised model on research he had undertaken at the Naval Museum in Paris, and most likely on “Le Brillant,” a Louis XIV-era ship built in Le Havre.88 He had also been alerted by readers to errors he had made in L’Île Noir, which he hastened to correct in subsequent versions.89 Jijé (Joseph Gillain), whose Westerns in Spirou mapped the cultural geographies of the American Old West with a researched care, had discovered and recorded the terrain during a three-year trip through Mexico and the United States at the end of the 1940s. Likewise, Uderzo’s commitment to

87 François Clauteau, Pilote Weekly no. 1 (29 October 1959).
88 Peeters, Tintin and the World of Hergé, 75.
89 Gaumer, Larousse de la BD, 788-789.
accuracy in his *Tanguy et Laverdure* series earned him special privileges from the French Ministry of Air to conduct research at aviation sites around the country normally closed to the public.\(^9^0\) Careful documentation carried over into the features and sections surrounding the comics as well. The editorial board at *Pilote* had indeed recruited journalists to author news and information sections. Some of the magazine’s educational centerfolds were created by seasoned “hommes de plumes et hommes de pinceau,” such as the press illustrator Henri Dimpre and Jacques Gambu, a journalist at *Aviation Magazine International*.\(^9^1\) Their contributions helped cement *Pilote*’s reputation as a respectable magazine with classroom-worthy manipulables. Clauteau remembered that the success of the Pilotoramas “était tel, qu’à la demande des enfants ou des instituteurs, nous avons dû parfois en réaliser des tirés à part.”\(^9^2\)

Across the 1950s, BD magazines pandered to the “mythic” and “romantic” understandings of the eight- to fifteen-year-old age group, to draw on Kieran Egan’s useful classifications of children’s differing levels of engagement with fiction and the world.\(^9^3\) They did so by offering full and rotating slates of exotic and grand imperialist

\(^9^0\) Gaumer, *Les Années Pilote*, 45.
\(^9^2\) Quoted in Gaumer, *Les Années Pilote*, 54.
\(^9^3\) Egan posits that children acquire and build on different kinds of understanding as they pass through language acquisition, literacy, and puberty on their way to adulthood (4). In his formulation, the body-focused, imitative, or “somatic” learning style of the infant gives way to the “mythic” understanding of the two- to seven-year-old. At this stage, he argues, after the cut of language but prior to the onset of literacy, children learn primarily through opposition, comparison, metaphor, storytelling, fantasy, orality, rhythm, and image (33-70, 162-171). Mythic understanding “layers” with somatic understanding to help children
adventures, even if those adventures were now more firmly tethered to specific time periods, geographic locations, cultural distinctions, and historical events. Editors also coordinated the appearance of certain adventure episodes or segments with ethnographic-style content to help readers parse the details presented in the comics themselves. Paratextual material in the form of articles, histories, maps, photographs, travel accounts, and fictions provided readers with ancillary or background information on the non-white peoples – and particularly the colonized others – that their favorite BD heroes frequently encountered. The more journalistic content, on the other hand, make sense of abstract concept pairs like “security/fear, good/bad, brave/cowardly, love/hate, happy/sad, poor/rich, health/sickness, permitted/forbidden” (40). As children begin to read, they acquire a new kind of understanding, one that Egan terms “romantic” after the nineteenth-century vogue for grand tales of romance, heroic adventure, exoticism, and othering (71-103). Romantic understanding, dominant in eight- to fifteen-year-olds, seeks to circumscribe the power of fantasy and myth by establishing rational explanations for natural and historical phenomena. Romantic learners deconstruct or nuance mythic binaries in their efforts to fix the limits and extremes of human experience and the physical world. They become collectors of objects and facts and gravitate towards encyclopedia- and record-book reading. They seek to learn about “the wonders of the world, the most extreme experiences, the limits of reality, the greatest achievements, the most exotic forms of life, the most amazing events,” in order to settle the “real limits of the world and of human experience” and establish the “proportionate meaning of things” (84-85).

Despite the move towards documented realism, adventures in many ways were still largely structured like folktales, meaning, following Propp, that they were calibrated above all to teach moral lessons in memorable ways, and that they used formulaic repetition to do so. Adventure episodes frequently employed some of the same functions that Propp identified in the folktale. Stories generally proceeded from an “initial situation” to the “violation” of an “interdiction” or the emergence of a “villain,” followed immediately by the hero’s “departure,” usually in search of something or someone. Along the way, the fortuitous appearance of “donors” and “helpers” eased the difficulty of the hero’s quest. Action culminated in “struggle,” “pursuit,” and the “liquidation” of threat and usually wrapped with the hero’s victorious return. See Vladimir I'akovlevich Propp, Morphology of the Folktale, trans. Laurence Scott (Austin: University of Austin Press, 1968), 25-66. Francis Lacassine had even written in 1963 in the pages of Giff-Wiff that bande dessinée as a whole should be “héroïque, épique et lyrique” in the same vein as “la mythologie gréco-latine, des chants des trouvères, [et] des contes de fées.” Quoted in Groensteen, Un objet culturel, 102. It is of note as well that Hergé himself started out with the intention of adapting Les Mille et une nuits, Perrault’s Contes, and de la Fontaine’s Fables as comics. Groensteen, Un objet culturel, 21.
appealed to readers at the upper end of the age spectrum, or to those acquiring a “philosophic” understanding of the world, by offering glimpses into local and global systems of power and exchange.95 Non-comics content could include scientific datasheets, diagrams and explanations of technological or business innovations, sports coverage, and weird facts of nature, all of which introduced a wealth of images, factoids, landscapes, and peoples – for learning, comparing, and collecting – into the imaginations of entire generations.96

3.4.2 Charting the Fall: Adventure Landscapes at Decolonization

The heroes, adventures, and magazines of the 1950s and early 1960s were rooted in imperialist visions of the world.97 In a stunning matrix of interconnected and overlapping genres, the adventure anthologized myriad tales of discovery, threat, and war and chronicled, with a minimum of critical apparatus, the often uneasy dominion over indigenous peoples in the far corners of the world. Not surprisingly, the earnest,

95 Egan argues that teenagers, as they turn into young adults, begin to make sense of the world as a set of “systems” or “processes” organized around “positivist” conceptions of truth, reason, science, and law (104-136). “Philosophic” understanding, as he terms this stage, presumes a knowable, mappable, and explainable world, one whose “underlying order, rules, or laws” can be exposed through close examination or rigorous (social) scientific inquiry (109). As the particularities of lived experience destabilize the claims of grand narratives and general schemas, philosophic understanding gives way to an “ironic” understanding defined by Egin as an ethical position that acknowledges the constructedness of such notions as truth, reality, race, nation, and essence (134-155).
96 On bande dessinée and collecting, see Serge Tisseron, Psychanalyse de la bande dessinée (Paris: Flammarion, 2000); Thierry Groensteen, Un objet culturel, 70. On hobbyism and the collecting of cultures, see also Philip Joseph Deloria, Playing Indian (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 135-153.
more realist adventure peaked in production against a backdrop of massive geopolitical change for Europe. India, the jewel of the British crown, had seceded from the Commonwealth by 1948. Indonesia and Indochina broke free in 1954, from the Dutch and the French, respectively. Well into the 1960s, colonized territories across Africa and the oceans had reconfigured their relationships to the European metropoles or had gone to war to win their independences. In the span of roughly twenty years, anticolonial and nationalist movements had succeeded in driving out white settler populations and driving back the European reach to little beyond their metropoles. Across the same period, however, BD adventures trained young eyes outward onto the cultural geographies of the Earth and its contemporary political hotspots, albeit with caveats. Long after bodies and ships and machines had traversed the planet, at a moment when there seemed nothing left “pour les audacieux, pour les découvreurs, pour les savants,” and precisely when the European imperialisms were most at risk, intrepid adventurers on the page struck out for the unknown and found a hero’s work and welcome in the faraway frontiers of nation, kingdom, empire, continent, and “civilization.”

Between the mid-1950s and the early 1960s, the more popular adventure series tracked shifts in sentiment regarding the ongoing wars and the future of imperialism itself. In 1954, for example, as French troops came under siege at Dien Bien Phu,

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98 Depictions of the Algerian war of independence, for example, were increasingly circumscribed by the French government during wartime.
marking France’s dramatic last stand for Indochina, but several years yet before nationalist consolidation would drive settlers and colonial administrators out of the colonial realm, adventure heroes of all stripes hastened to fight battles, redress torts, aid the weak and the oppressed, and further cement relations of dependence among the colonized.99 Only a year earlier, a French military recruitment brochure still promoted overseas deployment, in this case to Indochina, in terms of a duty to protect and civilize – and as adventure:

Quelle que soit l’affectation elle donne à chacun l’occasion de s’épanouir pleinement et de montrer toutes ses qualités. Dans les unités d’intervention, un matériel moderne est utilisé : véhicules de toute nature, vedettes blindées, engins amphibies, chars de combat, etc. […] Vous devrez protéger, aider, conseiller, soigner une population pacifique. Les services aident les combattants, ils doivent Construire, Entretenir, Ravitailler, Soigner.100

Across 1954 and 1955, BD magazine readers encountered colonies, imperial alliances, and so-called primitive civilizations within the frames of their favorite adventure stories. In *Vaillant, l’homme de brousse* Lynx Blanc trekked from central Africa into the Far East as the cowboy Sam Billie Bill intervened for the Comanche in the Plains.101 In *Spirou*, the American fighter pilot Buck Danny flew missions off Korea, Japan, and the

Philippines. Jean Valhardi, insurance agent turned action hero, jetted to the Communist Near East to stop a plot to destroy the world. U.S. Marshall Jerry Spring fought warring Kiowa in the unsettled southern Plains, while Blondin and Cirage set out to document exotic African and Asian lifeforms in the Belgian Congo and Tibet. Even in stories of the period with a science fiction bent, such this sprawling episode of Blondin et Cirage, contemporary concerns were still clearly legible. In the story, our young heroes discover an African species of the fictional marsupilami before jetting off with the Professor Labarbousse on a scientific expedition to the Tibetan highlands to unmask the legendary Hommes-Des-Neiges. Drawn as an Asiatic gorilla people, the reclusive Hommes-Des-Neiges in fact reveal themselves to be the most technologically, scientifically, and medically advanced “civilization” on the planet. The professor, after a quick study of their society, rationalizes their existence as the product of a useful isolation: “Sans cesse refoulé dans les montagnes par les peuples nomades, ce petit peuple choisit comme moyen de défense de s’isoler du reste du monde sur les hauts plateaux ... Dans tous les domaines, ils nous dépassent.” While test-driving the latest model of flying saucer, however, Blondin and Cirage inadvertantly fly to America and

103 Jean-Michel Charlier (text) and Eddy Paape (art), Jean Valhardi, “La Machine à conquérir le monde,” Journal de Spirou no. 798 (1953) to no. 840 (1954).
are forced to put down next to a diner full of crass Midwesterners, an unpleasantness from which they only narrowly escape. Once returned to Tibet, the heroes tire of the Hommes-Des-Neiges and their panoply of modern inventions, including 3D television, and they return with relief to the provincial cobblestones of western Europe. The sudden miracles of science and technology, the story seems to conclude, when wielded by the inexperienced or the unwilling, lead somewhat terrifyingly to the unexpected or merely represent the inessential.  

In *Le Journal de Tintin* across 1954 and 1955, the detecting duo Blake and Mortimer, fresh from their adventures in Egypt, investigated crime in London, while Tintin, in a highly technical diptych, reached the final frontier and landed on the moon, effectively eclipsing American and Soviet efforts to do the same by more than a decade.  

The Chevalier Blanc, for his part, remained Earth-bound, quelling mountain “savages” in outlying Bourgogne before besting a dastardly rival. It was not unlikely at the time for courtly romances also to showcase travel, nature, and dangerous tribal encounters. In “Le Nectar magique,” a straightforward swashbuckler centered on a revenge plot, the hero Jehan de Dardemont, known as the Chevalier Blanc, encounters

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his opponent in the rocky and wild terrain of the Emerald Mountains of Bourgogne.

Immobilized by injury, Jehan is left for dead at “un site sauvage et désolé” accentuated by dangerous rapids and sheer cliffs and roamed by the fearsome “Ghors” clan. These latter, a mountain people bent on avenging the murder of a clansman by a white man, track and surveil the Chevalier Blanc, capture him with an intimidating, “Silence, chien! Un seul cri et tu es mort...” and prepare to submit him to frontier justice. The white-bearded chieftain, clad in a fox headdress, delivers no mercy: “Misérable étranger! Tu vas payer de ta vie le crime de ton complice...” Jehan narrowly escapes his fate by way of pay-it-forward Christian goodwill, embodied unambiguously by the Father Ambroise who steps in to save him.108

Across the mid-1950s, as violence escalated throughout the European empires, BD adventures burgeoned with new episodes set in new destinations. American and Soviet pressures following the Suez crisis had driven the British out of Egypt in 1956, and fighting had only intensified in Malay, Kenya, Madagascar, and Algeria. Harold Macmillan, Anthony Eden’s successor as British Prime Minister following the Suez debacle, moved quickly to “liquidate” the remaining territories under British control, as France, following defeat in Indochina, shifted and conscripted troops into war fronts in

the Maghreb.\textsuperscript{109} Tensions mounted in the metropoles, particularly in France. From late 1955 into early 1956, appelés and rappelés throughout France boarded trains to join the “police operations” in North Africa amid crowds of antiwar protestors.\textsuperscript{110} By July of 1956, after Morocco and Tunisia had successfully negotiated their respective detachments from France, French troop levels in Algeria topped 400,000 and national attention turned to the Algeria “question.”\textsuperscript{111} In February of the following year, the \textit{Cahiers du Témoignage chrétien} published the testimony of the draftee Jean Müller on the use of excessive force by French soldiers stationed in Algeria.\textsuperscript{112} The “disappearance” four months later of the Algerian academic Maurice Audin during the battle for Algiers spurred anxious debate in France about colonialism and its methods, in particular systemic torture, within republican ideology and liberal democratic politics more generally.\textsuperscript{113} Rising fears of war at home led to the passage in July 1957 of Special Powers legislation to excise suspected Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) militants and their supporters from the metropole. Meanwhile, on Algerian soil, the \textit{képis bleus} of the newly


\textsuperscript{111} Stora, 17.

\textsuperscript{112} “Dossier Jean Müller,” \textit{Cahiers du Témoignage chrétien}, n° XXXVIII (Feb 1957).

\textsuperscript{113} On the use of torture during the Franco-Algerian war, see Vidal-Naquet. For French veterans’ accounts, see Rotman and Tavernier.
formed Séctions Administratives Spécialisées (SAS) carved rebel strongholds into zones interdites and shifted civilian populations into camps de regroupement.114

The BD adventures published across 1956 and 1957, in cartogrammatic fashion, clustered storylines in imperial “problem” regions or worked through the thematics of war and colonial crisis in tales set across time and space. In the pages of Le Journal de Tintin, the young hero Alix, ally to the Romans, battled Parthians in the deserts of Syria and the Levant, and the plot only marginally contained the story within its purported historical time period and settings.115 Jacques Martin’s “La Tiare d’Oribal” follows the blond Gallic warrior Alix, ally of the Romans, as he conveys the “Oriental” King Oribal and his treasure safely to his kingdom. As they travel through deserts and fend off bands of Parthians out for blood, Alix and his accomplices foment revolt in Oribal’s name to overthrow the ruthlessly ambitious grand vizier Arbacès, Alix’s Greek nemesis. The plot culminates in a dramatic attack on Oribal’s capital city of “Zür-Bakal” and sees Alix, Oribal, and the latter’s royal troops wrest the territory out of the hands of the Greek usurper and restore rightful dynastic rule under Oribal. Alix himself foments monarchical support and readies Oribal’s countrymen for a reactionary fight: “Mes amis, votre joie éclate, mais hélas ! le roi n’est pas encore dans son palais... Le chemin

114 Stora, 34-36. The SAS, created across 1955 and 1956 under Jacques Soustelle, the Governor General of Algeria, were mobile Army units tasked with the paternalist functions of colonial administration – education, aid, civil services – as well as military operations, including security, reconnaissance, and psychological warfare. Over 700 units had been created in Algeria by 1961. Natalya Vince, Our Fighting Sisters: Nation, Memory and Gender in Algeria, 1954-2012 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 76-81.
pour y parvenir n’est plus long : toutefois il sera semé d’obstacles. Aussi, je demande aux hommes courageux et valides de rallier nos rangs. Quant aux autres, qu’îles nous fabriquent des armes, des chars, des balistes.”116 The liberation of the besieged capital also salvages the colonial alliance between Oribal and Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus in Rome, notably to prevent the northwesterly creep of the Parthians towards Rome and Gaul from their imperial hub in present-day Iran.

Also in Le Journal de Tintin around 1956, the exiled warrior Harald the Viking subdued natives and annexed their lands in present-day Canada.117 Pom and Teddy traversed newly independent India and aided Roma in Andalusia.118 Blake and Mortimer fought the insurrection of the colonized of the Atlantis “Empire,” which they triangulated to a location in the Azores.119 “L’Énigme de l’Atlantide” verged into science fiction but it nevertheless told a relevant story of colonialism contested. As the story unfolds, the English adventuring duo Professor Mortimer and Captain Blake happen upon the lost Empire of Atlantis on an expedition to the Azores. Deep underground in the capital city of Poséïdopolis, a nuclear-powered metropolis showcasing amazing feats of transportation, they encounter the uneasy rule of the Emperor and his heir the prince

Icare over the vestiges of the “barbarian” peoples colonized millennia ago. Magon, an officer of the Empire secretly allied with the barbarian king, plots to restore native rule to the continent. With the blind support of the barbarian army, Magon engages the prince and our heroes in a battle for the Empire within the caves, canyons, carnivorous jungles, swamps, and underground seas of the deserted colonial realm and in the capital city itself. To quell the revolt, the imperialists go all in: “Amis ! Ce dernier coup qui risque de paralyser notre résistance exige des mesures extrêmes. Il va falloir nous résoudre à utiliser nos armes les plus meurtrières...”120 Sabotage during battle floods the underground Empire and drowns the barbarian rebels with it. In the nick of time, Icare returns Blake and Mortimer safely to the surface of the Earth – with his eternal thanks – as the remaining Atlantis settlers board spacecraft and make for a new life on a new planet.

In Vaillant across the mid-1950s, Lynx Blanc tamed man and beast in central Africa while Sam Billie Bill pacified routes through the Pacific Northwest and Canada.121 In Spirou, readers followed Buck Danny from Alaska to Malaysia and watched as Jean Valhardi stopped world destruction off Japan.122 Jerry Spring, fresh from mediating

122 Jean-Michel Charlier (text) and Victor Hubinon (art), Buck Danny, “Menace au nord,” Journal de Spirou no. 909 (1955) to no. 929 (1956); “Buck Danny contre Lady X,” Journal de Spirou no. 931 (1956) to no. 954 (1956);
peace between the Apache and Mexican revolutionaries, parleyed for the Utes in the
Sierra Nevada. In the former episode, entitled “Trafic d’armes,” Spring, the son of a
sympathetic and widely respected judge, proposes assimilation as the guarantor of
Native American survival. The tale follows Spring as he steps in to negotiate a ceasefire
between the Apache, Spanish colonizers, and “bandito” revolutionaries in a lawless and
factional Spanish Mexico. Accompanied by his Navajo-Mexican sidekick Pancho, Spring
persuades the young Une-Seule-Flèche, their Apache ally, to take advantage of the
colonizing will by learning to read and write, so that he may demand his people’s right
to self-determination in the white man’s tongue. Une-Seule-Flèche internalizes Spring’s
advice, declaring: “Une-Seule-Flèche connaît mieux que tous les Apaches les pistes des
homme rouges ! Quand il connaîtra les pistes des visages pâles, il reviendra parmi ses
frères et il sera le premier de sa nation et le maître de la Sierra et de la Plaine...” By the
end of the tale, Spring’s strong, loyal, and honorable conduct in negotiation and war
cements his reputation as a justicier among hors-la-loi and earns him the valuable trust of
the Apache elders.

The realist BD adventure reached its apogee in the final years of the decade, against a backdrop of accelerated decolonizations across Africa and increasing discord over the splintering of trans-Mediterranean France. In May 1958, an embattled René Coty called on Charles De Gaulle to assume the presidency of France and rescue both the Republic and the empire from further factionalism and collapse. Despite the attribution of full powers to De Gaulle to found the Fifth Republic, revise its constitution, and reconceptualize the colonial relationship to ensure cohesion, the majority of France’s African colonies requested autonomy within the newly formed French Community and had negotiated their respective independences from France by 1960.125 Meanwhile, war in Algeria worsened, particularly following De Gaulle’s reversal on his promise to keep l’Algérie française, which he made public in a televised address on 16 September 1959.126 His decision to abandon Algeria only strengthened the resolve of those wishing to continue to fight and laid the groundwork for cabalistic dissent leading to civil war. By the April 1961 putsch in Algiers, bombings and assassinations orchestrated by anti-Gaullist army generals operating clandestinely as the Organisation

125 On the final days of the Fourth Republic and De Gaulle’s ascension to power, see Rioux, chap. 15, 285-313. Not all “transfers of power” were peaceful, however. See, for example, Achille Mbembe, La naissance du maquis dans le Sud-Cameroun, (1920-1960) : histoire des usages de la raison en colonie (Paris: Karthala, 1996), on the Cameroonian independence movement.
de l’Armée Secrète (OAS) and supported in part by pieds noirs had succeeded in turning Algeria and France into active war zones.127

The adventure landscape at the time reflected the war weariness and frustration pervading France. The Fourth Republic’s “crisis of consensus” had inevitably triggered its demise, and widespread resignation about the future of the empire, combined with early disappointments in De Gaulle’s handling of Algeria, refocused attention on “home” rather than abroad, or as Ross argues, on the “housekeeping” tasks of “interior colonialism:” electrifying households, overhauling infrastructure, streamlining business, establishing a middle management class, and unifying the nation around American-style mass consumerism.128 By the early days of the Fifth Republic, writes Jean-Pierre Rioux,

Gone was the Liberation’s blind faith in the virtues of a just democracy run by powerful and honest political parties; gone too was the obstinacy with which, from one election to another, it had been believed that the ballot-box could produce durable majorities, and that the parliamentary régime was capable of enlarging the consensus rather than fragmenting it. The Assembly-based régime was ridiculous, inefficient in decision-making, a prisoner of events, governing little and badly, while attempting to mask its incompetence with moralizing. And the cost of the myopia of its leaders was only too obvious: handicapped by the traumas of 1947, defeated in Indo-China and caught in their Algeria War, at a time when French society wanted, unanimously, simply to partake of prosperity.129

The closing years of the decade registered a slight shift in the geographic cadre of the BD adventure from points south (Africa) and east (Asia) to points north (Europe) and west

128 Rioux, 309; Ross, 77, 7.
129 Rioux, 446.
(America), in parallel with the retrenchment of the European empires and the turn inward, or homeward, in France. Readers could nevertheless still locate Africa and Asia in their favorite magazines, new and old. Tanguy and Laverdure, in the newly launched *Pilote*, flew missions from a French airbase in Morocco. In *Spirou*, Tif and Tondu pursued the international criminal Choc to Japan, while Buck Danny deployed once again to Southeast Asia before continuing on to India and Tibet. In *Le Journal de Tintin*, Pom and Teddy safaried in the Belgian Congo. Alix journeyed from Pompeii to eastern North Africa to quell a revenge plot. The young Corentin Feldoë fought Mongols in India, but was all too glad to set sail for his home in France. In this latter episode, entitled “Le Poignard magique,” Corentin embarks on an imperiled expedition to purchase elephants from the Sultan of Nédérabad for the princess Sa-Skya’s father, the maharajah of Sompur. His trusty sidekick Kim, a slight Indian boy, and his pet gorilla Bélzébuth accompany him on the journey. When the Sultan tasks them with conveying a sapphire-encrusted dagger and a sacred white elephant as well, they fight off sailors, natives, and “des hommes-singes” to deliver the herd safely to the

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maharajah, who will use the animals to help with the irrigation and increase his people’s crop yields. The dagger, however, goes missing. Kim and Corentin find themselves in close pursuit on a ship headed to Corentin’s home city of St. Malo, France, and the story pauses to highlight Corentin’s intense satisfaction at feeling the “sol breton” under his feet once more.135 In his village of Ker-Armor, Corentin and Kim solve a bridegroom mystery and retrieve the dagger from a thieving seaman before sailing back to a Sompur under siege by ruthless Mongolian invaders. The brave Sa-Skyà in their absence, however, has raised a ragtag “rebel” army of women, villagers, animals, allies, and the “hommes-singes,” an army that Corentin himself rallies upon his return to defeat the Mongol Sardal-Khan.

