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Diderot's *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*: A Study in Historical Precociousness

Casting anti-colonialism as an exclusive product of the nineteenth and twentieth-century colonial experience, though a dominant trend among historians, is tremendously misleading. Such reductive generalizations tend to gloss over significant ideologies or events simply because they complicate the distinct periods which historians have retroactively applied. Indeed, insofar as European domestic colonial opposition is concerned, several articulate and forceful challenges to the colonial enterprise were certainly put forth prior to the nineteenth century. Denis Diderot's novella entitled *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* stands out on several counts in this oft overlooked field of early-modern European anti-colonialism. Diderot's work cogently attacks the ideology of empire while simultaneously undermining the "noble savage" or "natural man" orthodoxy through which proponents of empire typically viewed the colonial Other. In its place, Diderot posited an image of these "others" as profoundly cultured beings, rather than being mere caricatured projections of the European imagination that the "noble-savage" paradigm made them appear to be. As such, Denis Diderot's novella deserves to be considered by future historians as an important example of proto-anti-colonial literature.

Precise working definitions of the terminology used in this study are critical to its methodological approach and the contextualization of its central concepts. The western psyche often perceives the term "anti-colonialism," somewhat erroneously, as an ideology which promulgates a visceral disgust and rejection of Europeans in addition to a rejection of all forms of colonial rule. This perception, however, is one which largely grew out of the specificities of twentieth-century colonial experience. To attribute similar ideological proclivities to Diderot simply because of his shared rejection of empire would be to commit the grave historical error of viewing the past through the lens of the present. Indeed, anti-colonialism in the twentieth century, fanonian sense of the term would have been reprehensible to Diderot; though he was most certainly a radical, forward-thinking philosophe, he was fundamentally a man of his time.

Similarly, Diderot's views towards European involvement in the "New World" and the far flung Pacific islands such as Tahiti were distinct from his opinion on European involvement in what was then referred to as the "Orient." Unlike the Americas and the largely unexplored Pacific islands, the Orient had a long and often contentious history

with its European neighbors. Oriental civilization was, in the mind of the eighteenth-century European, the primary, if not the only, feasible claimant to the title of culture besides Europe itself. As such, European interference in this region was viewed by Diderot more as a manifestation of an old and contentious rivalry between adjacent civilizations than as an asymmetric relationship between an avaricious subjugator and innocent natives. Indeed, according to Anthony Strugnell, a noted scholar of Diderot, the philosophe's views on colonialism specifically pertaining to India "denote an inability to escape the straitjacket of European superiority."

Additionally, European involvement in the Orient during this period was principally aimed at expanding trade routes whereas in the Americas and the Pacific colonialism was intricately tied to the institution of slavery. Diderot, a noted supporter of nascent anti-slavery movements, would have been moved to oppose colonial efforts outside the Orient not only due to the fundamental flaws he saw in the colonial logic, but also because of the slave-based economy it often brought with it. This belief in the inevitable comingling of colonialism and slavery greatly informed his argument in *Supplément*. With these critical geographical and conceptual boundaries firmly in place one can more completely understand what the term "anti-colonialism" signified to Diderot.

As he was certainly a consummate French *homme de lettres*, Diderot was undoubtedly best acquainted and most concerned with France's specific pursuit of empire.

Therefore, the anti-colonial challenge he puts forth in *Supplément* must be viewed through a fundamentally French lens. The personal reign of Louis XIV, which began in 1661, was the turning point for the French empire as it was then transformed from a "haphazard collection of territories" to a vast and formidable colonial network connected principally through trade. Indeed, the market in goods such as sugar, tobacco and cotton from the French Caribbean alone went from "4.4 million livres in 1716 to 77 million in 1754." The growing number of slaves was central to the production of these labor-intensive products. Similarly, French holdings in Africa and the Indian Ocean grew in the eighteenth-century under the authority of state-authorized trading companies which were involved in expanding the African slave trade and thus the plantation-based economy. The most geographically vast of the areas under French control in this period was the north-western Atlantic region known as Nouvelle France. Though not statistically significant in terms of its involvement in the slave trade, Nouvelle France provided the metropole with considerable wealth because of its centrality in the fishing and fur industries. Such was the state of colonial affairs about which Diderot likely began to learn after his arrival to Paris in 1728.

Any scholar so inclined will have difficulty locating hints of Diderot's future philosophical radicalism in what Diderot himself often described as an idyllic, pastoral childhood in the town of Langres. Diderot's early life and upbringing were in fact rather pious and his family had deep clerical roots. According to Diderot's celebrated biographer Arthur Wilson, Diderot's family was "not only intimately familiar with the tradition of the church but also not in the least rebellious against it." It was thus in large part Diderot's life in Paris, the friendships he forged and the social circles in which he was an active part, which made him the formidable philosophe he became.

Arguably the most significant of the relationships that Diderot built was his storied rapport with another major thinker of eighteenth-century France, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose caustic assaults on European mores impacted much of his thought (the exchange was, to be sure, reciprocal). Rousseau was, however, one of the principal exponents of the "noble-savage" theory, which Diderot categorically rejected in *Supplément*. Furthermore, Rousseau's articulation of this exceedingly popular idea was both tremendously influential among his contemporary thinkers and was largely representative of their own approaches. The fact of Diderot's longstanding close relationship with Rousseau and their eventual estrangement renders likely that Diderot based, at least in part, his refutation of "noble savagery" in *Supplément* on Rousseau's understanding of the concept.

Rousseau expounded the most on "noble savagery" in his work entitled *A Discourse on Inequality*. He began therein with a bitter rejection of the decadent, corrupt and immoral civilization he perceived all around him. Rousseau was adamant that the Europe of his time had tragically distanced itself from the primitive, natural past in which interlocking social relations, indeed society all together, was non-existent. Man in this natural state was "an amoral creature, akin to an animal that simply satisfied its immediate needs without reflection or moral judgment." He was, in essence, entirely free from artifice. Evidently, in this happy and innocent state of man the only type of moral imperative was to pursue one's own interests "with as little possible harm to others." Man's metaphorical fall from this heavenly existence was to Rousseau's mind "wrought by sex, by competition, self-awareness, self-consciousness and hence personal property, laws, morality, and guilt." All of these factors necessarily involve other people; indeed several of them form the very basis of civil society and culture. This fallen and domesticated man will eventually "grow feeble, timid, servile; and his soft effeminate way of life completes the enervation both of his strength and his courage."

There is little, if any, subtext in Rousseau's writing. His scathing critique of man's current state clearly referenced the advanced stage of social interdependence he saw in

France and the rank moral depravity he believed it to have engendered. As for this "natural man" or "noble savage," Rousseau readily admitted at the beginning of "Discourse" that his account was hardly evidentiary or empirical, but was rather a creation