Yet many adventures during the final years of the decade pictured the Americas, the terrain of bracing modernity, struggle, possibility, individualism, and prosperity, or western Europe itself. Jerry Spring passed from Kutchin territory in the Yukon into Mexico, where Valhardi was embroiled in a ransom plot in the big city.136 That story solves the mysterious disappearance of the wealthy heiress Jane Barnes and her archeologist uncle by the blond detective Jean Valhardi, who notably dons a brownface disguise to infiltrate the hacienda of a local cattle baron and free the prisoners. Jijé’s

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136 Philip (text) and Jijé (art), Jerry Spring, “Fort Red Stone,” Journal de Spirou no. 1069 (1958) to no. 1090 (1959); Jean Acquaviva (text) and Jijé (art), Jerry Spring, “Les trois barbus de Sonoyta,” Journal de Spirou no. 1012 (1957) to no. 1932 (1958); Philip (text) and Jijé (art), Jean Valhardi, “L’Affaire Barnes,” Journal de Spirou no. 1015 (1957) to 1035 (1958).
boldly cinematic style, or what he himself defined as a flair for capturing both perspective and “des attitudes vivantes, souples, réelles,” energizes this otherwise stock procedural by focusing readers’ eyes on fast and sleek transportation of all kinds, from cars, trucks, buses, and motorcycles to horses, airplanes, helicopters, speedboats, and hydroplanes. After Mexico City, Valhardi went on to hunt eastern mafia in Paris and London, while Tif and Tondu raced cars near Venezuela. In a rare home adventure, Buck Danny flew to Maryland to test supersonic aircraft and deal with teammate troubles. Astérix and Obélix, in their first adventure in Pilote, staved off total Roman occupation of Gaul from their backyard in Armorica. In Vaillant, the medieval knight Yves le Loup fomented peasant revolt in the south and north of France. Moreover, the Yves le Loup episode “Debout les Jacques!” was a tidy World War II allegory featuring roving soldiers, burned and pillaged villages, assassinations, torture, and anti-feudal insurrection in baronic lands northeast of Paris. Set in the time of Louis VI, le Gros, fifth Capetian king of the Francs, the story chronicles a series of peasant revolts against the tyrant Gaudri. Passing through the region, Yves le Loup hears the cry, “Commune, 

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138 Philip (text) and Jijé (art), Jean Valhardi, “Le mauvais oeil,” Journal de Spirou no. 1043 (1958) to no. 1063 (1958); Maurice Rosy (text) and Will (art), Tif et Tondu, “Plein gaz,” Journal de Spirou no. 988 (1957) to no. 1029 (1958).
139 Jean-Michel Charlier (text) and Victor Hubinon (art), Buck Danny, “Escadrille ZZ,” Journal de Spirou no. 1127 (1959) to 1148 (1960).
140 René Goscinny (text) and Albert Uderzo (art), Astérix le Gaulois, “Astérix le Gaulois,” Pilote Hebdo no. 1 (1959) to no. 38 (1960).
141 Jean Ollivier (text) and René Bastard (art), Yves le loup, “La Tour des cent vaillances,” Vaillant no. 645 (1957) to no. 661 (1958), and “Debout les Jacques!” Vaillant no. 662 (1958) to no. 684 (1958).
Commune!” and consents to organize the rebellion. Throughout the tale, he is substantially aided by the loyal Arliette, standing in for Marianne, and together they encourage peasants and workers to storm the castle of Laon and kill the ruling bourgeois. Reprisals mount, yet the Jacques hold steady and wage a long and bloody war of ambush and attrition from the maquis, or rather from “field” and “forest,” even as their captured comrades are put to the Question and killed. The Communist tale ends with struggle, sacrifice, and firm commitment but without victory.

In Le Journal de Tintin, Teddy, of Pom and Teddy, struck out for Hollywood, where he made a Western and foiled gangsters. Newcomer Guy Lefranc prevented World War III from an island off Normandy. Harald the Viking ventured only as far as the Scottish Highlands. Blake and Mortimer investigated in the environs of Paris. Lawman Jack Diamond, new to Le Journal de Tintin, chased bandits through Arizona and fought settler prejudice in Montana and North Dakota. In a series first, travel-hardened Tintin embarked on a personal journey and experienced something of an

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142 Jean Ollivier (text) and René Bastard (art), Yves le Loup (Issy-les-Moulineaux: Éditions Glénat, 2004), 26.
emotional breakdown while searching for the body of his friend Chang, in “Tintin au Tibet.”  

The BD adventure emerged from the decade of the 1950s in a state of transition, much like western Europe. Between 1960 and 1964, 17 British colonies, the majority in Africa, gained independence, including the battleground colony and protectorate of Kenya, which won independence in 1963. In 1960, Belgium’s scattered withdrawal from the Congo and the French loss of Madagascar foretold of a broader imperial collapse. The Evian Accords negotiated between France and the FLN’s provisional Algerian government on 18 March 1962 rather unceremoniously terminated over five centuries of French capitalist exploration, occupation, and settlement that had touched every continent. BD adventurers of the early 1960s fanned out again across a different world, one now thoroughly integrated by transportation, communication, militarization, global enterprise, and mass consumerism, and one whose imperial questions had undeniably received their answers. Ross writes: “Having decisively slammed shut the door to the Algerian episode, France then careened forward to new frontiers, modern autoroutes, the EEC, and all-electric kitchens.”

The adventure exploded outward. In Spirou, Valhardi tracked counterfeiters from the Mediterranean to the Amazon jungle and volunteered for police work in

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149 Ross, 9.
Canada. Tif and Tondu traveled north to the United States and pursued submarine pirates off the coasts of Europe. In Mexico, Jerry Spring fought corruption in the Gulf, Yaqui in the Northwest, and bandits and pirates near Veracruz. Buck Danny deployed once more for “Indochina” to squelch civil war, and then tracked an international spy ring to Haiti. In Vaillant, Yves le Loup embarked on crusade. Sam Billie Bill came east and sided with abolitionists in the American South during the Civil War. Lynx Blanc, “le plus grand courreur de brousse que la terre ait porté,” fomented peasant revolt against European plantation owners and Japanese invaders on the island of Sumatra during a reimagined World War II. In the story, published as “Tonnerre sur les îles,” Lynx postpones his tiger hunt and sidelines the beautiful Patricia Olivier to come to the aid of Maï-Wang, an Annamese woman organizing the insurrection, and Shankar, its symbolic leader. With his Malaysian comrade Moki by his side, Lynx and

154 Jean Ollivier (text) and René Bastard (art), Yves le loup, “La Conquête du graal,” Vaillant no. 889 (1962) to no. 904 (1962), and “La grande croisade,” Vaillant no. 904 (1962) to no. 913 (1962).
155 Roger Lécureux (text) and Lucien Nortier (art), Sam Billie Bill, “Lorsque les hommes seront tous frères,” Vaillant no. 862 (1961) to no. 888 (1962).
company outsmart soldiers, assassins, spies, and collaborationists in dangerous jungle landscapes, on plantations, and in the streets of a Padang under siege. As the revolutionary objectives take definitive shape, Lynx steps aside and all of Sumatra rises up in solidarity to drive out the imperialists. Their collective voices cry out: “Au delà des archipels, des hommes rêvent de raver nos terres... Ils viendront un jour plus terribles que le cyclone... Leurs machines de guerre écraseraient nos villages, brûleront nos forêts et nos plaines. Les traîtres et les lâches les aideront !!”157 The tale culminates in the battle for Padang, which sees the resistance exit the maquis at the head of a “liberation army,” bomb and slaughter the Japanese soldiers, and arrest the European planters. Maï subjects these latter to a “tribunal of the people,” which swiftly judges in favor of their execution as traitors.

In Pilote, Astérix and Obélix resisted Roman occupiers in Lutèce/Paris, the land of the Goths/Germany, and Rome itself.158 Tanguy and Laverdure removed to France, where they monitored aircraft and tracked spies.159 The pirate Barbe-Rouge and his son Eric sailed separately for London, after which Eric passed through France, set sail for the

157 Lécureux and Gillon, Lynx Blanc, panel 17.
East Indies, and evaded capture in Algiers. In “Défi au roy,” Eric sets sail from St. Malo with a shipment of gold destined for India, only to run afoul of a mutiny plot onboard and Barbary pirates commanded by the Dey of Algiers along the coast. Eric is imprisoned in Algiers, sold on the slave market, and put to hard labor. He manages to escape with the help of a Guinean female slave Aïcha, revealed to be the long-lost sister of his faithful servant Baba, the Black “colossus.” She tells Baba’s backstory: “Baba et moi, nous, enlevés par trafiquants d’esclaves, quand nous vieux de treize années... Baba vendu à cap’taine espagnol pour aller dans mines delà de la mer. Moi vendue ici, à Alger!” Every grateful for her assistance, Eric nevertheless returns without her to France, where he is sentenced to death on the wheel by the Breton parliament for having assumed a false identity, sunk the gold, and endangered his crew.

In Le Journal de Tintin across the early 1960s, Blake and Mortimer remained in Paris, Jack Diamond booked rustlers in Wyoming, Alix trekked to Gaul to stop the assassination of Caesar, and the crusader Flamme d’Argent freed Antioch from the Moorish siege. Harald the Viking liberated war-torn Norway and oversaw its

161 Jean-Michel Charlier (text) and Victor Hubinon (art), Une Aventure de Barbe-Rouge: Défi au roy (Paris: Dargaud, 1964), 33.
reconstruction before chasing thieves through Denmark.\textsuperscript{163} Teddy and Maggie of \textit{Pom et Teddy} fomented anti-colonial revolution in the desert Middle East and then hunted Nazi treasure in Germany.\textsuperscript{164} The adventure in the 1960s was indeed shifting, not only to accommodate changing attitudes, but to cater to the interests and sensibilities of older teenage readers. Storylines and art began to move away from the earnest realism of the 1950s towards more ludic, ironic, and humorous modes that exploited caricature, allegory, anachronism, and parody. Subscribers to \textit{Pilote} were introduced to the hapless \textit{corsaire du roy} Jehan Pistolet/Soupolet, who, after making nice with natives on Barbados, was nearly outconquered in West Africa.\textsuperscript{165} René Goscinny’s penchant for anachronistic humor and the round exuberance and racist bent of Albert Uderzo’s line are clearly visible in this early effort from the future collaborators on \textit{Astérix}. In “Jehan Pistolet et l’espion,” Louis XIV seeks new territory to colonize and sends Jehan and his crew into West Africa. At sea in both senses of the word, they soon find themselves in a three-way race with Spanish and Prussian spies bent on colonizing Africa as well. Once ashore, Pistolet and his unseasoned men do the hard work of settlement – exploration, possession, pacification, clearing, fort-building, requisition – while the Spanish and


Prussians follow in their footsteps, plant their respective flags, and strategize takeovers. And while Pistoletville rises quickly in the savanna, the self-sustaining and worldly Africans present little for the colonizing imperialists to do, or as Jehan laments, “personne à coloniser, personne à civiliser !!” The local chieftain Alfred and his villagers muster a performance nevertheless. “Les enfants !” Alfred tells them. “Il va falloir jouer aux athropophages pour faire peur à une bande de sauvages !!!” To which the villagers, racially caricatured as short and nearly naked and with exaggerated anatomy, raise a series of astute objections: “Ça ne nous amuse pas de jouer aux peu civilisés;” “après tout nous devons faire attention au qu’en dira-t-on;” “est-ce qu’on touchera des heures supplémentaires ?” In the end, Alfred takes pity on the French and lends them his pet gorilla to civilize and his sorcerer to scare off their rivals. As tensions mount and war breaks out among the European factions, Alfred leans on his cannibalistic cousins the Miam Miam Miam and together they defend and preserve the colony, not without ironic commentary, for Jehan, King, and country.166

*Le Journal de Tintin* increasingly embraced satirical humor across the early 1960s as well. The same period saw the young Rataplan and his regiment outwit Egyptians at the Pyramids and Cossacks near Poland before returning home with a horse for

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166 René Goscinney (text) and Albert Uderzo (art), *Jehan Pistolet et l’espion* (Paris: Les Éditions Albert René, 1999), 30. The series first appeared in Belgium in 1952 and was reprinted serially in *Pilote* in the early 1960s. The series underwent a name change in the 1950s. For a brief overview of its publication history, see Uderzo’s preface to René Goscinny (text) and Albert Uderzo (art), *Jehan Pistolet corsaire prodigieux* (Paris: Éditions Albert René, 1998), np.
Napoleon. The self-effacing Spaghetti, a hero thoroughly averse to both adventure and travel, was appalled to find himself flying to North Africa in the company of gangsters. The equally unlikely hero Strapontin, in his battered taxi, placidly motored through western Europe, the Balkans, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and India on his way to “Patata,” before continuing up to Scotland and down to the Congo. Tintin, however, marking another first, negated the fundamental principle of high adventure: he stayed at home in “Les Bijoux de la Castafiore,” never once venturing beyond the gates of the chateau Moulinsart.

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The formula was a compelling one. Displacements in time and space enabled the adventure to comply with the spirit of the law of 1949 yet still hew closely to postwar geopolitics and themes of import to the new generations. The moral turn only deepened the appeal of its heroes. Reduced to portraits of white courage, cleverness, and stamina, the traveling heroes of bande dessinée offered visions of a rehabilitated, reconstructed, and racially retrenched France or Belgium or imperial “West.” Adventure episodes

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themselves provided a range of positions from which reader-viewers could explore and work through conquest and war, occupation, colonization, resistance, liberation, and loss. Comics magazines for their part fleshed out the worlds of the adventure by furnishing a wealth of supporting detail that could appeal across age, class, gender, nationality, ethnicity, and in some cases political leaning. In important ways, BD adventure cultures supplemented the formative work usually laid at the doors of church and school. They breathed life and colonial romance into the two-dimensional demarcations of a world atlas that at the time was relatively unfamiliar to French schoolchildren. They also, and perhaps more significantly, taught how the global imperialist orders had come into being and how and why they had been maintained and challenged. The final chapter dives more deeply into the stories published across the era of decolonization to demonstrate how comics set in the Far West at times allowed for more profound readerly displacements – into stories, into histories, into the skins of others – than comics set in French or Belgian colonial zones.
4. Cowboys, Colonizers, and the Algerian War of Independence

Et derrière ces rochers ... cent milles carrés de désert où ils s’évanouissaient commes des fantômes .... Il a fallu deux régiments de cavalerie et trois saisons pour nettoyer tout cela!

—Bill in the Jerry Spring Western “La Passe des indiens,” 1955-1956

Le chef fellagha – il s’agirait d’un adjudant déserteur de l’arsenal d’Alger – appela alors la population du douar et hommes, femmes et enfants s’acharnèrent pendant plus d’une heure sur les corps des malheureux soldats, les tuant lentement et se livrant à une véritable danse du scalp.

—France-Soir, May 1956

Les tortures ? On ne fait pas la guerre avec des enfants de chœur.

—French Lieutenant Ma—— in Algiers, 1957

From 1954 to 1962, against the backdrop of Algeria’s war of independence from France, French youth devoured stories of massacres and ambushes, native uprisings,

1 Jijé [Joseph Gillain], “La Passe des indiens” in Jerry Spring : l’intégrale en noir et blanc, vol. 2 (Brussels: Dupuis, 2010), 27. The episode ran in the Journal de Spirou from no. 922 (15 Dec. 1955) to no. 943 (10 May 1956). The opening frames of the story, in which a silent and unseen Indian warrior is pictured spying on a passing caravan from a position high among the surrounding rock, exemplify the Western’s structuring tropes of verticality, invisibility, surveillance, and ambush leading to assassination or massacre. All three passers-through in the opening sequence – a young boy, his mother, and their local escort Bill – are killed in an Indian ambush in the following frames.


3 The quote was attributed to General Jacques Massu’s aide de camp by the French Communist writer and journalist Henri Alleg, who had been arrested by French forces in Algiers in June 1957, held and tortured for a month by Massu’s Tenth Paratrooper Division at the El Bair prison, and further detained at a camp in Lodi, where he penned an account of his torture. The manuscript that became La Question was smuggled out of the prison camp and published by Les Éditions de Minuit in France in 1958. The French government quickly banned the book, on the grounds that it spread anticolonial communist and defeatist “propaganda.” Smuggled copies printed in Switzerland were widely read and distributed in France throughout the remainder of the Algerian war of independence (1954-1962), helped in part by Jean-Paul Sartre’s decortication of the event of Alleg’s torture in L’Express the year La Question was first published. Henri Alleg, La Question, Préface de Louiza Ighilahriz (Paris: Éditions ANEP), 67; James D. Le Sueur, “Introduction,” in Henri Alleg, The Question, With a New Afterword by the Author and Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, trans. John Calder (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), xiii-xxv; Jean-Paul Sartre, “Une victoire,” L’Express no. 350 (6 Mar 1958), reprinted in Jean-Paul Sartre, Situations, V : colonialisme et néo-colonialisme (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 72-88.
violent reprisals, migrations, encampments, tortures, exterminations, indigenizations, collaborations, and blood-mixing. Young readers explored the discriminations embedded within white racial logics and encountered the physical ruins and human detritus that imperialist capitalist expansion necessarily leaves in its wake. Stories asked reader-viewers to sympathize with the losers of land, home, tradition, and life. Lessons lingered over visuals of the innocents, terrorized and terrified, caught in the middle of a fight for sovereignty and often murdered as examples or in misunderstandings, their homes, barns, and crops burned and their towns razed. Heroic characters among the oppressed fell victim to circumstance, “race” betrayals, and the weapons of war, or banded together to apply improbable pressure from rocky heights or swaths of desert that rendered attack and retaliation difficult for the forces of “order.” These stories chronicled not the ongoing war in Algeria but the Americanization of the Far West, and they reopened, for the benefit of French readers in the era of decolonization, a closed chapter of American imperial history.

What did mainland French schoolchildren know about the war unfolding “là-
bas," in a remote province of France that most had seen in pictures but had never visited? The war’s politico-juridical classification as “police operations” for the purposes of stamping out anticolonial and nationalist elements, “pacifying” and “securing” the civilian populations, and restoring “order” situated the “events” consuming French Algeria on a colonialist continuum that predicted quick victory over “external” agitators. The refusal to recognize the violences inflicted and suffered as acts and effects of war deprived those who had witnessed them, the victims of them, and those who objected to them of public forums in which to take account, resist, make reparations, and mourn. As the psychiatric discoveries of Frantz Fanon during the war made abundantly clear, and as historians such as Benjamin Stora have since drawn out, censorship and traumas ensured that the war proceeded as a series of renewed “silences” or as an accumulation of national and personal “secrets” – about tortures, rapes, mass killings, betrayals, legal predations, denials of access – to be borne as burdens, internalized, and


6 This was particularly the case for the French soldiers killed in the Palestro ambush of May 1956. According to Branche, the language spoken at the funeral held for Michel Galleux in Pecq highlights the contradictions underlying the official refusal to admit to war in Algeria: “D’une part, les associations d’anciens combattants des autres guerres accueillent et accompagnent le corps [of the returned soldier], établissant, par leur présence, une continuité entre les conflits précédents et une réalité guerrière que beaucoup continuent alors à nier officiellement. D’autre part, les enfants des écoles publiques sont présents en délégation : gage que, là encore, la cérémonie s’inscrit dans la continuité des guerres passées. Les discours officiels rappellent le devoir de servir la patrie. ‘Tu es parti simplement comme ils étaient partis, tes aînés,’ commente ainsi le maire du Pecq qui précise ainsi que le petit Jackie est désormais ‘fils des tués’ et sa mère ‘veuve de guerre de France’ à ‘l’adorable dévouement.’” Branche, 60-61.
repressed, sometimes for decades.\textsuperscript{7} Writes Stora:

Méconnaissances volontaires des origines de cette guerre ; mensonges à propos des circonstances tragiques de son enchaînement ; dissimulation des effets profonds sur le fonctionnement actuel des sociétés... l’amnésie française des ‘événements’ (qui se nourrit du refus à reconnaître la moindre culpabilité) et la frénésie algérienne de commémoration (qui fonde une légitimité militaire étatique) se sont combinées pour construire l’occultation de cette guerre.\textsuperscript{8}

And yet news and images of the war did reach young French readers at the time. In some cases, a brother, cousin, or relative had been called up “sous les drapeaux” to join contingents on the ground. Their letters home most likely described life in the Algerian \textit{bled} and in the company of men, even if those same letters tended to omit, per military orders, identifying or incendiary details about French maneuvers against the “rebels” and their complicit civilian populations. Personal accounts of the war may have refrained as well from commenting on the use of physical violences, \textit{déracinement}, and scorched-earth retaliation as the primary psychological tactics of the “repression,” and on army desertion rates, the ill-preparedness of conscripts, and the prevalence of death by accident in the field.\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Appelés} and \textit{rappelés} writing home may, however, have dedicated space to the difficulties of the natural and built environments in Algeria, or alluded to their own fears, particularly in the early years of the war, of attack, torture, death, or imprisonment, or to the disagreeable isolation and boredom that often


\textsuperscript{8} Stora, 8.

\textsuperscript{9} Stora, 180-184; Thénaul, \textit{Histoire de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne}, 90-107.
accompanied the humdrum business of ground operations.\textsuperscript{10}

Newspapers brought the war home to millions of French families in May and June 1956 when the sole survivor of a Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) ambush on a French patrol passing through the gorges of Palestro spoke of bodies mutilated by Algerian villagers. Depending on their parents’ political orientations, teenage readers may also have understood that revelations of systemic torture within the French army made public in François Mauriac’s articles in L’Express, in Pierre-Henri Simon’s \textit{Contre la torture} from 1957, in Pierre Vidal-Naquet’s investigation into the disappearance of Maurice Audin, and by French victims and eye witnesses, among them Henri Alleg and the appelé Jean Müller, had brought the Fourth Republic to its knees.\textsuperscript{11} If they happened to come across a copy of the French army newspaper \textit{Bled}, they would have seen photographs taken by René Bail, Marc Flamant, or Marc Garanger of the topographies of the war zones or of French pacifying activities among Muslim Algerian civilians.

Garanger, drafted into the war but opposed to it, had also smuggled his more openly antiwar photojournalism into Switzerland for publication in \textit{L’Illustré suisse} in 1961.\textsuperscript{12} Other pictures and faces of the war circulated as well. In October 1961, as realizations of tactics and accusations of fascism threatened to undo the containment narratives

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\textsuperscript{10} Branche, 25-27; Rotman and Tavernier, 74, 14, 154.
\textsuperscript{11} On torture and the Algerian war, see Vidal-Naquet; Thénault, \textit{Histoire de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne}, 135-150; Stora, 28-34.
\end{flushright}
promulgated by French law and order to propel the “war without name,” evening television ran images of Algerian fighting-age men detained, bloodied, and corralled onto buses – for the safety of Parisians but also of France – by a metropolitan police force headed by the former Vichy official Maurice Papon.13 The tide turned definitively against any protraction of the war in February of 1962 when several French dailies ran a picture of Delphine Renard, the four-year-old girl wounded in Paris in an OAS bomb blast intended for André Malraux, President Charles De Gaulle’s acting culture minister.14 The Evian Accords were signed between the French government and the Gouvernement Provisionnel de la République Algérienne (GPRA) the following month with majority mainland approval.15

Recent scholars have argued that images of wartime Algeria and France not only constitute an important “subfile” within the “visual archive” of French imperialism, but that they must be understood as furthering the work of other “seemingly fleeting” forms of colonialist image-making, including maps, art, postcards, photographs, and moving images, that had already firmly situated the landscapes and peoples of French Algeria

13 House and Macmaster, 88-136; Welch and McGonagle, 65-89.
14 House and MacMaster write of the event: “Over a six-month period the press had recorded OAS violence that was evident for all to see, had affected very many personalities on the left, and had signified the need to end the war. Delphine Renard’s case crystallized all of these developments and was thus ‘readable’ in a way that neither everyday police violence against Algerians, nor the specific violence of 17-20 October had been to the majority of Parisians. The Delphine Renard tragedy showed how far the crisis of colonialism had now come to affect metropolitan French citizens” (247).
15 Shepard, 125; Lacouture, 163-164. The referendum on Algeria received 90% approval, with a 65% voter turnout.
within the metropolitan imaginary. What Edward Welch and Joseph McGonagle write of the role of the photograph in constructing French understandings and memories of the war in Algeria could easily apply to bande dessinée’s own role across the period in establishing a sense of what was at stake:

The photograph is a ubiquitous presence doing unobtrusive work in relation to our understanding of the war. By foregrounding particular themes or tropes at particular moments – such as the encounter on an Algiers street between French soldiers and an Algerian woman wearing traditional dress – it helps to shape the ways in which the war is remembered, ways which need our close attention.

This chapter rectifies the omission of bande dessinée from the visual archive of the French-Algerian war, arguing that BD Westerns engaged with the paradoxes, challenges, violences, and reticences of that war, and with the history of dehumanizations and exclusions that fueled it, even if they did so with slight changes to cast, costume, and “decor.” This dissertation has argued for the mutability and polysemy of the Western genre. It has revealed the contradiction of place and location that resides at its core and that has enabled “Westerns” to tell stories of North, South, East, and West, of times past and present, of peoples near and far, and of destinies

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16 See David Prochaska, “The Archive of Algérie Imaginaire,” History and Anthropology 4, no. 2 (373-420), on photography’s role in the constitution of a “visual archive” of the twentieth-century global imperialisms. Welch and McGonagle in turn draw out the colonial resonances and implications of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century visual tropes and objects that have linked France to Algeria and Algeria to France and created of trans-Mediterranean (post)colonial space a single “visual economy” (6-9, 14-15, 39). Julia Clancy-Smith points out as well that “the invasion [of Algiers in 1830] greatly increased the circulation of textual and visual material on Algeria in Europe.” Julia Clancy-Smith, “Exoticism, Erasures, and Absence: The Peopling of Algiers, 1830-1900” in Walls of Algiers: Narratives of the City Through Text and Image, ed. Zeynep Çelik, Julia Clancy-Smith, and Frances Terpak (Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2009), 28.

17 Welch and McGonagle, 44.
earned and fates unjust. For over a century, the genre has provided a space of narration for myth-makers charged with recounting the apotheosis of white victors over native peoples whose sole advantage was their knowledge of the terrain. But the Western over time has proven capable of telling almost any story, provided its themes and settings in some way signal a space before (urbanization, industrialization, full incorporation), a place outside (of peace, law, norms, gender conventions, productivity, the enceinte), a time apart (from teleological notions of presence, advance, degeneracy, or collapse), or an evolution in progress (of “modern” man, of liberal democracy, of mechanical invention, of social relations, of the techné of domination, of national “identity”). The Western was conceived in the early twentieth century as speaking for a “planetary” white racial minority from a pretended moment of achieved territorial empire, but also nostalgically, in celebration of a wilderness landscape figured as prior to, pure, or terrifyingly raw, a landscape – or rather a fiction – that the genre itself helped rescue from oblivion.18

This chapter demonstrates that BD adventures, including cowboy-and-Indian stories, circulating in France during Algeria’s war of independence painted colonial aventure as so many lawless fights in difficult landscapes to subdue insurgency, protect settlers, control and contain native populations, police boundaries, and safeguard and

18 Westerns in this way can be seen as continuing the work that for centuries had produced both a “Eurocentered form of [...] planetary consciousness” and a “rest of the world,” as Mary Louise Pratt has argued. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 2-9.
extend imperial interests at all costs. I show that Westerns, however, by figuring North American “histories” rather than African actualities, and by restaging “problems” that had already been solved rather than exploring “questions” that remained to be answered, indoctrinated young French reader-viewers into the complexities and aporias of advanced settler colonialism. What follows pays close attention to serial reading experiences and to the juxtapositions and simultaneities that they afforded to show how Far West landscapes – racialized and gendered, vertical and horizontal, shifting and mixed, violent, compromised, arbitrary, and in revolt – staged myriad outcomes of empire at a moment when the future of imperial France remained far from certain.

4.1 Landscape and Terror: Nature, Method, Hero

Maillot Hospital, Algiers, late May 1956. Pierre Dumas, lying bandaged in his hospital bed with wounds to the knee and face, reveals to the reporters crowding his hospital room and to a mainland France holding its collective breath how the bodies of 15 conscripts of his colonial infantry unit had come to be found naked and mutilated in a cave half a mile from their last known location near the “mixed” colonial town of Palestro, Algeria. The patrol of 21, Dumas among them, had set off at dawn on the eighteenth of May under the command of Second Lieutenant Hervé Artur to carry out the pacifying work of the French army, which entailed visiting the surrounding villages

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19 Branche, 178. The town of Palestro is today called Lakhdaria and is located about an hour southeast of Algiers.
to meet with their leaders, exchange objects or gifts, spread messages of continued loyalty to the French, and reconnoiter the lay of the land.\textsuperscript{20} On this particular trajet, Artur had decided to push farther into the beautiful but unfamiliar terrain of the Palestro gorges in order to reach the outlying villages, Djerrah among them. Only Dumas survived the machine-gun surprise attack organized spontaneously by Front de Libération National (FLN) soldiers of the Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN) under the command of Mustafa “Ali” Khodja, who had been alerted to the course of the French sortie by lookouts loyal to the revolutionaries.\textsuperscript{21} Following the attack, the ALN soldiers had requisitioned weapons and articles of clothing from the dead and wounded with the help of Djerrah villagers and had dispersed to take refuge in the mountains, should the French arrive with airpower or retaliate with razzias and arrests. They carried with them four prisoners: Dumas, who was found in a cave and liberated wounded from FLN custody five days later; Jean David-Nillet, found with him but killed accidentally during the rescue; and two others, badly wounded and left for dead on the side of the road as the ALN soldiers fled into the hills.\textsuperscript{22} At the site of the ambush, villagers most likely performed the mutilations before transporting the bodies elsewhere on the backs of mules, possibly to spare Djerrah from incrimination. The French reprisal that took shape immediately under Robert Lacoste resulted in arrests, the summary executions of 44

\textsuperscript{20} Branche, 49-50.
\textsuperscript{21} Branche, 176, 28.
\textsuperscript{22} Their bodies were never recovered by the French.
Algerians, the destruction of dwellings on the Djebel Ahmed, and the total destruction of the Ouled Djerrah.23

Across the end of May and into June, front-page newspaper coverage in France relied heavily on photographs of the dead soldiers in happier times or of the wounded Dumas to draw out the implications of the “massacre” of working-class Paris-area draftees sent to pacify the Kabyle frontier after only two weeks in country and only four days of military training.24 After the discovery of the bodies on the morning of the nineteenth, but before Dumas had been found alive and could clarify key details, sparse fact combined with hallucinatory conjecture to depict the attack as a slaughter of innocents by a band of savage rebels. Military reticence and later refusal to confirm numbers, causes of death, and the states of the bodies recovered left families, reporters, and readers to imagine the worst, particularly concerning the nature of the violences inflicted.25 Stories circulated that the soldiers’ throats had been cut; that the bodies had been emasculated and disfigured beyond recognition; that their abdomens had been sliced open and filled with rocks; that the soles of their feet had been signed in blood with the letters “ALN.” Others postulated that the soldiers had been captured alive and submitted to knife torture by a band of 30, 50, or 100 frenzied Algerian men, women, and children, and that villagers had then dragged the dead and dying over rocky terrain

23 Branche, 145.
24 Branche, 42-45, 166.
25 No photographs of the mutilated bodies were released. Branche, 58, 82.
to the cave that would become their tomb.26

In journalists’ hands, the cold fact of military ambush, a war tactic accepted and taught by both French and Algerian military strategists and which posited armed adversaries, the success of the blind strike, and casualties of battle, ceded lexical ground to the language of horror and terror.27 Headlines spoke of French soldiers “massacrés, égorgés, et mutilés” (Le Parisien libéré) and of “atrocités” (France-Soir) committed by the “déserteur Khodja” and his civilian abettors (Le Figaro) in an “Algérie meurtrie” in which “7 mariés (dont 4 pères de famille), 7 fiancés et 7 célibataires” (France Dimanche) had met ends both untimely and unjust.28 In turn, the Algerian resistance fighters, termed “fellagha,” “rebels,” and “terrorists,” emerged in mainstream coverage as moral enemies of a republican France. Descriptions of the ALN slipped easily into the colonial stereotype that had defined and denigrated the nineteenth-century resistance fighters led by Abd el-Kader in the plains of the Tell and by Cheikh el-Mokrani in the Kabyle highlands. According to newspaper reports, the ALN maquisards were savage, primitive, and cruel, given to sneak attacks in impossible landscapes, to betrayals and tortures, and in the case of the “Arabs,” to controlling docile civilian populations with a

26 Reports confirmed that only one soldier had been “égorgé,” that most of the bodies bore knife marks, and that several had been disfigured, rendering identification difficult. Medical reports put the time of death for many of the soldiers several hours after they had been removed from the ambush site, which situated the knifework as torture rather than as postmortem mutilations. Estimates of the number of attackers range from 30 to 50, and casualties were low on the Algerian side. Branche, 25, 79, 179.
27 Branche, 79-80.
28 Quoted in Branche, 55-57.
despotic will that manifested as irrational interdictions and exactions on pain of death.\textsuperscript{29} Raphaëlle Branche points out that photos of Dumas, the “rescapé de Palestro,” paired with pictures of his Parisian fiancée anxiously awaiting his return, framed the ambush for French reading publics as an attack on honor, domesticity, and “civilization,” thus confirming for many that France was indeed at war, and that the war had taken on “barbaric” dimensions.\textsuperscript{30} Media slippage between fanciful visions of Native American aggression and “danses de scalp” and accounts of Algerian attackers performing torture to the ululations of village women drew a clear picture of the kind of war unfolding in Algeria and the types of responses that it required.

The “embuscade de Palestro” became a “foundational event” of France’s war in Algeria, not least because it revealed the serious and organized nature of the conflict to French families who had been asked to make the ultimate sacrifice and to government officials hoping to contain and quash the revolt as a police matter.\textsuperscript{31} Branche points out that the Palestro ambush, hardly unique in the war, fell between the Philippeville massacre of 20 August 1955, which seemed to confirm the “savagery” of FLN “fanatics” who would murder French and Algerian civilians for their own gain, and the massacre of 28 May 1957 in the Kabyle village of Melouza, in which FLN soldiers killed 301 male inhabitants loyal to the maquisards of the rival Mouvement National Algérien (MNA)

\textsuperscript{29} Branche, 34, 38, 78.
\textsuperscript{30} Branche, 65-67.
\textsuperscript{31} Branche, 83, 166-167.
rallying around Messali Hadj.\textsuperscript{32} The Palestro ambush, she argues, gripped French imaginations because of the pending draft escalation and because it exposed deep levels of civilian involvement, and in particular the active role of Algerian women, in the torture and mutilation of French male military bodies.\textsuperscript{33} Dumas became an “icon” of the war that was not yet one because he symbolized all that young and ill-trained French conscripts stood to lose in a fight that, as of 1955, had required their participation on an increasingly mass scale.\textsuperscript{34}

More significantly perhaps, the ambush stoked generations-old fears born in the era of the colonial conquest about dangerous North African geologies and the ruthless, even “exterminatory” intent of its “desert Arabs” and Kabyle montagnards.\textsuperscript{35} It is not a coincidence that the attack goes by the name of Palestro and not Djerrah in France. The ambush took place in a scenic and blind passage of the Palestro gorges, in the high and jagged terrain separating the “peaceful” colonial settlements of the fertile Mitidja plain southeast of Algiers from the Isser River valley approaching the Djurdjura mountains of Great Kabylia. The colonial center of Palestro supported European homesteading from the 1860s on in the plain abutting the Kabyle frontier, and it was still a mixed community at the time of the ambush, home to various populations of Algerians and

\textsuperscript{32} Branche, 82. On the Melouza massacre, see Horne, 221-222, 258.
\textsuperscript{33} Branche, 82-83.
\textsuperscript{34} Branche, 166-167.
\textsuperscript{35} Robert Lacoste seized on the occasion of the Palestro ambush to defend his conclusions about the “exterminatory” aspect of the war waged by the FLN/ALN. Branche in particular draws out the legacies of the Kabyle insurrection of 1871 and its “echos” in the Djerrah ambush (93-104).
colon and a base for French administrators and soldiers stationed in the region. French media accounts of the ambush, taking their cues from the military’s own determinations, tended to fault the commanding officer for having foolishly led his men into hostile, uncharted, elevated, and blind terrain without a reliable native guide, even though his unit’s mission in the region had included reconnaissance. The rugged specter of the site loomed large in French imaginations: the overhanging rock that had cut sightlines and enabled the “rebels” to lie in wait; the narrowness of the gorge walls, which had hampered the riposte and prevented retreat; the remoteness of the location, which would have delayed the arrival of reinforcements had the radio not malfunctioned; the prevalence of caves in which to stash prisoners, bodies, clothes, weapons, and equipment; and the general aspect of this portion of high country, which permitted civilians to spy on the French from “invisible” positions and to communicate the soldiers’ movements from village to village, hilltop to rock outcropping, across a span of a mile or two. The Palestro ambush only exposed the historical weaknesses of French troops operating in “inhospitable” and unfamiliar geographies controlled by guerrilla fighters who knew to press climate and geology to their advantage.

The Palestro/Djerrah attack had in actuality been carried out by uniformed and moderately well-armed maquisards, numbering perhaps 30 to 50, under the disciplined command of a former member of the French armed forces, and its success had consolidated hope among Algerian military leaders and civilians that nationalist fighters
could win asymmetrical battles, and perhaps even the revolution, by launching such offensives in terrain – or casbah streets – unsuited to enemy maneuvers. On the French side, the nature of the ambush had emboldened right-wing military and political leaders, among them Robert Lacoste, the newly appointed Resident-Minister of Algeria, to make a stronger case for more boots on the ground and a broadening of repressive measures. The ambush had left fear, demoralization, and defeatism in its wake, particularly among conscripts fresh to battle. In addition, intermittent assassinations of colons in the Isser valley but also throughout northern Algeria made plain to French military strategists the types of men needed to fight a “dirty” war – not “choir boys” but hardy physical specimens – and the types of tactics – “musclées,” immediate, jusqu’à boutiste – that would win the war for the French. As Branche writes, the mere format of ambush unsettled notions of French military, technological, and cultural superiority in which both French metropolitan and European settlers fervently believed:

Il évoque les dangers imprévisibles des guerres asymétriques, quand le plus

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36 Early maquisards of the war of independence outfitted themselves with what uniforms and weapons they could, either by attack or requisition, and disciplined themselves into hierarchies that resembled those of the French army, from which some had defected to join the resistance. FLN fighters also spoke French among themselves to supersede perceived Arab/Berber divides and regional differences in favor of an Algerian national unity. In the early days of the war, French-speaking, uniformed, armed FLN commandos were in some instances mistaken for French forces in the field. Branche, 18-23, 137, 176.

37 To raise moral, Lacoste had visited troops, attended memorial services for several killed in the Palestro attack, and “exploited” the violence of the situation to promote an agenda that most in French Parliament had opposed. He had notably commented that the ambush “nous montre de quel côté se pratique l’extermination.” Branche, 59, 71-72, 162.

38 Branche, 35-36, 80-81.
faiblement armé des adversaires est aussi le meilleur connaisseur du terrain, et quand les atouts de la géographie permettent de renverser, au moins pour un temps, le cours d’une histoire trempée dans la violence.  

Many leaned on the nature of the Palestro ambush to call for the use of torture to obtain information. Knowledge of cells, hideouts, weapons, escape routes, civilian complicity, and plans would, quite simply, save French lives that would otherwise be lost, perhaps equally horrifically, in surprise attacks, massacres, or assassinations. The name “Palestro,” Patrick Rotman and Bertrand Tavernier point out, lived vividly in the minds of French soldiers throughout the war because it had simultaneously defined the risks, terms, and landscapes of the conflict and justified a course of action that involved reciprocal violences, however unpalatable the targeting of civilians, the institutionalization of torture, and the implementation of detainment camps may have seemed early on.  

In May 1956, they write,  

l’émotion [en France] est immense ; d’un coup, on découvre que, là-bas, c’est bien la guerre, puisque des jeunes Français meurent. [...] Palestro restera comme le plus célèbre embuscade de la guerre, qui en connaitra beaucoup d’autres aussi sanglantes, aussi sauvages. De classes en classes, les soldats du contingent se transmettront le souvenir de Palestro, le symbole de ce qui peut arriver de pire : l’attaque surprise, l’impossibilité de se défendre, la mutilation ultérieure des cadavres. La hiérarchie militaire saura d’ailleurs utiliser ce traumatisme afin de vaincre les réticences.  

In the mid-1950s, as photographs of the caskets of the returning dead seemed to attest to the collective inability of French soldiers to survive the extremes of terrain, weather, and

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39 Branche, 183.
40 In 1957, in response to the Palestro attack, French forces isolated ALN fighters in the region by removing the civilian populations that they relied upon “like fish in water” into camps de regroupement. Branche, 183.
41 Rotman and Tavernier, 51-52.
warfare that had come to characterize “events” in Algeria, the heroes of fiction battled similar foes in similar settings, but they achieved drastically different results.

### 4.2 Bande Dessinée and the Algeria Question

The former editor of *Pilote* Guy Vidal once asked Jean-Michel Charlier, a scénariste and foundational figure in Franco-Belgian bande dessinée, why the Algerian war never surfaced in the illustrés of the period.42 “Ce qu’il y a d’étonnant lorsqu’on lit le *Pilote* des débuts,” Vidal remarked to Charlier, “c’est de voir à quelle point il se tenait éloigné d’une part de la réalité. On parlait du Sherpa Tensing, du football vu par Kopa et on promettait un bel avenir au jeune Shah d’Iran, mais on n’évoquait jamais la guerre d’Algérie.”43 Charlier’s response highlights the breadth of state control of the media in France at the time, not just over the mainstream press, radio, and television, which were increasingly culled of anti-military, anticolonial, and later anti-Gaullist sentiments as war escalated in French Algeria, but over the children’s press, and comics and their magazines especially.44 He recalled: “Les journaux de jeunes à cette époque n’avaient pas le droit d’aborder ces problèmes. C’était interdit. Je le savais d’autant mieux que pour *Buck Danny*, on venait de me censurer un épisode que je situais durant la guerre de

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42 Charlier authored some of the period’s most popular series, including *Buck Danny*, *Surcouf*, *Tiger Joe*, *Kim Devil*, *La Patrouille des castors*, *Marc Dacier*, and *Jean Valhardi*, all published in the *Journal de Spirou*, and *Tanguy et Laverdure*, *Le Démon des Caraïbes/Barbe-Rouge*, *Jacques Le Gall*, *Blueberry*, and *Guy Lebleu* in *Pilote*. He was also co-editor of *Pilote* (with René Goscinny) from 1963 to 1972.
Corée.”

Given the repressive conditions under which comics creators toiled in the 1950s, individual authors or artists could hardly have inflected their works with political “messages” of their own. In the first place, the disequilibrium between producers and creators made it difficult for bédéistes to convey political positions at odds with those generally held by their publishers, or to disregard the desires and recommendations of the Commission de surveillance et de contrôle des publications destinées à l’enfance et à l’adolescence, which had been invested by the law of 16 July 1949. Publishers and editors, wary of the financial ramifications of recidivist violations, exerted censorial pressures of their own during production to ensure that their publications complied with at least the spirit of the 1949 law. Reprimands issued by the Commission could take the form of notices to modify scripts or illustrations; mandates to destroy issues already in distribution; citations accompanied by hefty fines; hearings; imprisonment for publishers, editors, or distributors; or even demands to suspend or terminate operations.

Charlie, for example, on behalf of Belgium’s Les Éditions Dupuis, had met with a representative at the French Ministry of Information in February 1954 to propose ways of revising Spirou and Dupuis album content in the hopes of reducing the number

45 Quoted in Vidal et al, 19.
46 The maximum sentences for violations of Article 2 of the law of 16 July 1949 included imprisonment of up to a year and fines of 50,000 to 500,000 French francs. The law also authorized the temporary suspension of a periodical’s operations for up to two years. Recidivist charges carried a maximum imprisonment of two years and a fine of between 100,000 to 1,000,000 francs. See Article 7 of Law No. 49-956, reproduced in Thierry Crépin and Thierry Groensteen, eds., ‘On tue à chaque page’ : la loi de 1949 sur les publications destinées à la jeunesse (Angoulême: Éditions du Temps, 1999), 240-241.
of citations and export bans levied against the publisher each year.\textsuperscript{47} Suggested changes, not all implemented in the end, included “terminating” certain series, including \textit{Valhardi}, preferably to be replaced with a boy scout series, or eliminating certain characters, such as the female heroine of \textit{Kim Devil}. Other recommendations called for showcasing French (not Belgian or American) heroes and settings, decreasing the violence depicted, depoliticizing certain contexts, and foregrounding pedagogism.\textsuperscript{48}

In the first year of its investiture, the Commission was tasked with regulating around 127 publications, among them 29 weeklies, 20 bimonthlies, and 78 titles published monthly or irregularly. It issued notices to 51 publications, the majority against “Americanized” periodicals like Winkler’s \textit{Le Journal de Mickey} and Cino Del Duca’s \textit{Tarzan} (Éditions Mondiales, 1946-1953) and \textit{Hurrah !} (Éditions Mondiales, 1935-1953). Together, they had been responsible for turning Tarzan, Dick Tracy, the Phantom, Superman, Flash Gordon, Red Ryder, and Mandrake the Magician into household

\textsuperscript{47} Between 1950 and 1958, the \textit{Journal de Spirou} received 15 citations. Eleven albums published by Dupuis received “un avis défavorable.” Stanislas Faure, “Entre protectionnisme et bonne tenue morale : Les éditeurs belges et l’article 13 de la loi sur les publications pour la jeunesse (1949-1967),” in Crépin and Groensteen, 123.

\textsuperscript{48} The proposed changes, which Charlier outlined in a letter to Dupuis dated 11 February 1954, included the following: “Supprimer les onomatopées, les scènes d’horreur et de brutalité, trop réalistes, les visages patibulaires. Adoucir le ton général des récits, y introduire des héros français et faire disparaître les armes, vues en gros plan et en action;” “étendre prochainement les didactiques sur deux planches;” “opérer une sélection plus rigoureuse des \textit{Oncle Paul};” and “supprimer toute allusion politique dans \textit{Buck Danny}. En bannir les scènes de guerre, orienter l’histoire vers des activités de paix.” Cited in Thierry Crépin, ‘\textit{Haro sur le gangster !}’ \textit{La moralisation de la presse enfantine} 1934-1954 (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2001), 428-429.
names in France. Tarzan, with its scantily clad male and female protagonists, violent situations, and themes of “savagery,” was singled out by the Commission as an example of the kinds of comics deemed particularly pernicious to French youth. By the mid-1950s, sustained intervention had targeted and mortally wounded Tarzan, which ceased operations for good in 1953. Le Journal de Mickey, relaunched in 1952, was Winkler’s only remaining journal on the French market. Hurrah! was absorbed by L’Intrépide (Nous deux éditions, 1948-1962). Donald (Edi-Monde, 1947-1953), accused by the PCF of featuring “100% American content,” had likewise disappeared, alongside a host of pre- and postwar publications that had failed because of citations, or because they proved unable to capture market share away from the journals of the rising Belgian “schools,” the first led by Jijé (Joseph Gillain), André Franquin, Morris (Maurice de Bévère), and Will (Willy Maltaite) in Marcinelle, and the second by Hergé in Brussels. By the late 1950s, the number of citations issued by the Commission had diminished, due most likely to self-censure and to changing social mores moving into the 1960s.

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51 In 1950 alone, 29 publications ceased operation between May and October, although most likely not all as a direct result of censure. Ory, “Mickey go home!” 74, 81. Only one publisher, Chott (Pierre Mouchot), has ever been formally prosecuted under Article 2 of the law of 1949. Thierry Groensteen, “La Mise en cause de Paul Winkler” in Crépin and Groensteen, 53. The law of 16 July 1949 remains in effect today.
52 Results obtained by the mid-1950s. Jobs writes: “Between 1951 and 1954, the commission received, on average, 2,000 issues annually for 23 weekly, 25 bimonthly, and 105 monthly periodicals. In that same time period, 1951 to 1954, the commission issued 135 simple recommendations, 45 warnings, and 41 sanctions. 262
Market competition itself, not the least of considerations, often guided editorial decisions in terms of heroes, destinations, and themes as well. Bédéistes found difference in repetition by sending a range of genre heroes all over the world, but the choice of adventurer type and the kinds of places, periods, and conflicts pictured within episodes paid obeisance above all to the risk of market saturation. Jean Van Hamme remembers how his series *Thorgal* was born out of such constraints: “On a procédé par élimination,” he recalled. “On s’est dit : ‘Bon, dans [Le Journal de] Tintin, il y a déjà un pilote de course, il y a déjà un aviateur, il y a déjà un cow-boy, il y a déjà un aventurier moderne ... Qu’est-ce qu’il n’y a PAS?’ [...] Et nous nous sommes dit : ‘Pourquoi pas l’univers des Vikings?’”

Likewise, E.P. Jacobs recounts ditching a script in progress for his series *Blake et Mortimer* because of a “petit problème de ‘cuisine intérieure:’”

Les découpages et les textes [for “L’Énigme de l’Atlantide”] étaient établis et je m’apprêtais à entamer les premières planches, lorsqu’à ma grande stupeur, j’appris que Willy Vandersteen sortait, en avance sur moi de six semaines, une histoire intitulée : *Les martiens sont là*, histoire qui, je l’ai su trop tard, n’était qu’une mystification humoristique n’ayant rien à voir avec le phénomène en question. Sans me renseigner davantage, je sabordai toute la première partie de mon scénario, perdant ainsi le bénéfice d’un thème particulièrement spectaculaire.

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The comic book industry had, for the most part, made alterations acceptable to the commission” (“Tarzan Under Attack,” 720).


54 Edgar-P. Jacobs, *Un Opéra de papier : Les mémoires de Blake et Mortimer* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), 140. Goscinny and Uderzo as well, the creators of *Astérix*, had intended to adapt the *Roman de Renard* for the 1959 launch of *Pilote*, but chose a play on “nos ancêtres les Gaulois” once they discovered that the fable had already been done in comics form. Vidal et al, 13.
As the previous chapter discussed, the networks of patrons from which individual magazines benefited exerted particular pressure on BD characterization and storylines. Catholic organizations, Communist leaders, educators, parent groups, social scientists, and morality leagues concerned with the promise and problem of youth had organized separately and for different reasons in support of stricter regulation of, above all, American and Nazi German cultural imports, from cinema and jazz to novels and comics.\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Le Journal de Tintin} and to a certain extent the \textit{Journal de Spirou} had enjoyed the favor of conservative politicians and religious and scout leaders.\textsuperscript{56} The French \textit{presse confessionnelle} published the period’s more popular journals, such as \textit{la Bonne Presse}’s \textit{Bernadette} (1914-1963) and \textit{Bayard} (1936-1956), as well as Fleurus’ \textit{Cœurs Vaillants} (1929-1963) and its equivalent for girls, \textit{Âmes vaillantes} (1937-1963), both of which were sponsored by l’Union des œuvres catholiques de France (UOCF). \textit{Vaillant} was a publication of the Parti communiste français (PCF). The patriotic \textit{Coq Hardi} was created and edited by the well-respected French Resistance fighter Jacques Dumas (dit Marijac), and most of the journal’s content bore his fingerprints. \textit{Pilote Weekly} as well, in its early years, strived to gain the trust of parent groups and secular educators by “mapping” its

\textsuperscript{55} The law of 16 July 1949 took shape within debates on the rising rates of juvenile delinquency in France. Crépin stresses that a “plurality” of reasons and hardly a “popular front” motivated the campaign for protectionist legislation in the 1930s and 1940s. Thierry Crépin, “Le Mythe d’un front commun,” in Crépin and Groensteen, 43-51. See also Richard Ivan Jobs, \textit{Riding the New Wave: Youth and the Rejuvenation of France After the Second World War} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 141-184.

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Le Journal de Tintin} was distributed in Belgium in churches and schools, with the approval of the Catholic clergy. Alain Lerman, \textit{Histoire du journal Tintin} (Grenoble: Glénat, 1979), 9.
content “onto the core subjects of the school curriculum.” In sum, pressures from all three corners – the law, the market, and magazine patrons – not only shaped the postwar BD industry and modulated the tenor of the comics that it could sell in the French territories, but also impeded the rise of any notion of auteurism, particularly given the many hands that usually contributed to the production of a single BD, from publishers, editors, idea-men, and scénaristes to dessinateurs, letterers, colorists, and censors. Per Henri Filippini: “Pas question de faire passer un quelconque ‘message’ ou de dessiner pour le plaisir. [...] Véritables parias, dessinateurs et scénaristes [...] n’avaient aucun droits sociaux et étaient à la merci d’éditeurs qui vendaient de la bande dessinée comme d’autres vendaient de la charcuterie.”

To ease production under the new regulations, the Commission published a handbook of good practices for content creators after reviewing what the market had to offer in 1950. The 28-member body tasked with regulating comics brought together representatives from the French Ministries of Justice, the Interior, the Press, Public Health, Education, and Youth, as well as members of civic organizations concerned with children’s health, education, and correction. Gone was the long era of the antihero, the

58 Vidal et al, 16-17.
59 The composition of the Commission is specified in Article 3 of the law. The handbook was included in the first annual “compte rendu” of the Commission’s activities in 1950, with this explanation: “En vue d’aider la façon pratique les éditeurs de la presse enfantine à exécuter leurs obligations, la commission a estimé utile de formuler à leur intention un certain nombre de recommandations élémentaires qui constituent une sorte
bumbling hero, or the criminal protagonist. BD storylines going forward would instead represent everyday (French) “reality” and struggles and promote ordinary heroism, solidarity, and achievement. The Commission’s recommendations touched on a range of elements both large and small, including the quality of the image, the role and placement of text, the use of humor, and the distribution of genres and heroes within publications. Narrative development and characterization received particular attention, in order to situate heroes as anticipatory emblems of a rehabilitated national spirit.

Postwar French youth barely recovering from war shortages and struggling to move past realizations of the dark years of the Occupation could look to their comics magazines for answers and explanations.\textsuperscript{60}

The moral turn in bande dessinée that Fourth Republic censors promoted within the handbook of 1950 responded specifically to tripartisan desires to prevent youth from backsliding into delinquency and defeatism as a result of the Second World War. But the

\textsuperscript{60} Comics and their magazines in the late 1940s and into the 1950s played an important role in identifying the heroes of the French Resistance and in memorializing their interventions as patriotic duty and sacrifice. The journal \textit{Tarzan}, for instance, ran a section called “Morts pour que vive la France” in the first years after the war that featured names, biographies, and occasionally photographs of the “heroes” or victims of the war. Those profiled included Free French resisters, a pied noir Algéroise, the Governor General Félix Eboué, General Leclerc, the New Caledonian Marcel Kollen, the Algerian \textit{tirailleur} Yaïche Sai, and Nguyen Jules, about whom was written: “Nguyen Jules, le canonnier cochin-chinois, songe. Nom indigène et prénom français, curieux assemblage ! mais son visage peut bien être asiatique, son cœur est avant tout français” (18 Feb 1947). \textit{TARZAN} (serial), BOXES 1 and 2, 1946-1949, nos. 1-170, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

course and tone set by the handbook at the beginning of the decade equally served youth agendas in the final years of the decade, when war and scandal exploded anew in France. Under government oversight, the comics heroes of the 1950s countered pessimism and victimhood with agency; they responded to provincialism, poverty, isolation, and detention with freedom and mobility; to fear, hunger, feebleness, and military unpreparedness with visions of strength and courage; to confusion with clarity; to self-loathing and outrage with purpose and integrity. The language of the handbook reveals the extent to which government agencies were invested in the very fabrication of the fictions read by hundreds of thousands of French youth. Recommendations laid particular emphasis on depicting hard-won victories over worthy adversaries in complex situations and on cultivating an effet de réel that could make such lessons meaningful.⁶¹ The suggestions included the following:


2) Rester logique. Éviter l’ineptie ; ne pas aligner des suites d’images incohérentes qu’un récit inconsistant ne relie point suffisamment.

3) Dans la représentation de la réalité, ne pas méconnaître les données scientifiques élémentaires, celles, en particulier, de l’histoire naturelle.

4) Faire en sorte qu’un résultat heureux ne soit pas obtenu sans effort, sans travail, sans intelligence.

5) Éviter l’emploi abusif de la force. L’intelligence, voire la ruse, doivent triompher plus souvent que la brutalité.

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6) Ne pas limiter l’action à la lutte entre deux groupes opposées : héros et coquins. Une place doit être faite au labourez, à la poursuite d’un idéal, à la lutte contre les éléments, au travail.

7) Ne pas recourir uniquement à la haine et à la cupidité comme moteurs de l’action. Faire intervenir les mobiles désintéressés et les sentiments de sympathie (bonté, générosité, pitié).

8) Proscrire absolument la vulgarité et la grossièreté dans le texte et dans l’image, comme dans les attitudes des personnages et dans la conception du sujet.

9) Mêler à l’action les descriptions, les voyages, les recherches, les découvertes. Évoquer à l’occasion des milieux de vie empruntés à la réalité nationale.

10) Éviter les scènes d’horreur, de tortures, les scènes sanglantes, les personnages hideux, monstrueux ou difformes, les scènes troubles entre hommes et femmes, les femmes aux tenues ou aux attitudes provocantes ou équivoques.

11) Ne pas omettre de représenter des scènes de vie paisible et honnête.

And perhaps as an afterthought:

12) Dans les récits dits ‘coloniaux’, avoir le double souci de ne pas froisser les lecteurs d’outre-mer, et d’inspirer, à leur égard, aux lecteurs métropolitains un sentiment de solidarité et de sympathie.\(^{62}\)

The Commission reiterated many of its suggestions in no fewer than eight stipulations regarding the hero. The ideal man of comics fiction would elicit the respect of all who encountered him and operate as a force for good, coming to the principled aid of the weak, the oppressed, the wounded, and the wrong-minded. He displayed loyalty, even to enemies in battle, and was chivalrous, intelligent, and in possession of admirable “qualités d’esprit et de cœur.” He was physically agile if not also robust but measured in

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\(^{62}\) Cited in Pierre, 130-131. See also Crepin, “Haro sur le gangster!” 316-332; Jobs, Riding the New Wave, 244-247; Joel Vessels, Drawing France: French Comics and the Republic (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 143-173.
his exaction of justice, “préférant livrer les coupables aux autorités légitimes” rather than engaging in violence himself. He was above all a model of Christian droiture: his pursuit of law and order was not “sport” but “un authentique dévouement à la cause du bien” that modeled appropriate responses to difficult problems. For young French metropolitan readers with fathers or brothers facing war in Algeria, the adventuring heroes of bande dessinée framed violent conflicts in somewhat positive ways: they showed how to behave on a battlefield and how to survive ambush, but also how to pacify the colonized, negotiate peace, judge men, and render justice.63

4.3 Far West Displacements in a Time of War

In 1959, the French bédéistes Roger Lécureux and Lucien Nortier treated their fans to a delicious game of genre crossover by figuring Sam Billie Bill, Vaillant’s standout cowboy hero, as a coureur de brousse and coureur de bois in landscapes not properly his own.64 The purpose of the interstitial was to promote the further adventures of Sam Billie Bill, his horse Joddy, and Bep, his old-timer sidekick. In this instance, however, the creators inverted the usual method of exciting reader anticipation by bombastic overselling and instead situated the idea behind the forthcoming installment as Sam Billie Bill’s own, delivered in person to Nortier himself pictured in the frame at his

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63 Cited in Pierre, 131-132. See also Jobs, Riding the New Wave, 244-247.
drawing table, hunting about for inspiration. In the two-page récit complet published as “Histoire de rien,” Nortier first runs through a series of hypotheticals that remove Sam Billie Bill to savanna, tundra, and jungle landscapes, with unsettling results. In Tarzanesque central Africa, the “heat” from sun and beast – “Il fait chaud par ici,” exclaims a frightened Sam Billie Bill fleeing a charging elephant – proves to be too much for the Oklahoma routier raised in the Rockies. Nortier changes the backdrop to South Africa and the land of the Zulus, although the cowboy’s use of petit nègre – “Y a pas bon par ici,” he ventures, dodging spears launched by warriors among the palms – situates him firmly on the wrong side of the colonial divide, as a harassed outlier in thoroughly foreign territory rather than as a confident representative of nation and empire. The genre play reveals surprising correspondences as well. Nortier as the narrator points out that neither the frozen landscapes of Labrador nor the desert vistas of the Sahara would require much in the way of a “decor” change for an artist accustomed to drawing the plateau scenery of Sam Billie Bill’s Colorado home territory. “Évidemment,” the narrator remarks, “dans le Grand Nord, il n’y aurait pas à se compliquer pour les décors, ça irait vite... au Sahara également....” The specificity of genre, the segment seems to reveal, lies as much on rock, plant, and climate as on man and beast encountered, which draws into easier dialogue and comparison those genres generally set in similar landscapes and featuring similar peoples.
The *Sam Billie Bill* meta aside exploits one of the paradoxes of the popular adventure format, namely that it relies on visual schematization or the simplification of character, setting, and plot to prevent conflation between genres (Vikings look nothing like cowboys, nor eighteenth-century pirates like twentieth-century pilots, nor colonizers in the Congo like detectives in Brussels) yet deploys similar tropes to teach similar lessons. The remainder of this chapter examines how the visual-verbal trope of catch and release, around which most BD adventure episodes of the 1950s and early 1960s were organized, not only built character and suspense but also struck chords with current events. The vast majority of away adventures published in the era of decolonization featured moments of ambush and usually restraint by natives and adversaries adept at surveillance, tracking, and kidnapping. We may remember, for example, the bow-and-arrow ambush of Harald the Viking along the British coast in “La Lueur verte,” or the silent and “invisible” Crow surveillance of Jack Diamond in “Le Chien d’Absaroka,” or the machine-gun attack on Tanguy and Laverdure by “pillards” in the Moroccan desert in “Pour l’honneur des cocardes.” Once caught, however, the heroes of adventure in most instances escaped their trial by fire, tomahawk, spear, gun, rope, or the knife because they had paved the way for their liberation in the early pages of the story, whether by cultivating alliances that would pay forward good deeds or by

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indigenizing to hone their own skill at ruse and to develop their own knowledge of the terrain. In other instances, deus ex machina appearances of donors or helpers moved plots forward, yet all recurring heroes met with success in the end, which required of the hostile forces threatening their survival a concession of ground and power.

What differed across genres and series, however, was the manner in which the heroes once captured evaded torture and death, and the perspectives and outcomes put forward in text and image to justify white victories over the darker elements of frontier space. BD Westerns, I suggest, afforded more latitude for exploring the moral contradictions of colonialism, in part because Westerns seemed to seal racist imperial conflict within a specifically Anglo-American past, and because this in turn lessened the French censorship of their storylines and depictions. Yet because many of the landscapes drawn in adventures of the Far West resembled the Algerian desert, mountain, and plains theaters of war, cowboy-and-Indian stories in significant ways framed and explored elements of the debates that were then gripping trans-Mediterranean France. BD Westerns of the 1950s and early 1960s, much more so than the genres featuring French or Belgian adventurers to Africa, made legible the entanglements and aporias of settler colonialism in stories that confronted head-on the personal consequences of military duty and excess, blood- and social mixing, and misguided missions to civilize the “barren” lands of the national expanse.
4.3.1 The Men of Empire: “Ombres Blanches” and Sitting Bull

In “Ombres Blanches,” a récit complet written by Marijac across 1952 and 1953 for Coq Hardi and illustrated by Le Guen, the Congolese characters do not speak. Docile villagers commissioned as boys to guide the white expeditioners whimper and tremble and gesticulate in fear. Their few words, delivered haltingly in the broken French of the fictional colonized – “moi avoir peur,” “méchant sorcier mort,” “toi revenir guérir tes amis” – point to tribal fears of place and name and parrot the wishes and orders of the European “master.” Their half-language reaches but never arrives; they find formulae in the logic of gratitude and loyalty that the colonizers seek to instill among them. Away from the outpost, within the heights of the “taboo” Okoumé forests, “Makoumbaté” warriors scream in attack, whisper in “de mystérieux conciliabules,” and prepare with dizzying frenzy for the torture and sacrifice of their captives, the good doctor Jean Doucet and the wealthy trophy huntress Agnès. The full-color, half-page panel or splash that opens the story and sets its tone depicts the ambush of Doucet and his boy by the Makoumbaté in a forest clearing. Dressed as an explorer and armed with a pistol and rifle, Doucet is nevertheless pinned against a tree by flying spears and arrows, his body language communicating fear and anguish. The art further underscores his total

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66 Marijac [Jacques Dumas] (text) and Le Guen [Pierre Le Guen] (art), “Ombres Blanches,” Coq Hardi, no. 93 (1952) to no. 111 (1953). The issue numbers cited are from the second series (la nouvelle série). It appears that the story was never reissued in album format.
67 Marijac and Le Guen, Coq Hardi, no. 93 (1952); no. 111 (1953).
68 Marijac and Le Guen, Coq Hardi, no. 93 (1952); no. 107 (1952). Jean Doucet’s name is listed as André Doucet in the summary at the top of each page, an inconsistency due most likely to the pace of production.
incapacitation by figuring his body at a reduced size relative to the Makoumbaté that dominate the foreground and the left side of the panel. Their Black bodies, drawn as sinewy and fibrous extensions of the lush jungle vegetation from which they emerge, appear to writhe and levitate above Doucet in a show of irrational and unbeatable strength. Their gleaming musculature and brightly plumed costumes overpower the slight white of the European cowering in the bottom of the frame. Readers’ suspicions that the fighting men of the Makoumbaté are somehow less than human are soon confirmed. The warriors give themselves over to the “cri inhumain” of their sorcerer and to the crossed beats of the tom-tom in “des danses frénétiques.” They hurl incoherent insults at a defiant and unrepentant Agnès for having shot the sacred elephant. They dismiss the conciliatory words addressed to them in Makoumbaté by the doctor himself. The murderous jungle thickets, “impénétrables” and crawling with “d’invisibles personnages,” pulsate with “des clameurs sauvages” as our heroes brave escape with the help of tribal “friends” unwilling to condone the ritual of human slaughter. The tale ends as expected with the triumph of the imperialists’ reason over the unreason of the sorcerer, and by extension of Europe over Africa and man over nature. The sorcerer dies, leaving Doucet free to practice his “white sorcery,” or his biology, as an “ombre blanche” from a new “modern” laboratory built at the colonial outpost of Fort-Martin

69 Marijac and Le Guen, Coq Hardi, no. 107 (1952); no 108 (1952).
70 Marijac and Le Guen, Coq Hardi, no. 94 (1952); no. 93 (1952); no. 109 (1952).
with money from Agnès’s dowry. Agnès gains the most in her encounter with
difference and death in the African heart of darkness. She accepts responsibility for her
own role in the drama and retreats from the hunting grounds into the house, having
replaced arrogance and masculine pretension with humility and Christian compassion.
Thus domesticated and reformed, she channels her previously misguided “energies”
into the more appropriate work of marriage, motherhood, and colonial
humanitarianism, which entails assisting her new husband Doucet in inoculating the
peoples of the upper Congo against smallpox and raising their own child among them.

In many ways, Marijac’s one-off tale of the Belgian Congo resembled the mass of colonizer tales glutting the journals, comics, and novels of the period. Tropological fantasies of a pestilential Black Africa abound in “Ombres Blanches.” Our heroes battle blinding jungle heat, man-eating crocodiles, venomous snakes, and fever swamps in a “malsain” and “inconnu” African interior stricken by animism, idolatry, prostration, and disease. The oppressed innocents of the jungle, drawn as *hommes-enfants*, wide-eyed

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71 Marijac and Le Guen, *Coq Hardi*, no. 103 (1952); no. 111 (1953).
72 Marijac and Le Guen, *Coq Hardi*, no. 104 (1952). Agnès is nevertheless given a backstory that accounts for her self-interested, naive, and impetuous behavior. Her mother died young, leaving her in the sole care of a doting and wealthy father who trafficked in precious African timber and brought her along. As a result of her singular upbringing, she developed seemingly masculine qualities not entirely undesirable. As Paillard, one of the expeditioners in the region and her one-time guide, tells the doctor Doucet: “C’est exactement le type de fille à laquelle on serait heureux de donner des gifles .... Je dois avouer par contre qu’elle a un caractère indomptable et que son énergie est à toute épreuve.”
73 Marijac and Le Guen, *Coq Hardi*, no. 111 (1953); no. 95 (1952). Readers found similar portraits of Africa in the *Tiger Joe* series written by Jean-Michel Charlier and drawn by Victor Hubinon and published in *Pilote Weekly*; in the *Bernard Prince* series written by Greg [Michel Regnier] and drawn by Hermann [Hermann
and unspeaking, subjugate themselves to the superior care of Europeans whose hero status pivots largely on their difficult acclimatization and on the impossibility of their task, given the depth of need assumed to be ravaging the colony, if not also the continent. Not surprisingly for the period, even in a publication produced by a former French Resistance fighter with a humanist bent, the images of Africa in “Ombres Blanches” deploy uncritically along the two axes – primitivism and paternalism – that had long underwritten French and Belgian accounts of racial difference and imperial duty. Jules Ferry in 1885 had made clear France’s, and Europe’s, relation to Africa when he reiterated that the “superior races” had a “right” to Africa precisely because they also shared a “duty to civilize the inferior races.”

New directions within French anthropology across the early Third Republic only reinvigorated myths of Black African excess, predatory virility, ignorance, violence, servility, polygamy, paganism, and cannibalism with new evidentiary “science.” The emergence of ethnology in the 1920s and 1930s in France proposed ways of moving beyond the fixed categories upheld by physical anthropologists like Paul Broca towards more open and multilineal theories of

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Huppen] for Le Journal de Tintin; and in the Marc Franval series written by Yves Duval and drawn by Édouard Aidans for Le Journal de Tintin.

human and social development.\textsuperscript{75} As Alice Conklin points out, prewar French ethnologists began to “challenge long-standing and insidious forms of racial prejudice” and presented a “sociologically grounded understanding of difference based on such innovative universal concepts as the gift, the person, and historical contact between societies.”\textsuperscript{76} Some of the guiding principles of the new field – that there were “no ‘primitives’ without history or culture, living ‘more simply’ and ‘authentically’ than people in the modern West” – were also reflected in UNESCO’s “statement on race” issued from Paris in 1950.\textsuperscript{77} The international panel of “race experts,” French ethnographers among them, charged with summarizing developments in the field had declared rather boldly for the era that “the myth of ‘race’ has created an enormous amount of human and social damage,” “taken a heavy toll in human lives,” and “caused untold suffering.”\textsuperscript{78} The authors urged that the “biological fact of race and the myth of ‘race’ [...] be distinguished,” since “for all practical social purposes ‘race’ is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth.”\textsuperscript{79}

Popular media images of Africa and Africans hardly reflected these pluralist and humanist academic inroads, which themselves had been controversial within their own

\textsuperscript{75} On the rise and fall of French physical anthropology, see in particular Alice L. Conklin, \textit{In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850-1950} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 19-57.
\textsuperscript{76} Conklin, 2-5.
\textsuperscript{77} Conklin, 4-5, 327-331.
\textsuperscript{79} UNESCO, 33.
disciplines.80 Unceasingly through the middle of the twentieth century, popular fictions and especially children’s comics in Europe circulated pictures of Africa and Africans as irreducible otherness with élan.81 As Paul Landau argues, the “image-Africa” standing in the way of the “West’s” real geographic and anthropological engagement with Africa has for over a century recycled and repackaged “decontextualized vision-bites of the continent and its peoples.” He writes: “Steamy jungle, arid savannah, Stanley and his bearers, Livingstone in a cauldron, the wise Bushman squinting in the Kalahari sun, bronze bodies, spears, lions, witch doctors and bones, tom-toms and war cries, wild-eyed rites and wildebeest on the plains, all hang in front of Africa like a theatrical scrim.”82

The myth of primitivism inscribed in the opening frames and deployed throughout “Ombres Blanches” enabled the story’s appropriate paternalist close, but it also set up a thèse-antithèse-synthèse structure that was less common in the colonizer adventures of the period, outside of those published in more leftist journals like Vaillant. The dual representation of the Makoumbaté as warriors and children, as cruel savages

80 The language on race in the 1950 statement “provoked a storm of controversy among certain biologists and physical anthropologists” and was eliminated from the statement on race issued in June 1951. Conklin, 329.
and grateful recipients of the colonizer’s gaze, reflected decades of popular consensus in parts of Europe on the Black African mind as static or *arriéré* and on the urgency of the colonizing mission. In European thought, writes Achille Mbembe, primitive peoples were classified as incapable of “rational argumentation,” in need not only of enlightenment, but more critically of the shape of the human. For centuries, he writes, many Europeans believed that the savage

lived in a universe of its own making, impervious to experience and inaccessible to our ways of thinking. Only the White race possessed a will and a capacity to construct life within history. The Black race in particular had neither life, nor will, nor energy of its own. Consumed by ancient ancestral hatreds and unending internal struggles, it turned endlessly in circles. It was nothing but inert matter, waiting to be molded in the hands of a superior race.

In “Ombres Blanches,” the thesis establishes the villainy of the Makoumbaté warriors as total by painting them as savage creatures of unbounded physicality bent irrationally on blood-letting. Here, Marijac and Le Guen hyperbolize in text and image, drawing freely from the “inexhaustible well of phantasms” that for centuries has produced images of Black African men as animal sense and muscle, as emerging from nature and one with it, as “prehistoric” entities “struck by a kind of blind consciousness, incapable of distinguishing between history and mystery” and given to flesh principles and flesh-

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83 The urgency to create metropolitan subjects out of colonized populations differed across the European empires and across colonial territory and highlighted one of the key differences in theory and praxis between direct and indirect rule. James R. Lehning, *European Colonialism Since 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 210-217.

84 Mbembe, 39, 42.
The story’s heightened reimagining of the equatorial setting conforms to reductive visions of Africa as well. The jungle landscape is both “emptiness” and “precarity,” death and life, vast and unknowable but with improbable densities of “superstitious societies, impotent societies,” slated to implode in fratricides or degenerate, rot, and disappear. The synthèse in the final frames reconciles the warrior-child dilemma by evacuating the presence of the unmanageable – the savages under the spell of the sorcerer – and aging the childlike populations into pupils, patients, and parents. In place of fear is easy commerce; in place of the jungle is advanced medical sanitation; in place of tribal powers and inscrutable local tradition is the commonplace of mothers and children accepting the European presence into their very bloodstreams, as a talisman against Africa itself.

The story’s antithèse appears in the form of a short interlude devoted to the backstory of the Makoumbaté. Yet here as well, Marijac deprives the African characters of the pleasure of telling. It is Doucet who chronicles their history, based on what he has gathered during his tenure as a captive among them. The Makoumbaté had not always lived deep within the jungle forest. They were “at their origins” a peaceable “peuplade nomade” living freely in the savanna and self-sustaining by the hunt. Here the story pauses, as a bearded Doucet smoking a pipe looks directly at the reader from the center.

85 Mbembe, 70, 42.
86 Mbembe, 49.
87 Marijac and Le Guen, Coq Hardi, no. 105 (1952).
of a frame wiped entirely of background to focus attention on his message. Speaking of
the tribe, he explains: “La civilisation l’a peu à peu repoussée dans la forêt vierge, qui est
devenue pour elle son dernier bastion. C’est pourquoi elle défend son accès avec tant
d’archarnement,” and one of the reasons why, as he mentioned earlier to Agnès, “on a
dit beaucoup de choses inexactes” about the Makoumbaté. Forced out of the “les
grands espaces” and into the humid enclosure of the tropical rainforest, their “robust
constitution” had weakened considerably. They were now a dying people, déraciné,
desperate, and at the mercy of those preaching vengeance and resurrection. Doucet’s
testament draws to a close with a flashback frame picturing an African child in his arms
as the child’s mother smiles on in the background, visual proof that he has indeed been
conducting “le plus paisiblement du monde des recherches biologiques dans cette
région.” The flashback frame also overlays Doucet’s explanation for why he remained
their captive even though he could have escaped “one hundred times over” by
following the hunting trails leading out of the village: “Mais je me suis pris d’amitié
pour les Makoumbatés, car ils avaient besoin de moi.”

Marijac mitigates his defense of the revolutionary violence of the colonized in
“Ombres Blanches” by relegating all narrative functions to the European characters, and
by effectively transfiguring the band of Makoumbaté rebels into eager sons of Belgium

88 Marijac and Le Guen, Coq Hardi, no. 105 (1952); no. 102 (1952).
89 Marijac and Le Guen, Coq Hardi, no. 105 (1952).
90 Marijac and Le Guen, Coq Hardi, no. 105 (1952); no. 102 (1952).
by the tale’s final frames. In *Sitting Bull*, a long-format elegy to the Sioux resistance published in *Coq Hardi* across the same period, Marijac’s exploration of the colonial dialectic found its full voice.91 Drawn by Dut (Pierre Duteurtre) with a caricaturist’s grasp of gesture, a miniaturist’s eye for detail, a painter’s sense of light and shadow, and a researched attention to place, *Sitting Bull* weaves an intricate tapestry of the lives lost and convictions upended in the messy terrain of an American middle West at war.92 Marijac published the story at a rate of about a *planche* a week between 1948 and 1953, and in 1948 it was awarded the Grand Prix de la bande déssinée française, the first of its kind, by a jury composed of bédéistes and National Education staff. Marijac also received the Grand Prix de la ville d’Angoulême in 1979 for his ponderous body of work as a publisher, editor, illustrator, and writer in the field of Franco-Belgian comics.

Marijac had become interested in the history of the American West through his long-time friend Jean Hamman, a beaux-arts-trained illustrator and regular contributor to *Coq Hardi* and other illustrés of the period. Born in 1883 in Paris, Hamman had been

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91 Marijac [Jacques Dumas] (text) and Dut [Pierre Duteurtre] (art), *Sitting Bull*, 2 vols. (Grenoble: Arts Graphiques Presses and Éditions Jacques Glénat, 1978-1979). *Sitting Bull* appeared in *Coq Hardi* as the following discrete *récits*: “Sitting Bull : le chevalier rouge,” from no. 133 (1948) to no. 207 (1950); “Sitting Bull contre Buffalo Bill,” from no. 207 (1950) to no. 243 (1950); “La grande révolte,” from no. 1 of the new series (1950) to no. 26 (1951); “Le troubadour du désert,” from no. 27 (1951) to no. 47 (1951); “Clay Allison,” from no. 48 (1951) to no. 83 (1952); and the tale of Jimmy Ringo, from no. 84 (1952) to no. 118 (1953).

inspired as a child by Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show as it toured France and had later traveled to the United States to work as a cowboy on a Montana ranch. While there, he had also passed time on U.S. reservations, including Pine Ridge, and had developed a keen interest in Native American lives and histories and in the Far West more generally. His 1906 or 1907 film *The Cowboy*, the first of many Westerns that he would make in France, some of which he shot in the Camargue, marked the start of his career as Joë Hamman, both in front of the camera, notably in the role of Arizona Bill, and behind it as a director and producer. After the Second World War, Hamman lent his in-country and screen Western expertise to Marijac to help structure *Coq Hardi* around an Indian theme. Readers were encouraged by the “Sachem Sans Plumes” (Marijac as editor) to join the “tribue des Coqs Hardis” and write in for their Indian names; the young Jacques Chirac, for example, was christened Bison Impétueux; Georges Wolinski received the name Belette Grimaçante. Hamman also contributed didactic pieces on the Native Americans, whose organized resistance as a “race” he found both admirable and tragic and a particularly useful lesson in courage and odds in a postwar France engaged in

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writing the role of French resisters into the Liberation. “Il faut bien comprendre,” he had written in Coq Hardi shortly before the launch of Sitting Bull,

qu’à cette époque [the 19th century], si les Indiens étaient loin d’être des saints, l’on envahissait leur territoire, sans compensation, les obligeant à un perpétuel recul vers les contrées désertiques, privées d’eau et de gibier. Affolés, désespérés, haineux, ils ne pouvaient que se livrer à des révoltes sporadiques, cruellement matées par les soldats mercenaires.95

Once the sprawling saga was firmly underway, Hamman had also introduced Marijac to Francis X. Guardipee, chief Big Lodge Pole of the Piegan Nation and the first Blackfoot to serve as a U.S. Park Ranger in Glacier National Park. As the story went, Guardipee, an avid Boy Scout leader, had attended the world scouting Jamboree de la Paix in 1947 in Moisson, France, and there had inducted Marijac into the Blackfeet tribe – “pour le remercier de l’impartialité de ses textes” – as honorary chief “Plumes Blanches,” the feathers signifying journalist, the white “étant chez l’indien le signe de l’amitié.”96

Sitting Bull tells the complicated, vengeful stories of the men of empire and the allied men against whom they bitterly fought in the decades surrounding 1876’s Battle

95 The serial appearance of Sitting Bull was preceded in Coq Hardi by an educational rubric on the Hunkpapa chief Sitting Bull authored by Joë Hamman and entitled, “Histoire véridique du grand chef indien Sitting Bull (Taureau-assis).” Reproduced in Marijac and Dut, Sitting Bull, vol. 1, 8-11. The piece ran in 1947 in nos. 84, 85, and 86. Hamman profiled a host of Native American chiefs and kings for Coq Hardi across 1947, 1948, and 1949, including Red Cloud, Geronimo, Crazy Horse, Red Jacket, chief of the Senecas, and Atahualpa, king of the Incas. Hamman’s didactic work on the American West also, and perhaps more importantly, helped build solid support among readers for the journal’s Indian theme and its Western comics series.
96 There are inconsistencies to the story. Filippini claims that Hamman introduced Marijac to “Francis Guardipe” at the scout jamboree in Mantes in 1948, but France hosted the Sixth World Scout Jamboree in 1937 in the Netherlands, and at which he was reportedly made a Blackfoot chief. Henri Filippini, “Avant-Propos,” Sitting Bull, vol. 1, 5; Myers Reece, “The First Native American Ranger: The Overlooked Story of the Blackfeet Nation’s Francis X. Guardipe, a Cultural Pioneer in Glacier Park’s History,” Flathead Living (14 Oct. 2016), <http://flatheadliving.com/2016/10/14/first-native-american-ranger>. 284
of Little Bighorn. The theme of reversal lends the intertwining stories in *Sitting Bull* their bildungsroman quality. Principles shift in the face of personal encounters and affictions; guerrilla warfare and the tactics “required” to counter it shatter innocence, tolerance, and bipartisanship. Again and again, men on all sides cede their better judgment to self-interest, the siren call of eye-for-an-eye justice, and racial prejudice, thus destroying the fragile patchwork of peace that the more measured and informed among them have constructed across the Plains. Characters large and small, actual and fictional, honorable and hideous register the “winning” of the West as a series of stopgap measures and sacrifices. Among them: Sitting Bull, commanding the attention of the Plains from Queen Victoria’s Canada to the Navajo settlements of Arizona and struggling to raise his hand indiscriminately against an entire “race” of people, knowing the depth of the reprisals in store; William F. Cody, stalwart Army scout and second hand to Generals Custer and Miles, searching out third ways to peace through mountain passes and political impasses alike; Custer, inclined to parlay and treaty to spare soldiers, settlers, and “innocents,” yet obliged to follow orders; Fred le Rouge, trafficker

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97 Women are hardly absent from the story. A central section paints the French-Canadian pioneer woman Christine Lalouette as a Marianne resistance figure, although one somewhat complicated by her intimate association with Sitting Bull himself and the fact that her father was métis. In a clear departure from the historical record, the local schoolmarm Marie, ministering to Navajo children, saves the righteous soul of the wrongly killed Bill Hickok. The sister of young Jack, a trumpeter in Custer’s regiment, struggles to overcome her abject fear and racial hatred of Indians after losing her parents in an attack, particularly when she hears rumors that the dead and wounded on the Little Bighorn battlefield have been “suppliciés” (vol. 2, 94). The daughter of the corrupt Indian Affairs commissioner Hirson, on hearing of her father’s scheme to seize reservation land and sell it at auction, hastens to Sitting Bull’s cabin to warn him, only to be saved by him once her carriage tips into a river.
of arms and whiskey, tipping the Plains into war time and time again; the Army scout Bill Hickok, ordered to corral the Navajo but turning coat upon seeing the humanitarian costs of conquest; Old Jim Bridger, indigenized and ostracized, singing a useless song of peaceful coexistence to a resolute and vengeful Plains; the deputy mayor of St. Louis, corrupt, rash, and genocidal, shooting “Red” men for sport and undoing years of careful peace; the Cheyenne chief Yellow “Hand,” belligerent and vicious, bent on torture and total destruction; the sharpshooting Jimmy Ringo, commissioned by terrorized townsfolk to assassinate Sitting Bull but incarnating his final defender instead; Captain Brown, ordering an attack on a Hunkpapa Lakota village to pay for the supposed murder of his own wife and child, and reduced to horrified silence when they are discovered alive; Michel Lalouette, the métis pioneer who befriends, aids, and defends Sitting Bull and the Sioux alliance, only to find himself tried and exiled as a collaborator; and the list goes on.

Two moments in particular take pains to counter contemporary stereotypes of Native Americans as warring, thieving, untrustworthy, irrational, and unmanageable beings worthy of the proverb, “The only good Indian is a dead Indian,” long attributed to General Philip Sheridan from the 1860s. Axioms and epithets about Native Americans abounded across the nineteenth century and pervaded the twentieth century,

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98 Sheridan denied having said it; the sentiment was most likely given full expression by a congressman from Montana in 1868. Walter Mieder, “‘The Only Good Indian Is a Dead Indian’: History and Meaning of a Proverbial Stereotype,” The Journal of American Folklore 106, no. 419 (Winter 1993), 38-60.
among them “sly as an Indian,” “to be an Indian giver,” and “to go Indian file.”

Wolfgang Mieder writes that the “dead Indian” proverb crystallized invective that was already freely flowing from West to East and across the Atlantic, such as “Indians will be Indians” or “An Indian, a partridge, and a spruce tree can’t be tamed,” by capturing more succinctly the genocidal dimensions of American feeling. He points out:

Many proverbial comparisons repeat this negative image of Native Americans as morally, physically, and socially inferior to whites: “As dirty as an Indian” (1803), “As mean as an Indian” (1843), “To yell and holler like Indians” (1844), “As wild (untamable) as an Indian” (1855), “As superstitious as an Indian” (1858), and “To run like a wild Indian” (1860). [...] the willfully planned and ruthlessly executed destruction of Native American peoples needed its battle slogan, a ready-made catchphrase that could help the perpetrators justify the inhumane treatment of their victims. The proverb that gained currency at the time [...] was “The only good Indian is a dead Indian.” [...] On the literal level it justified the actual mass slaughter of Indians by the military, and, on a more figurative level, it promoted the belief that Indians could only be “good” persons if they became Christians and took on the civilization of their white oppressors. They might be “good,” but as far as their native Indian culture was concerned, they would, in fact, be dead.

In Sitting Bull, Marijac and Dut create a titular hero out of an Indian character – an avant-garde decision for the late 1940s – precisely by Christianizing him. Text and image de-emphasize his role in history as a Lakota holy man and endow him with positive valences commonly understood at the time as the sole province not only of

99 Mieder, 40-41.
100 Mieder, 40-42.
101 In bande dessinée, Le Journal de Tintin would debut a short series featuring an Indian title character in 1962 (Wapi, written by Benoi Acar and drawn by Paul Cuvelier). Other Indian-central strips would follow in the late 1960s, notably the Loup Noir series, which debuted in 1969 in Vaillant/Pif magazine. On screen, Delmar Daves’s Broken Arrow (1950) has been hailed as one of the first sympathetic portrayals of Native Americans in American screen Westerns and marked the start of a period of reevaluation and transition regarding the treatment of Native characters in comics and film. Paul Herman, Epopée et mythes du western dans la bande dessinée (Grenoble: Glénat, 1982), 14-15.
Christians but of whiteness itself. He is loyal instead of treacherous, dispassionate instead of fanatical, deliberate and contemplative instead of vacuous, reckless, or messianic. Far from ahistorical or “primitive” in his thinking, he instead writes the history and keeps the memory of his people, situating each military and societal gambit within a wider purview reaching back to past chronologies and forward through the many possible outcomes of war and resistance. In a particularly salient six-frame sequence, one of many such examples throughout the series, Marijac and Dut illustrate Sitting Bull’s manner of thinking as it weaves between past and present to settle on a course of action in the war.102 The central frame of the passage zooms in on Sitting Bull’s pensive and worried expression, his gaze downcast, while copious narration in the surrounding frames confirms that he is a magnanimous leader and pragmatic strategist carefully weighing the existential costs of non-engagement. “Sitting-Bull songe,” explains the narrator, “au massacre de Sand Creek qui fut à l’origine des guerres indiennes, où les enfants cheyennes et arapahos furent tués sans pitié sur les bords de la rivière au nom sinistre...” “Le grand chef Sioux est inquiet, car les blessés, les femmes et les enfants qu’il traîne à sa suite retardent la marche.” “Les signaux que lui envoient ses éclaireurs deviennent de plus en plus inquiétants.” “Va-t-il abandonner aux représailles des soldats ses frères de race qui lui font confiance?” The accompanying visuals draw out the burden of Sitting Bull’s responsibility. A flashback panel pictures Colonel

102 Marijac and Dut, Sitting Bull, vol. 2, 98.
Chivington, the commander of the Sand Creek massacre, galloping into the encampment with sword aloft to strike down a small girl in his path. Another panel features two scouts perched on a rocky outcropping over a valley, one of whom looks to the reader-viewer in alarm as General Miles and his Cavalry appear on the horizon. The frame is one of many that uses perspective to build empathy for the Indian plight. Images of Sioux women and children burdened and displaced also drive home the genocidal fury embedded within the so-called Indian Wars and embody the human cost with which Sitting Bull, situated deliberately in the sequence as a philosophical and rational man, is contending.

Should French youth still fail to encounter Sitting Bull as suitable hero material, a short segment featuring the blond Cavalry trumpeter Jack completes the Christian conversion of the Sioux chief from warring mystic to the “Red Napoleon” or “Red knight” of the Plains.\(^\text{103}\) Crawling through the grass on a mission to scout Indian capabilities, the sixteen-year-old Jack comes upon Sitting Bull as he is praying and unreflectively draws his weapon to shoot. His companion in arms, the Seventh Cavalry scout Clay “The Kid” Allison, recognizes the Hunkpapa chief, restrains Jack, and is soon “overcome” by what he hears. Allison translates Sitting Bull’s prayer for Jack: “Ô Dieu des hommes rouges, éloigne de mon cœur la haine qui rend aveugle, la lâcheté qui rend

\(^{103}\) Marijac and Dut, Sitting Bull, vol. 2, 22. The sequence in question appears on page 85 of the second volume.
méprisable. Donne-moi le courage qui élève l’âme, et donne à la vie et à la mort une raison...” Jack, filled suddenly with awe and “respect,” responds: “Dire qu’il y a deux heures, j’aurais tiré sans remord.” Allison’s facility with the languages of the land enables the transmission of Sitting Bull’s appropriate piety and chivalrous attitude in battle not only to the young trumpeter, but to *Coq Hardi* readers as well. Yet throughout the series, Sitting Bull’s own words, unmitigated by translation and unfiltered by narration, make a strong bid for the reader’s sympathy while also paving a clear path to anticolonial revolution. “Vos batons à tonnerre,” he tells whiskey-traders, “ne vous suffisent plus pour décimer ma race... Il faut encore que vous la pourrissiez avec vous poisons.”¹⁰⁴ To his own people: “Lorsque le bison disparaitra de nos plaines, vous saurez que la fin de la race rouge sera proche, et que pour elle le soleil se couchera à jamais.”¹⁰⁵ Revealing whip marks on his back, he cries: “Les visages pâles sont des fourbes !.. Ils se disent tes amis jusqu’au jour qu’ils te torturent et te flagellent jusqu’au sang.”¹⁰⁶ And finally acquiescing to war: “La vie sans liberté et sans honneur n’a plus aucun sens.”¹⁰⁷

True to generic form and to the rhythms of enlightenment and undoing that structure both plot and feeling throughout *Sitting Bull*, Jack and Allison’s moment of hesitation and clemency are repaid instantly in treachery. Northern Cheyenne warriors under Yellow Hand’s command ambush the pair in the grass and deliver them to Sitting

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¹⁰⁴ Marijac and Dut, *Sitting Bull*, vol. 1, 30.
¹⁰⁵ Marijac and Dut, *Sitting Bull*, vol. 1, 103.
¹⁰⁶ Marijac and Dut, *Sitting Bull*, vol. 1, 72.
¹⁰⁷ Marijac and Dut, *Sitting Bull*, vol. 1, 74.
Bull’s encampment along the Little Bighorn. Jack must be brought to Sioux justice for having shot a tribesman, although Sitting Bull himself takes no part in his torture and expressly forbids his scalping: “Depuis quand les Sioux se consuisent-ils comme des loups?” Tied to stakes, Jack and Allison watch as women prepare the fire, “des cris de haine et de vengeance” mingling with “des tam-tams de guerre.” Arrows, tomahawks, and knives rain upon them far into the night. Young Jack learns from Allison what bravery under torture looks like – “Quoiqu’il arrive, apprête-toi à connaître les pires tortures mais ne crie ni ne gémis jamais” – and takes a knife to the shoulder before a tornado enables their escape. In this instance, natural rather than human forces intervene to prevent an outcome that would have tarnished Sitting Bull’s honor and undermined the humanizing intent of text and image.

4.3.2 Enceinte and Assault: “Charles de Foucauld” and Jerry Spring

Fall 1953. General Henri Navarre replaces General Raoul Salan as the seventh commander of French forces in Indochina, and mainstream press intimates for the first time that France may lose territory to the Viet Minh. With little professed knowledge of the terrain and a firm interest in alleviating the situation as quickly as possible, Navarre

110 Marijac and Dut, Sitting Bull, vol. 2, 87. It is notable that Marijac ends the story before Sitting Bull’s murder at the Standing Rock reservation in South Dakota in 1890, although his killer, Red Tomahawk, a sergeant on the reservation police force, does figure significantly in the last vignette of the series featuring Jimmy Ringo. The final frame of the two-volume series pictures a resigned but not entirely beaten Sitting Bull telling Crow Dog (misrepresented as Craw Dog): “Je regrette de te décevoir, Craw-Dog, mais notre peuple a besoin de paix pour se regrouper.... Mon devoir est de me soumettre en attendant des jours meilleurs... j’ai dit!” Marijac and Dut, Sitting Bull, vol. 2, 141.
greenlights Operation Castor to concentrate expeditionary corps soldiers within a
fortified army garrison in the Thai valley of Dien Bien Phu. His main objective is
twofold – to draw out General Vo Nguyen Giap’s troops and cut the Viet Minh off from
Laos – and his thinking threefold. First, the defensive fort concept, modernized with the
help of the Americans to counter heavily armed guerrilla resistance, would render the
French “imprenables.” Second, the fixed position would lure General Giap’s troops to
the fort and expose their artillery, or what little they could maneuver over steeply
uneven and forested jungle terrain, to the neutralizing power of French guns. Third,
French domination of the skies would “harceler les lignes de communication Viet Minh
de telle façon qu’il aura[it] la vie impossible.”

The soldiers parachuted into the jungle outpost immediately began to “nettoyer”
the surroundings and prepare for counterassault. They removed vegetation and dug
trenches, built an airstrip to receive supplies and reinforcements, and planted explosives
around the perimeter of the fort. They installed surveillance posts into the hills
surrounding the garrison and christened them with rallying French names like
Gabrielle, Béatrice, and Anne-Marie. French news media followed the fort-building
with interest in the closing months of 1953, predicting facile victories over unorganized
and ill-equipped “bands” of Viet Minh rebels, despite the enemy’s singular aptitude for

112 Ruscio, 14-16, 18.
113 Ruscio, 15, 26.
“l’art de l’embuscade et de la pratique de l’assaut à dix contre un.”\textsuperscript{114} 
\textit{L’Humanité} critiqued the removal of French forces to Dien Bien Phu as “useless” and dangerous. 

\textit{L’Observateur} went further: “Le corp expéditionnaire d’éparpille, s’épuise à la poursuite d’un adversaire insaisissable, se retranche dans des forteresses imprenables, que nul n’attaque, mais dont il lui est interdit de sortir.”\textsuperscript{115} Le Monde’s correspondent Robert Guillain, who had visited the fort himself, brought the lay of the land into French imaginations but also strengthened long-standing fears of “blind” colonial landscapes and “invisible” enemies:

Le visiteur qui tombe là-dedans du haut du ciel est assailli au premier moment par un désordre d’impressions qui lui coupent le souffle. L’impression d’être encerclé, encagé, cerné ; celle encore d’être vu de partout, que chacun de ses mouvements doit être perçu par l’ennemi, qui plonge ses regards d’en haut, tandis que lui-même, derrière le rideau des forêts, ne nous est visible nulle part (…). Mais bientôt naît un sentiment rassurant : celui de pénétrer dans un système formidable. C’est une espèce de piège gigantesque et compliqué, hérisé de pointes, boursouflé d’ouvrages, miné, creusé, compartimenté, labouré sur des kilomètres carrés, et plus habité qu’une fourmilière.\textsuperscript{116}

By the end of March 1954, the French were under siege, having ceded their airspace to Viet Minh DCA control and lost their outlying positions in strikes by heavy enemy artillery amassed right “under their noses.”\textsuperscript{117} At home, writes Alain Ruscio, the tone shifted in the press from one of cautious optimism to politically motivated heroicization and assignation of blame. \textit{Le Figaro} extolled the resistance of French

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\textsuperscript{114} Ruscio, 17-19.
\textsuperscript{115} L’\textit{Humanité} (3 Dec. 1953) and \textit{L’Observateur} (19 Feb. 1954), cited in Ruscio, 21.
\textsuperscript{116} Le \textit{Monde} (15 Feb. 1954), cited in Ruscio, 16.
\textsuperscript{117} Ruscio, 22.
\end{flushright}
combatants engaged in a suicide mission: “Au milieu de la poussière et de la fumée des incendies, dans le fracas des explosions, ces hommes résistent magnifiquement aux furieux assauts d’un ennemi cinq fois supérieur en nombre.”\textsuperscript{118} From March to May, Paris-Match published 144 photographs of the soldiers at the fort to accompany features that aggrandized their valor and sacrifice.\textsuperscript{119} L’Aurore was more circumspect: “L’héroïsme est une vertu, l’intelligence en est une autre.”\textsuperscript{120} The way to immortalization, however, had already been paved across the spring of 1954, as press accounts vaunted the French “counterattacks” against “hordes” and “waves” of kamikaze “fantassins fanatisés” of a “volonté et héroïsme farouches” and a “discipline draconienne, voire même sauvage.”\textsuperscript{121} Nice-Matin wrote of the final hours of the siege: “Les combats se seraient prolongés jusque dans l’infirmerie souterraine où des scènes d’une sauvagerie indescriptible se seraient déroulées, les Viets fanatisés, ivres d’alcool et de sang, n’ayant plus le contrôle de leurs actes.”\textsuperscript{122} The battle for French Indochina, Ruscio notes, became a “lutte entre la civilisation – européenne – et la barbarie – asiatique.”\textsuperscript{123} But it also marked a devastating win by French colonial subjects who across nearly 10 years of war had, at the simplest level, exploited French military ignorance and fear of the topography.

\textsuperscript{118} Le Figaro (5 Apr. 1954), cited in Ruscio, 29-30. 
\textsuperscript{119} Ruscio, 30. 
\textsuperscript{120} L’Aurore (30 Apr. 1954), cited in Ruscio, 32. 
\textsuperscript{121} Ruscio, 33-35. 
\textsuperscript{122} Nice-Matin (8 May 1954), cited in Ruscio, 35. 
\textsuperscript{123} Ruscio, 35-36.
September 1956 to June 1957. The “battle” of Algiers unfolds as a series of bombings and assassinations waged from the enceinte of the casbah by FLN nationalists and Algerian civilians, in response to continuing waves of repressions by French police and soldiers, some of whom are newly arrived from Indochina following the fall of Dien Bien Phu. French military tactics to “restore order” to the city are fortified in April 1957 by the full investiture of police powers to detain, arrest, and interrogate suspects. “Counterterrorism” efforts under the generals Salan and Massu range from bombings, razzias, checkpoints, and curfews to media suppressions, disappearances, and propaganda campaigns, with intensities escalating in May and June 1957. The number of Algerians arrested and summarily executed increases acutely, as does the systematized use of “centres de triage et de transit” by French paratrooper divisions in order to detain and interrogate suspected militants and their sympathizers.124 The Algiers casbah itself acquires new significance within the struggle to control the national space and the heart of French Algeria. Since before the time of the French invasion of Algiers, the indigenous architecture of the Arab quarter and of the North African medinas in general had fascinated Europeans. The casbah marked a space of enclosure and ancient mysteries that presented a défi to the curious eye. In romantic European views of the Algerian capital, the “unreadable” geography of the casbah – not geometric but palimpsestic;  

built not for “regular” access but for footpaths snaking and stealing between hidden domiciles – produced labyrinthine and seemingly impenetrable networks of exchange and communication as well. In times of war, the casbah also rebuffed the colonial advance. Its tortuous streets and steep stairways prevented colonial quartering, numbering, tracking, and control, while the tangle of roofs and crannies climbing the hillside above the minarets of the Ketchaoua mosque blocked sightlines to any street level.125 The white of the casbah, like the white of the haïk or veil, reflected light and energy back onto those Europeans who looked specifically to discover, or to disarm. Both the native dress of the women of Algiers and the casbah that housed them shrouded in secrecy what should rightfully have fallen open under the colonizer’s gaze. As Malek Alloula remarked, the colonial practice of visually capturing Algiers and in particular Muslim women signaled “a right of (over)sight that the colonizer arrogate[d] to himself.”126 That right, above all scopic in nature, was also sexually and racially motivated in the confines of Islamic North Africa. Julia Clancy-Smith writes of la Mauresque:

During the nineteenth-century conquest of Algeria, a French general observed that ‘the Arabs elude us because they conceal their women from our gaze.’ Once

brutal military pacification had rendered Algeria secure enough for Europeans to settle permanently and produce offspring, the status of Muslim women became increasingly significant for judging the culturally different, subordinate other. The dominant colonial discourse regarding an active, masculine, seditious Islam came to be accompanied by a parallel discourse about an unchanging, monolithic Islam that undergirded all family structures and sociosexual relations. In the imperial imagination, behind the high walls of the Muslim household, women suffered oppression due to Islamic laws and practices – not because of the inequities of the colonial system itself. As the colonial gaze fixed progressively upon Algerian women between 1870 and 1900, Muslim sexuality and marriage customs were deployed as reasons for denying the colonized legal rights and political representation.\textsuperscript{127}

Fanon perhaps put it most succinctly: “Cette femme qui voit sans être vue frustré le colonisateur. Il n’y a pas réciprocité. Elle ne se livre pas, ne se donne pas, ne s’offre pas.”\textsuperscript{128}

During the battle for Algiers, the casbah represented to French military strategists both the locus of revolutionary disruption and the inaccessible kernel of the resistance, a shape-shifting space of invisible strength that bombing and arrest could not suppress nor torture unmask.\textsuperscript{129} The FLN’s use of the veil and of women to hide and deliver arms and bombs played out as an extension of the occupier’s historical inability to see into and maneuver within the closed spaces not only of the casbah, but of the

\textsuperscript{127} Clancy-Smith, 54-55.
\textsuperscript{128} Frantz Fanon, “L’Algérie se dévoile,” \textit{L’An V de la révolution algérienne}, in Fanon, \textit{Œuvres}, 281.
\textsuperscript{129} Çelik, 154-157. Çelik points out that photographs of French forces penetrating and occupying the inner courtyards of Algiers houses marked a triumphant victory for the colonizers: “Across the Mediterranean, as they gazed at photographs on printed pages as war news, or more intimately as memorabilia sent home by soldiers on duty, French citizens could easily comprehend the message. Thirteen decades of visual breaking and entering had prepared them historically” (157).
mountain highlands as well. Similar to the tactics of resistance deployed in mountainous settings, “the use of the veil,” writes Steve Pile, “was guided by the spatialities of struggle: strategies for the control of space, the definition of boundaries and exteriority; tactics for moving through spaces,” for being seen and unseen, “noticed” and unnoticed, for striking to gain ground or retrenching to protect it.

Across 1958 and 1959, the *Journal de Spirou* published two serial comics nearly back to back built around colonial fantasies of ex-filtration – from a fort under siege in hostile enemy territory – and penetration – of tribal lands and sacred Islamic space. The second of the two stories, “Charles de Foucauld, conquérant pacifique du Sahara,” marked a not unusual departure into Catholic pamphleteering for the Belgian author/illustrator Jijé. Conceived as a one-shot, Jijé’s biography of the French ascetic explorer and “discoverer” in the 1880s of Morocco and southern Algeria ran serially

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130 On the instrumentalization of the veil – wearing it and particularly not wearing it – as a tactic of war, see Fanon, “L’Algérie se dévoile,” 274-298.
across 22 weekly issues between April and September 1959. The episode wrapped one week before De Gaulle’s historic televised speech of 16 September 1959 in which, in an about-face from previous policy directions, the President of France proposed three options going forward to the non-European peoples of Algeria: “l’association,” or to co-govern with France; “la francisation,” or to integrate fully into all aspects of French life and politics; or “la secession” from France, although this latter option, he feared, would provoke “une misère épouvantable, un affreux chaos politique, l’égorgement généralisé et, bientôt, la dictature belliqueuse des communistes.” Directly preceding the launch of “Charles de Foucauld” was Jijé’s “Fort Red Stone,” the eighth installment of the Jerry Spring series based on a script written by Jijé’s son Philippe. The story proceeds as a rather lightweight tale of trafficker catch-and-mouse set in the wilds of the Pacific Northwest, but its plot spirals outward from the titular military fort, which falls under siege by insurrecting Loucheux Indians. Both stories, perhaps not surprisingly given their appearance during a crucial moment of uncertainty in the Algerian war, featured daring acts of survival by white colonizers venturing far outside of the enceinte onto unknown and lethal ground. They also played out compelling scenarios of infiltration,

133 The biography loosely illustrates the events chronicled in the Viscount Charles de Foucault’s geographical and travel journals published as Reconnaissance au Maroc, 1883-1884 (Paris: Challamel et Cie, 1888).
134 Quoted in Lacouture, 43.
unmasking, ruse, disguise, and escape that for soldiers returning from Indochina or fighting in Algeria were largely the stuff of fiction.

“Charles de Foucauld” charts the physical and spiritual transformation of the boisterous womanizer the Viscount de Foucauld as he passes through the ranks of the Saint Cyr military academy, the drawing rooms of high society, the Algerian theaters of war, Morocco, Palestine, and Turkish Syria, until, abandoning all earthly possessions, he repairs as an ascetic to Tamanrasset in the Ahoggar of southern Algeria to live among the Tuareg. The young de Foucauld, deeply unsettled by his decadent fin-de-siècle surroundings, yearns for the action and distinction of colonial aventure. “Ces gens m’ennuient !.. Tout m’ennuie !” he laments; “la vie est stupide.... Si au moins on faisait quelque chose qui en valait la peine.”136 One month later, he finds himself in the wilds of French Algeria at the head of a contingent of Chasseurs d’Afrique, but “la montagne reste calme” and he sinks into ennui once again. An ill-advised dalliance earns him a discharge from duty until news of “des milliers de pillards en dissidence” in southern Oran province moves him to seek a recommission. It is in the aftermath of battle that his eye falls upon the distant Moroccan frontier.137 “C’est drôle,” he remarks; “des pays plus grands que la France, et dont on ignore tout....”138 He leaves the army to prepare for expedition, seeking out an orientalist’s education in Hebrew and Arabic and

cartography lessons from the head of the Algiers Société de Géographie.\textsuperscript{139} To gain passage into a realm “interdit aux roumis,” de Foucauld concocts to disguise himself as the Rabbi Joseph Aleman and hires the Rabbi Mardochée-Abi-Serour to guide him through both Moroccan territory and Jewish custom.\textsuperscript{140} At every pass, Mardochée warns de Foucauld of the precariousness of their existence among Muslim holy men or marabouts, “pillars,” “guerriers,” and “tribues hostiles,” particularly given de Foucauld’s predilection for taking notes and measurements with European tools right under the noses of Islamists. These latter, sketched as ruthless janissaries, present formidable barriers to their safety and communication. Militarized, fanatical, enslaved to despotic power, merciless and racist in their dealings with outsiders, the guards and villagers that they encounter ill portend of de Foucauld’s – and by extension of France’s – future in the kingdom.\textsuperscript{141} “Vous serez démasqué avant d’atteindre Fès,” Mardochée predicts.\textsuperscript{142} “Nous aurons la tête tranchée,” “accrochée aux portes de la ville.”\textsuperscript{143} “S’ils découvrent la vérité à ton sujet, c’est la mort !”\textsuperscript{144} After passing through Chefchaouen, Fes, Taza, and Boujad with the help of a sparse network of Jewish and Muslim allies, de Foucauld and Mardochée venture into the Atlas mountains. “Pourquoi vouloir continuer ?!”

\textsuperscript{139} Charles de Foucauld had in actuality learned the métier of exploration from Henri Duveyrier himself, whom he thanked in the préface to his \textit{Reconnaissance au Maroc}.
\textsuperscript{141} Jijé, “Charles de Foucauld,” 119-120.
\textsuperscript{142} Jijé, “Charles de Foucauld,” 117.
\textsuperscript{143} Jijé, “Charles de Foucauld,” 118, 121.
\textsuperscript{144} Jijé, “Charles de Foucauld,” 122.
Mardochée asks. “Les cols sont dangereux, et de l’autre côté, il n’y a rien : le Sahara... de la pierre... du sable...” “Jamais un Européen n’a franchi ces cols !” exclaims an ennobled de Foucauld, and they pass into the desert.\textsuperscript{145} There they are imprisoned, rescued, betrayed by guides, robbed, and abandoned to make their slow way “home” to French Algeria. On his return, de Foucauld publishes his findings to sudden celebrity, although his deepening spiritualism moves him to establish a mission in southern Algeria, where he is murdered later in life by Tuareg in revolt.

The \textit{frisson} of adventure in “Charles de Foucauld” originates not only in the potential failure of the disguise, which would surely and swiftly subject the “infidel” to the Moroccan sword and paint French know-how, colonizing zeal, and scientific effort in demoralizingly faint strokes. The beating heart of the story emerges instead in the forbidden encounter between de Foucauld and the \textit{évolué} grandson of the powerful marabout Sid Ben Daoud.\textsuperscript{146} The secret meeting unfolds as a series of cautious gambits barely contained within the courtyard garden of Ben Daoud’s stately domicile in Boujad. “Accepterais-tu d’introduire un chrétien à Boujad ?” asks de Foucauld, dressed as the Rabbi Aleman, of the young El Hadj Idriss. The sequence pictures de Foucauld, Idriss, and Mardochée seated on a covered dias before a sumptuous spread of food and drink. “Mais certainement, pourvu qu’il vienne dans le plus grand secret. D’ailleurs, un roumi

\textsuperscript{145} Jijé, “Charles de Foucauld,” 125.
\textsuperscript{146} Jijé, “Charles de Foucauld,” 124.
est déjà venu à Boujad,” replies Idriss, directly assessing de Foucauld for the first time.

“Sous le costume ... musulman, sans doute ?” ventures de Foucauld. Jijé draws the setting as a sort of seraglio, as an open-air interior space, raised and rectilinear, but one shrouded from public view, overflowing with abundance, and fraught with danger. Mardochée’s thought bubbles underscore the latter – “Ça y est !.. Le piège est tendu....” – but the double entendre reveals a mutual desire for communion and alliance between the supposed religious hardliner Idriss and the colonizer de Foucauld. In the final frame, Idriss and de Foucauld finally face each other unmasked and as equals, their encounter having been facilitated by the classic figure of the Jewish intermediary, now pictured sitting squarely between them with his back to the reader.

In European imaginations since at least Racine’s Bajazet (1672) and Antoine Galland’s Mille et une nuits (1704-1717), the meanings and myths of the seraglio as the sultan’s private quarters of state and pleasure have changed little in essentials. Inaccessible to foreigners and unseen by the populace, the seraglio and all that it produces and shields – the harem, the bloodline, specialized ranks to surveil and discipline, violences and machinations, despotic excess, sublime beauties, grotesque deformations – became a node of fixation for European travelers wishing to encounter
the radical other that the Ottoman Turk represented within European politics and societies. Alain Grosrichard writes:

Fermé par définition à tout regard étranger, domaine exclusif d’un seul être, [le seraglio] n’est le paradis de la jouissance que parce que l’interdit le cerne de toutes parts. Le seul lever du rideau est donc déjà transgression, et rend le spectateur complice, avant même qu’il en soit témoin.

In “Charles de Foucauld,” the eponymous hero penetrates doubly into the sealed, secret spaces of Morocco: he sees, and he lets himself be seen as a French colonizing officer. In the sequence above, the triangulating of inner/cross talk and of gazes deflected telegraphs to young readers the stakes at play. Yet both de Foucauld and El Hadj Idriss, in a thrilling twist, reveal themselves to harbor the same desire for ouverture, which in a Morocco ruled by pillagers, marauders, and religious strongmen must live as a dangerous secret. The garden-as-seraglio here distorts the myth of oriental space as a shadowy realm of exclusion and expulsion to signify instead, in microcosm, what an enlightened, collaborationist, and ultimately colonized Morocco could look like: controlled instead of wild, verdant instead of desiccated, ordered instead of hedonistic and unproductive, a land of plenty instead of poverty, but also, under French colonial


rule, a land opened up, laid bare, unmasked, accounted for, and oriented toward the world outside. “J’ai traversé l’Algérie,” reminisces Idriss; “jai vu ce qu’y ont fait les chrétiens : la prospérité, l[a] sécurité, l’ordre y règnent. Mais combien plus extraordinaire encore doit être le pays des roumis : la France !” In the ultimate act of conquest, de Foucauld not only accedes to the forbidden interior of the Islamic soul but initiates the process of its transformation, by inspiring Idiss towards subjection, and obtaining his help as an ally. When de Foucauld reveals that he is “français et officier,” Idiss responds first by laying a fraternal hand on his shoulder. “Je l’avais deviné,” he concedes. “J’attendais de toi cette marque de confiance. Je t’aiderai. Que ce pays serait riche si les Français le gouvernaient !”

Jijé’s “Fort Redstone,” published in Spirou from October 1958 to March 1959, unfolds similarly within hostile pockets of a frontier landscape depicted as out of bounds to all but natives and intermediaries. The cowboy justicier Jerry Spring and his Mexican sidekick Pancho respond to a call for assistance from the military commander of Fort Juniper located in the Northwest, a far distance from their usual stomping grounds in the Sierra. Illegal trafficking along the local waterways has armed a Loucheux tribe wintering nearby and cut the neighboring Fort Redstone off from arms, supplies, and reinforcements. Indian relations, explains the commander, “excellentes jusqu’à présent,” have deteriorated as the number of “provocations” against settlers,

trappers, and soldiers has increased.\textsuperscript{150} “Des indiens ivres et arrogants ont été rencontrés, armés de carabines neuves... un trafic clandestin d’armes et d’alcool existe.” The commander states the case plainly: “Si les indiens passaient aux actes avec ces armes nouvelles, le fortin de ‘Redstone’ serait isolé et sans doute anéanti.”\textsuperscript{151}

As luck would have it, the ranking officer at Fort Redstone tasked with neutralizing the threat and restoring operations “n’[a] aucune expérience quant aux indiens.”\textsuperscript{152} By the time Jerry Spring and Pancho arrive, having substituted their spurs for mocassins and their vests for deerskin fringe, the situation has become “extrêmement tendue” for the unit of 20 men stationed at the fort.\textsuperscript{153} Spring and Pancho quickly acclimatize to the surroundings and undertake a series of reconnaissance missions in the forested heights around the base to spy on the Indians’ war capabilities and preparations and to expose the identity of the arms sellers. The trouble lies with a corrupt trader and his \textit{métis} go-between La Ballue, coerced into illegal dealings with both the military base and the Indians. Pancho, disguising himself as an Indian, exposes the black market operation to the police, while Spring, dodging warring Loucheux in the woods, over water, and across the prairie, penetrates both the enceinte of the Indian camp and the tragic family secret propelling the corruption and the war. Once Spring

\textsuperscript{150} Jijé, \textit{Jerry Spring l’intégrale en noir et blanc}, vol. 3, 30, 34.
\textsuperscript{152} Jijé, \textit{Jerry Spring l’intégrale en noir et blanc}, vol. 3, 39.
\textsuperscript{153} Jijé, \textit{Jerry Spring l’intégrale en noir et blanc}, vol. 3, 34.
and Pancho eliminate whiskey and bullets from the wider circulation, the northwest prairie settles into “peace” again, and they head home to the territories of the Southwest.

Across the story, tension builds over the fate of the soldiers under siege. Readers discover the enemy, often before Spring and Pancho do, hiding behind rock formations in ambush, slithering through the short grasses of the prairie, blending into river banks, surveilling behind trees, and closing in upon the fort, silent and unseen by their targets. Yet unlike Charles de Foucauld, for whom the imperative of dissimulation, compounded by a dependence on guides, circumscribes his ability to speak and act freely, Spring and Pancho match ruse for ruse and will for will, adopting Indian tactics and engaging the enemy at points all across the prairie, however much their cooptation of “savagery” unsettles the men of the fort. Pancho, arguably the hero of the episode, conducts counter surveillance on his hands and knees, breaks up an attack formation, and ambushed an Indian of his own to requisition his bronco and clothing. Spring, playing the white Indian, penetrates the enemy lair, narrowly escapes assassination, disarms his attackers in hand-to-hand combat, and lashes them to each other in an ironic simulation of white captivity. That sequence as well, drawn four strips to a page instead of three and with sparse white backgrounds, showcases Jijé’s agility at rendering line as motion and his mastery of cinematic angles and perspectival shifts.154 Horses leap, men flail, knives launch, and ropes sail in careful juxtapositions of panels that capture

emotion and gesture at their peak intensities. The result is a fast-paced story constructed of isolated and significant visual moments that each propel ideas of action, decision, skill, and courage. Reader-viewers follow as the heroes outrun a war party, sink a group of canoes, escape an Indian encampment at full gallop on a stolen horse, and luck out of capture in the desertic wilds. The reversal of the trope of ambush, however, finds its fullest expression in the plot to liberate the men from the military enceinte before the assault commences. “Une sortie !? Ma parole, vous êtes fou ! Nous n’avons aucune chance ; nous serons tous massacrés,” protests the young lieutenant. Pancho oversees the digging of a tunnel beneath the fort walls, to the misleading sounds of boisterous singing: “Le gramophone fera assez de tapage pour étouffer les menus bruits de l’évasion et fera croire aux Peaux-Rouges que nous vivons joyeusement nos dernières heures.” And in the dead of night, the soldiers abandon the fort under the nose of the enemy and follow the river to Fort Juniper.

More than wish fulfillment, more than a simple reversal, in fiction, of the spectacular losses suffered by the French at Dien Bien Phu, in the Palestro gorges, or in Algiers, the penetration fantasy in “Charles de Foucauld” and the ex-filtration fantasy in “Fort Redstone” pass judgment on the colonial presence, and in vastly different terms. De Foucauld’s scientific success in Morocco and the fact that he discovers oases of

complicity justifies in retrospect the auspicious start of a vast enterprise to come, one made all the more worthy following de Foucauld’s martyrdom in an act of Tuareg aggression depicted in the story as a crime against humanity. A tragedy of genre haunts Jerry Spring. The cowboy hero’s inherent nomadism, writes Daniel Agacinski, reflects his paradoxical need to outrun civilization even as he leads its march across the land, even if the “work” that he accomplishes will only hasten his demise as a species:

> Les héros de l’Ouest se meuvent dans un espace aux limites mobiles, mais par leur mouvement même ils permettent l’émergence d’un espace stable de sédentarité – si bien qu’ils instituent tragiquement un monde dans lequel il n’ont plus de place, car une fois toutes les terres défrichées et toutes les villes pacifiées, l’existence même de ces héros perd son sens [...]. Leur mobilité, qui leur fait perdre, au terme de leur parcours, toute place dans le monde sédentaire, vient en définitive de ce qu’ils sont radicalement situés entre deux mondes (c’est-à-dire dans aucun des deux), en un sens à la fois temporel et spatial : entre le monde sauvage et le monde civil, entre le monde d’avant et le monde d’après — en cela ils sont précisément des hommes de la Frontière.157

In “Fort Redstone,” Spring and Pancho operate in the in-between, too indigenized to misunderstand what the natives stand to lose under colonialism, and too experienced in indigenous, or more particularly colonial, warfare to integrate seamlessly into even the mouvementé but regimented life of the army. The story’s denouement places blame for the Loucheux insurrection not only on their impaired judgment and the availability of weapons, but more fundamentally on the corrupting presence of white capitalism.

Readers would have to wait several decades to see more balanced explorations in bande dessinée of the aporias of settler colonialism in analogous settings in Africa.  

4.3.3 Half-Worlds and Harkis: Blueberry in the Contact Zone

During the Algerian war of independence, between ten and twenty percent of the population of eligible male “Français musulmans” contracted with the French armed forces to conduct military, police, or milice operations against the Algerian nationalists. The civilian category of “French Muslims” aimed to distinguish Christian “Français de souche européenne” or “Français d’Algérie” from the autochthonous Algerian populations itemized as “Arabs,” Berbers, and Jews. During the war, French military units reproduced the legal and social divisions that had buttressed Franco-French civilian rule in French Algeria for decades, and particularly the discriminations that they institutionalized. Between 1955 and the ceasefire of 19 March 1962, the integration of auxiliaries took different forms. Beginning in 1955, mokhaznis enlisted under officers commanding the mobile Sections Administratives Spécialisées (SAS) and assisted with construction, the distribution of aid, information-gathering, surveillance, patrolling, raids, and the occasional ambush. In rural areas, the Groupes Mobiles de Police Rurale (GMPR) created under the governor-general Jacques Soustelle in 1955 and renamed the Groupes Mobiles de Sécurité (GMS) in 1957 helped with the quadrillage and

“pacification” of the countryside. In 1956, resident minister Robert Lacoste authorized the formation of Groupes d’Autodéfense (GAD), composed of populations believed to be loyal to France, as well as small mobile units or harkas of soldiering men, called harkis, who contracted daily with French colonial administrators and army officers to serve as guides, translators, cooks, mechanics, and the like. A small percentage of harkis also participated directly in “counterterrorism” operations, including ambushes and interrogations, conducted by the more specialized commandos de chasse. Across 1960 to 1961, at the high point of Algerian enrollment, harkas comprised 60,000 men, the SAS makhzens 20,000, the GMS 12,000, and the GAD roughly 62,000, although exact numbers have been difficult to establish. By the end of the war, some 200,000 to 400,000 Algerians had at some point formally aided operations on the French side, and some 2,500 had been killed in action.159

As Algeria transitioned into independence under the FLN’s provisional government in the Spring of 1962, suspected Algerian collaborators were “purged” by civilians and soldiers in assassinations, massacres, or incarcerations and subjected to humiliations, tortures, and requisitions, particularly in the Aurès, where the war had

officially started on 1 November 1954, as well as in Kabylia. French lawmakers were alerted in 1961 to the dangers faced by current and former auxiliaries who had deserted or returned to civilian life in regions or villages long controlled by the FLN. New legislation offered safe passage to France to the most “menacés” among them, to be carried out in tandem with the mass repatriation of French settlers or pieds noirs as the French transitioned out of Algeria. Across the 1960s, nearly a million people from Algeria, auxiliaries among them, arrived in a hexagon wary of their involvement in the war and for the most part disinclined and ill-equipped to handle their integration as “French” citizens, as colonial troops or veterans loyal to France, as refugees, or as migrants.

Explanations for the participation of Algerian supplétifs in significant numbers in the French armed forces reveal the complicated structures of power and belonging that motived the war in general and that in many cases rendered the “choosing” of sides

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160 In these regions, violences against those who had aided the French continued into the Fall. Some 80% of supplétifs returned to their towns or villages in Algeria and not all experienced the same levels of retribution, if any at all. Sylvie Thénault, “Massacre des harkis ou massacres de harkis ? Qu’en sait-on ?” in Besnaci-Lancou and Manceron, 91.

161 Hautreux, “L’Usage des harkis,” 524-525; Shepard, 139-168, 229-247. Sylvie Thénault, “Massacre des harkis ou massacres de harkis ?,” 81-110. Thénault puts the number of supplétifs and their family members who came to France after the war at around 60,000. She points out that the debate surrounding the number of harkis killed in Algeria, and whether all harkis were killed after the war, has to do with the classification of the “massacre of the harkis” as a genocide and the criminal role of the French state in abandoning the majority of them to their fates (85-87). On the placement of former supplétifs and their families in French camps, in some cases for years, see Abderahmen Moumen, “Du camp de transit à la cité d’accueil : Saint-Maurice-l’Ardoise : 1962-1976,” in Besnaci-Lancou and Manceron, 131-145.
a matter of betrayal or perceived treachery or an acquiescence to coercion. Fatima Besnaci-Lancou and Gilles Manceron write:

Impossible [...] de définir des raisons uniques ou simples à leur engagement. La reconstitution des itinéraires individuels laisse apparaître une grande diversité de motivations et de chemins : l’engagement ‘réactif’ à l’assassinat par des maquisards d’un membre de sa famille ; l’engagement ‘obligé’ à la suite d’une manœuvre ostensible des militaires français pour compromettre des individus [...] ; l’engagement de militants nationalistes pour fuir la violence et l’autoritarisme meurtrier de certains petits chefs de maquis ; l’engagement résultant d’une logique de fidélité à une appartenance clanique, dans un contexte ou des rivalités entre tribus, villages ou familles surdéterminaient des choix en faveur de telle ou telle faction nationaliste ou parfois l’allégeance aux Français ; l’enrôlement essentiellement dicté par le besoin d’un maigre revenu pour faire vivre sa famille, de la part de paysans peu informés du contexte politique ; ou bien d’autres raisons encore.162

Algerians’ decisions to side against the nationalists became, within the French army as well as among their “own” in civil society, cause for discrimination and ostracization. Within army units, harkis rarely overcame their superiors’ suspicions of their movements and loyalties. Military protocol required that soldiers “de souche européenne” constantly surveil their harkis, double or triple them in nighttime guard duties, and supply them with weapons of lesser quality and capacity, to be secured, by chain, when not strictly in use. Like the American “Indian” who, as the contemporary proverb went, “will come back to his blanket,” meaning not only return to his people but revert to his primitive, violent, and treacherous ways, the Algerian auxiliary soldier

162 Besnaci-Lancou and Manceron, 16.
was in many cases treated with contempt and caution, as a future betrayal lying in
wait.\textsuperscript{163}

In the year following the ceasefire, as the repatriation of pied noir families and
the arrival of supplétifs and their families at holding camps unsettled metropolitans,
\textit{Pilote Weekly} debuted the adventures of a new kind of cowboy, one formed by mixed
loyalties in a warring desert environment seething with racial hatred and mistrust. U.S.
Cavalry officer Lieutenant Mike T. Blueberry né Donovan not only drank to excess and
cheated at cards but excelled at military insubordination. Moreover, as readers
discovered in the inaugural episode, he accepts deployment to the isolated base in the
Apache borderlands of Arizona and New Mexico not for glory or out of a sense of duty
but to avoid the brig for accumulated infractions.\textsuperscript{164} His new commanding officer, short
on men, sees a path of redemption for Blueberry fighting Indians in the desert,
particularly since Blueberry had forfeited his inheritance as the son of a wealthy Georgia
plantation owner by siding with the Union in the Civil War; slavery, Blueberry reveals,
revolted him.\textsuperscript{165} But the colonel’s initial disapprobation of his new officer presents
readers with the prospect of a thuggish hero, a Belmondo type in form and content,

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\textsuperscript{163} Mieder, 41; Hautreux, “Les supplétifs pendant la guerre d’Algérie,” 43. Not all of the protocols were
followed and camaraderie and trust did develop between supplétifs and soldiers in some cases. There was
also a steady trickle of soldiers changing sides, which nourished fears of betrayal.
232 (1964).
\textsuperscript{165} Jean-Michel Charlier (text) and Gir [Jean Giraud] (art), “Fort Navajo,” in \textit{Blueberry : l’intégrale 1} (Paris:
Dargaud, 2012), 56.
\end{flushright}
driven by impulse, shaped by contradictions, and with a nonchalance towards death and duty stemming from repeated encounters with the law, and with events. “Buveur... joueur... tricheur... indiscipliné... bagarreur... rouspéteur insolent... une vraie litanie!” comments the colonel. “Si on ne vous a pas chassé ignominieusement de l’armée, si on vous a laissé une ultime chance de vous racheter en vous faisant oublier ou... tuer, dans l’Ouest, c’est uniquement à cause de vos exceptionnels états de service, durant la Guerre Civile.”

By choosing a low-ranking career military officer as their hero, Belgian writer Jean-Michel Charlier and the talented young French artist Gir (Jean Giraud), who by 25 had already worked with Jijé on Jerry Spring, fleshed out a character that had until then mainly appeared within BD storylines in rigid silhouette, as the nameless rank and file sent to deliver the hero from certain death or as a righteous arm of government in need of the hero’s know-how and intervention, either to start a war or stop one. Lieutenant Blueberry, however, was neither the indigenized white Army scout nor the decorated man of principle and leadership. From the start, he sheds his “knights of the plains” chivalric inheritance to reveal a more complicated orientation towards deal-making and justice. His personal code of honor, which he defines most simply as a desire to “[ne pas] salir les mains,” is gut-driven and reactionary. He responds in the moment to minimize abuses and to stop “felonies,” but often at the expense of his own mobility, authority, or

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166 Charlier and Gir, “Fort Navajo,” in Blueberry : l’intégrale 1, 56.

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ascendancy, and his efforts at times fail.\textsuperscript{167} The age of Pilote’s readers as well as l’air du temps permitted Charlier and Gir to strip their realist saga of the Far West of overt triumphalism and to explore those caught in the colonial machinery in ways that did not reproduce paternalist thinking or tropes of the noble savage. In the climactic treaty-signing scene in the first episode, for example, Major Boscom, the villain of the story out to clear the desert of all Indians, which he likens indiscriminately to “vermine,” “coyotes,” “chiens,” “bêtes,” “sauvages,” “rats,” “racaille,” and “serpents,” faces off with a level-headed Cochise, chief of the Apache, drawn as forceful, virile, and calculating and imbued with a compelling star quality.\textsuperscript{168} Cochise throughout the story commands readers’ sympathies as much as or more so than do the Anglo-American soldiers, our heroes included. As José-Louis Bocquet points out, Blueberry jumped off the page as an original and balanced exploration of “les racines du génocide indien” published at a moment in France when such lessons could be useful.\textsuperscript{169} “À l’heure de la décolonisation en marche,” he ventured, “Charlier racont[ait] comment le monde tourne.”\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{167} Charlier and Gir, “Fort Navajo,” in Blueberry : l’intégrale 1, 48.

\textsuperscript{168} Charlier and Gir, “Fort Navajo,” in Blueberry : l’intégrale 1, 47, 48, 59, 63, 64, 66. The sequence in question takes place on pages 66 and 67.

\textsuperscript{169} The authors nevertheless drew heavily from cinema. John Ford’s Fort Apache (1948) starring John Wayne influenced the feel of the first plot while Jean-Paul Belmondo’s star turn in À Bout de souffle (1960) influenced the look of its hero.

\textsuperscript{170} José-Louis Bocquet, “Préface,” in Charlier and Gir, Blueberry : l’intégrale 1, 10-15.
“Fort Navajo,” the first installment of a five-episode continuing story organized around the search for a pioneer boy kidnapped by a marauding band of renegade Chiricahua, follows Blueberry’s arrival at the fort and his run-ins with superiors and Indians that drive the Apache to declare war. The Cavalry stationed at Fort Navajo falsely accuse Cochise and his peaceful Apache tribes of killing the Stanton boy’s parents and razing their ranch. Major Boscom, the second in command at the fort, retaliates by authorizing the massacre of a peaceful band of Apache men, women, and children. A horrified Blueberry, under orders to participate, sounds the bugle to retreat to prevent the slaughter of innocents and is sentenced on the spot to be summarily executed by his peers for “trahison devant l’ennemi.”171 The general’s son entices Boscom to stand down, but the moral battle lines of the series have been clearly drawn. As the canyons and plains of the Southwest erupt in insurrection, Cochise, a moderate, attempts to avert war and offers to renegotiate his treaty. The fort commander colonel Dickson, Cochise’s equal in restraint and pragmatism, agrees: “Aventurer des cavaliers dans ces montagnes qu’ils connaissent mieux que nous serait les vouer à une mort certaine ! ... Le mieux est d’essayer de traiter.”172 At the moment of the meet, however, the colonel is sidelined by a rattlesnake bite, which leaves Boscom in command. Blueberry and his new allies the Lieutenant Craig, an inexperienced West Point graduate with noble intentions, and

172 Charlier and Gir, “Fort Navajo,” in Blueberry : l’intégrale 1, 55.
Crowe, a métis Cavalry soldier, half-Indian, half-white, find themselves under orders to betray, capture, and possibly eliminate Cochise and his tribal chiefs. True to history, Cochise escapes the negotiation tent and calls for war even with his lieutenants imprisoned at the fort. Attacks and assassinations mount on the soldiers, couriers, settlers, and miners of the region until the Seventeenth Regiment finds itself restricted to the enceinte of the fort and under siege, unable to mount a counterattack or call in reinforcements. Blueberry, in the final frame, deadpans the turn of events and closes the episode on a cliffhanger: “Well !.. voilà qui nous ôte tout espoir d’être secourus ! Nous sommes maintenant complètement isolés, en plein territoire apache révolté.”

In his nuanced portrait of a Southwest far from pacified, Charlier diversifies the motivations of those fighting on the American side to highlight the gradations of commitment to U.S. military objectives in Indian territory. An early standoff between Boscom, Blueberry, Craig, and Crowe, drawn across seven frames against a bright blue and for the most part horizonless sky, situates the loyalties and prejudices of the story’s major players. Boscom, leading a patrol, comes across Blueberry and Craig making their way to the fort after having discovered evidence of the Indian attack at the Stanton ranch. Boscom calls for immediate retaliation: “Je ne rentrera pas au fort avant d’avoir fait un exemple terrible !” Crowe risks insubordination by reminding his superior that

174 Charlier and Gir, “Fort Navajo,” in Blueberry : l’intégrale 1, 47.
their military orders were to return to the fort once the new recruits had been located. Thought bubbles, sidelong glances, and shocked expressions accompany the speech bubbles to elucidate the *partis pris* of all four men. Boscom, hardened by the rhythms of repression and resistance and by an enemy fully capable of routing his men, insists that the “vermine rouge va payer, eux et tous les autres,” for imperiling the forward march of a superior military, political, and social force and for hampering the claims of white civilization to lands there for the taking. As he tells Blueberry, “les beaux sentiments n’ont pas cours” in a West in which Indians leave no quarter: “Il n’y a pas de paix possible avec ces bêtes féroces ! Il faut les anéantir !”

He turns mercilessly on Crowe, decrying his “miscegenated” blood as a sickening weakening of white vigor that threatens the future of both race and nation: “La peste soit de ceux qui tolèrent la présence de ces chiens bâtards de sang mêlé dans l’armée des États-Unis. Voilà où ça mène !” And the one-drop rule applies: “En vérité, ce sont les Indiens que je hais,” he tells Blueberry, “et Crowe est le fils d’une Indienne et d’un Blanc.”

Blueberry, out of uniform, as yet unbefriended to rank, and reading the racial tension of the situation correctly, pushes Boscom to explain and defend himself, which paves the way for the antiracist insubordinations to come that situate Blueberry squarely as the hero of the series. Craig in the sequence is doubly hamstrung by his elite military education and his

176 Charlier and Gir, “Fort Navajo,” in *Blueberry : l’intégrale 1*, 47.
deep respect for hierarchy and not surprisingly remains silent, although thought bubbles align his reactions with the objections raised by the others.

Crowe, however, by opposing racism and power, acquires a hero status of his own. Rather than downplay his hybridity, Crowe integrates into army ranks without losing sight of his dual heritage, which places him under the suspicion of his peers and superiors and inflames Boscom’s hatred, who further inveighs: “Il ne perd jamais une occasion de prendre la défense de la race de coyotes puants dont il sort à moitié.” At various moments in the episode, Crowe works within the structure of the military and the affordances of his rank to temper Boscom’s genocidal fury, even though the story cycle hinges at several key moments on a will-he-won’t-he question of his eventual betrayal. Crowe’s admission to Blueberry of the unjust treatment he receives at the fort – “on me tient toujours à l’écart !... mon sang indien” – and of his “Indian” sense – “j’ai gardé de ma race de vraies oreilles de peau-rouge” – leave the question tantalizingly open in the first episode. Charlier in fact complicates the traditional hero couplet by pairing Blueberry with the blond Lieutenant Craig as well as with Crowe from the start. Blueberry’s brand of renegade individualism, self-interest, and wile in battle pairs most easily with the morally irreproachable Craig as the hero figure, while Crowe, indigenous and outsider, fits the bill as the more traditional adventure sidekick whose blood- and

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177 Charlier and Gir, “Fort Navajo,” in Blueberry : l’intégrale 1, 47.
178 Charlier and Gir, “Fort Navajo,” in Blueberry : l’intégrale 1, 57.
barrier-crossing supplements or supplies the hero’s knowledge of foreign ways and terrain. The hero pairing that persists across the first Blueberry cycle is Blueberry and Crowe, which makes for a more ambivalent, compromised, and indigenized titular hero.

In the same way, desert space in Blueberry operates less as a theater of war in which opposing blocs meet in formation in a foretold battle of Western civilization over savagery than as a true borderland, an in-between and mixed space or “contact zone” that authorizes white lawlessness and allows for “transculturations,” borrowings, exchanges, and defections. Mary Louise Pratt envisions the contact zone as “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.” But contact at the periphery also gives rise to “improvisation,” “appropriation,” “interactions,” language mixing, and “interlocking understandings and practices” that redefine the meanings of the enceinte itself. “Borders and all,” she argues, “the entity called Europe was constructed from the outside in as much as from the inside out.”

That sentiment wholly applies to the multiethnic experiment that was the formation of the United States and to the murky encounters along its moving frontiers from which the foundational stories of America derived.

179 Pratt, 6-7. On the appropriations of native cultures in the formation of specifically American patriotism and traditions, see in particular Philip Joseph Deloria, Playing Indian (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).
Blueberry’s originality within the genre and popularity in the early 1960s can be attributed in part to its portrayal of colonial warfare as fundamentally, and not only temporarily, unsettling – of the boundaries of belonging, of notions of superiority – and as a generator of impasses arising from violences too great to contemplate or propitiate. The intertwining perspectives in “Fort Navajo” paint cowboys and Indians equally as agents in a war of colonial domination whose operational objectives and moral certainties have shriveled in the desert sun. Victory also eludes much of the first cycle, as characters struggle to reconcile eastern mentalities with western realities and to acclimate to the corruptions, ambitions, collaborations, and dangers of life “à la limite des territoires apaches, zunis et navajos” along the Arizona-New Mexico border. Other BD series at the time displaced their heroes to similar environments yet without depicting the desert frontier as porous and enacting. The year before “Fort Navajo” appeared in Pilote, Le Journal de Tintin published a similar tale of a desert siege, only the territory in question was controlled by a Turkish army under the command of the Emir Kerbogha of Mosul. “Le Croisé sans nom,” the second episode of the Flamme d’argent series, celebrated the liberation in 1098 of the noble heads of Europe – Raymond of Toulouse, Baldwin of Hainault, Robert of Normandy, Godfrey of Bouillon, Bohemond of Taranto, Robert of Flanders – from the second siege at Antioch during the First Crusade,

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180 Fort Navajo’s location as specified in Charlier’s script. Charlier and Gir, “Fort Navajo,” in Blueberry : l’intégrale 1, 16.
aided by our crusading hero Ardan-des-sables, known as the Flamme d’argent, and his young wards Edric and Fennec. In the story, Christian knights engage and defeat single-minded Muslims depicted variously as fanatical militants, pillagers, and slave-traders.

When the villains do speak, they speak in the verse of the fictional Islamist: “Sus aux infidèles!” “Pas de quartier!” “Périssent les roumis!” “Les scorpions doivent mourir, même dans l’enfance!”182 Drawn in arresting color and from low angles looking up to heighten the terror of their gestures, the Sultan’s troops threaten the reader-viewer’s eye as formidable, disciplined, well-armed, but barbaric adversaries, which only augments the valor of the European cohort that finally defeats them.183 Cuvelier had also authored with Benoi (Benoit Boëlens) one of the first BD adventures to feature a Native American character in the title role, yet that short series as well, as “Le Croisé sans nom” had most certainly done, projects the elimination of an indigenous or non-white presence from frontier space as a foregone conclusion. “Wapi et le triangle d’or,” published in Le Journal de Tintin across 1962, recounts the coming of age of the young Sioux boy Wapi as his elders find themselves ordered at gunpoint to renegotiate their treaty or migrate onto reservation lands following the suspected murder of a white settler.184 Nature and circumstance best the angry mob of miners, police, and Fifth Cavalry soldiers out for

182 Greg and Cuvelier, 48.
183 See, for example, Greg [Michel Regnier] (text) and Paul Cuvelier (art), “Le Croisé sans nom,” in Flamme d’argent (Brussels: Lombard, 1965), 59.
184 The story was published as “Wapi et le triangle d’or” in Le Journal de Tintin, Fr. ed., no. 701 (1962) to no. 715 (1962).
Sioux blood – crying “Qu’on les exterminate!” – which allows the plot to shift focus onto the machinations of the village sorcerer, who has been secretly amassing gold in the mountain and sowing tribal discord. Despite the momentary victory of native ruse and fortitude over the representatives of progress, “Wapi et le triangle d’or” condemns the Sioux villagers doubly by its final frames, first to eventual elimination by white invaders depicted as multifactioned, rapacious, and self-renewing, and second to degeneration or implosion, the result of fratricide, superstition, and corruption.

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With Blueberry, Charlier and Gir orient the BD adventure, and bande dessinée as a whole, towards more nuanced and adult understandings of contemporary subject matter. Their disquieting explorations of the contradictions of settler colonialism and of the kinds of soldiers that it produces – compromised, half-blooded, between-worlded – engaged shrewdly with the complicated loyalties laid bare by the violences of revolution and decolonization in France and the colonies. There is no “clear line” in Gir’s hands, nor does the Western genre in Charlier’s rendition of it deliver black-and-white answers to the questions of integration, culpability, and belonging that have always resided at its core. In “Fort Navajo,” one finds instead dynamism and reaction cascading across a

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185 Benoi [Benoit Boëlens] (text) and Paul Cuvelier (art), Wapi et le triangle d’or (Brussels: Éditions Bédéscope, 1985), 31.
desert setting that pulverizes law and order, punishes the inexperienced and the brash, and necessitates the formation of unlikely and risky alliances for survival.

Jijé’s “Charles de Foucauld,” whether ideological or tone-deaf, painted an enticing portrait of colonial possibility in the desert at a historical moment of its very impossibility. “Ombres Blanches,” similar in tone, advertised the humanitarian work of white colonizers among Black Africans depicted as unable to gift themselves life or reason, and across a period that saw African nationalists emerge from the shadows to demand their collective and respective detachments from Europe. Meanwhile, the more popular realist BD Westerns for the most part eschewed facile conclusions and attempted more sympathetic explorations of the victims of imperialism. As this chapter has shown, the landscapes of ambush, surveillance, and ruse that defined Sam Billie Bill, Sitting Bull, Jerry Spring, and Blueberry as heroes are littered with dead bodies, failed accommodations, and trampled rights. Unlike the globetrotting adventurer, who returns to the safe enclosure of civilization at the end of each episode like a tourist returning home from a harrowing vacation, the hero of the frontier tale remains trapped, as was the expeditionary soldier at Dien Bien Phu, as was the conscript in French Algeria, in a fatal environment unceasingly at war with nature, man, and machine. That tragic environment, which series like Sitting Bull, Jerry Spring, and Blueberry explored and exposed, resonated with vast BD readerships across the 1950s and early 1960s precisely
because its landscapes, peoples, conditions, and consequences had contemporary corollaries, most strikingly so in French Algeria.
Conclusion

The words: infertility – desert – void – do not do justice to the place. I am in agreement with Monsieur Foureau to employ the expression ‘waste,’ the ‘Saharian waste.’ The expression is not too strong.

—Major Jean Deleuze, 1901

In the United States and France, the desert has long been imagined as a place of experimentation and transgression, an out-there or other-there in which the laws and norms of the enceinte hold little sway. The sheer scale of land, sand, or bare rock that stretches flat to the horizon or rises in offshoots that dwarf both man and the man-made ridicules the preoccupations of the “civilized” human form – its thirst and hunger, its insistence on etiquette, its belief in reciprocity, in productivity, in transformation. In Euro-American conceptions of national territory and colonial accretion, perceived wildernesess of all kinds, including deserts, plains, and jungles, marked barren, “vacant,” impenetrable, or otherwise unassimilable dead zones bridging lands deemed more suitable for exploitation and settlement. The scientists and explorers who passed into such geologies and lived to describe the experience only reinforced the dire pictures of desert space as a graveyard or “waste” and of jungle thickets as deathtraps. To the

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imperial-minded, however, the less desirable lands had to be crossed, mapped, routed, and nominally incorporated, if only to claim the boundaries of the realm.

From the late nineteenth century into the middle of the twentieth century, deserts in particular featured prominently in American and French narratives of imperial strength, national grandeur, and masculine valor. Myths, stories, histories, and images of ordinary men battling to expand the empire and implant the nation in dangerous and geologically aberrant landscapes appended new traits to the national character. The climates and topographies of the American deserts and desertic Plains, like those of the Algerian Tell and the western Sahara, tested endurance and skill in war and provided opportunities for making “true men” out of “biological men.”

In the American Southwest across the nineteenth century, for example, the trails called the “jornadas de muerte” regularly claimed the lives of traders, miners, pioneers, and prospectors unaccustomed to the heat and cold and indefensible against indigenous tribes striking for food, clothing, supplies, and weapons. John C. Frémont, the “discoverer” of the Southwest, described those desert dwellers as “American Arabs, who lie in wait to murder and plunder the innocent traveler.” At the turn of the twentieth century, in the early decades of France’s thrust south from Algiers towards the Tuareg strongholds of the Ahaggar, Saharan expedition, writes Douglas Porch, similarly

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4 Quoted in Limerick, 36.
“required mental toughness and determination of an extraordinary order to march day after grueling day over [...] naked and hostile land.”\textsuperscript{5} Popular cultural entertainments circulating between and across the United States and France increasingly mythologized not only the white metropolitan men who traversed and survived the desertic spaces of America and Algeria, but also, and more importantly, those who encountered and subdued the non-white peoples who inhabited them. Their successes, exaggerated in the hands of hagiographers, policymakers, opinion-shapers, and cultural producers, traded on and reinforced deep-seated and widely shared beliefs in landscape-derived Anglo-American exceptionalism and in the Franco-French imperial duty to civilize the “inferior races.”

This dissertation has argued that wilderness mythologies and popular celebrations of frontier heroics facilitated the conjoined work of nation- and empire-building in the United States and France across the nineteenth century, and promoted and justified various forms of the American and French imperialisms across the first half of the twentieth century. The frame of comparative colonialism employed in this study reveals similarities and disjunctions between the historical conditions, processes, and depredations that enabled the consolidation of the continental United States by 1850 and its conquest by 1890, and the concomitant initiatives and violences that propelled France’s incorporation of French Algeria as three metropolitan departments by 1848 and

\textsuperscript{5} Porch, 32-33.
their “pacification” by 1871. More significantly, the comparative methodology situates American and French colonial and imperial policymaking and national mythologizing within a transatlantic economy of exchange that circulated ideas, narratives, goods, and images relating to territorial expansion, conquest, agrarian settlement, subjection, and colonial rule. Alexis de Tocqueville’s travels in the 1830s and 1840s between the eastern and central frontiers of the United States and the French fronts and settlements in Algeria had notably brought the colonizing and “civilizing” projects of both nascent empires into dialogue and overt comparison. Across the century, however, expeditioners, government officials, and myth-makers in America, Europe, and North Africa frequently looked to the other side of the Atlantic not only in a spirit of competition and as rivals, but in search of inspiration, direction, and validation. As this dissertation demonstrates, deciders and shapers in the United States and France, particularly across the turn of the twentieth century, reconceptualized the meanings or origins of their respective nations in terms of territorial reach, imperial efficiency, and restored virility. The laws, discourses, and objects that they produced emerged out of and took shape within a single transatlantic, transimperial context, one that can be defined most simply as a shared conviction in conjoined “race destiny,” or the white, Christian domination of the planet.

The bande dessinée adventure, as a popular visual phenomenon deeply implicated in the production and circulation of national narratives and imperial myths,
rose to prominence in the middle decades of the twentieth century in France precisely because war, change, and anticolonial revolution had placed the very future of the empire in doubt. Postwar regulation of the print sector had succeeded in transforming the BD adventure into a pedagogical medium and its heroes into national ideals for the new generations. Stripped of licentiousness, laziness, physical infirmities, magical abilities, and ambivalences, BD adventurers incarnated the sève of the nation at home and its colonizing spirit abroad and harnessed the power of travel, speed, and technology. Serial adventures appeared in BD journals and magazines in overwhelming numbers across the 1950s and early 1960s, their popularity enabled by parajournalistic and illustrated features that took care to situate and explicate the peoples, places, and conflicts that the weekly heroes themselves encountered in their stories. This study’s socio-historical approach to comics production and reception reads chronologically across series, periodicals, and issue numbers, specifically to synthesize themes and treatments, draw out the pedagogical intent of the BD adventures and the content that supported them, and track the aventure’s engagements with contemporary events and debates. I have argued that BD adventurers across the era of the European decolonizations hastened to imperial “problem” regions and offered valuable lessons in how to master foreign terrain and how to police, pacify, and civilize so-called primitive populations. Heroes cycled into the between spaces of empire, freely complicating their relations with the peoples of the unsettled frontiers and leveraging the resources at hand
to rid the planet of the forces of darkness. Wilderness and desert settings again served crucially to showcase white physical prowess, superior accomplishments, cleverness, and perseverance against enemies and adversaries drawn from the non-white and colonized populations of the world.

Westerns, however, or adventures featuring American colonizers, provided French and Belgian bédéistes with vital room for experimentation at a time when government oversight largely stripped bandes dessinées for children of anticolonial and anti-imperial sentiment. Across the late 1950s and early 1960s, as Algerian nationalists engaged French soldiers in stark and dangerous frontier landscapes, stories of cowboys and Indians battling in similar settings propelled young weekly readers into an everydayness of colonial warfare and resistance that other media could not depict, because of censorship, or would not depict, because of editorial obligations, business loyalties, or personal convictions. BD Westerns told tales of another’s empire, of forgotten times, and of “vanished” places, but corollaries in text and image invited comparisons with contemporary events. In this regard, the specificities of the comics form itself facilitated polyvalent and multilayered readings and interpretations of adventure storylines and their art. As graphic narrative or narrative art, comics tell stories predominantly through visual means. The illustrations, images, and text included in the comics panel represent only some of the visual elements that reader-viewers must contend with as they read progressively in sequence to build narrative. The use and
manipulation of page margins can structure time, action, and feeling, as can the spaces left blank between panels, the width and shape of their frames, and their arrangement on the page. In realist adventures, the capture and rendering of human, animate, and object reality as two-dimensional images juxtaposed in sequence to simulate movement and duration necessarily creates gaps and elisions that reader-viewers account for themselves. They do so imaginatively, by drawing from their own experiences and knowledge and often from the wealth of ideas and images circulating in the public sphere. Bande dessinée illustrations that gesture at desert sand, sheer rock, and dark-skinned warriors can in this way generate coincidences in the moment of reading with more than one time, place, and context.

What Jacques Rancière writes of the theater spectator equally applies to the comics reader-viewer:

The spectator [...] observers, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of place. She composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her. She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way – by drawing back, for example, from the vital energy that it is supposed to transmit in order to make it a pure image and associate this image with a story which she has read or dreamt, experienced or invented.6

The transmission of unitary “messages” through art, he continues, is neither straightforward nor guaranteed, nor can authors and artists ever fully “anticipate” or

control the interpretations and uses of the images they produce. There exists instead a “distance between artist and spectator,” a creative space of disjuncture and possibility in which a “third thing” appears “that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect.”

Comics’ ability to inspire deeply personal, affective connections with protagonists and storylines accounts in part for the co-optation of bande dessinée in the 1950s by morality leaders and politicians who sought to reach, teach, and shape the new generations. Authors of realist BD adventures in general limited the ambiguity of text, line, and layout to enhance the legibility of the heroics on the page and to offer poignant lessons, seemingly tailored for the times, in how to remember the past and how to survive the future. But because meaning in comics exceeds what is pictured, images of deserts, mountains, plains, and jungles, of armed resistance and imperial conquest, of subjugated peoples and colonial others, particularly in BD Westerns, resonated in complicated ways with conflicts and crimes far outside the frame.

7 Rancière, 93-94, 103.
8 Rancière, 15.
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Biography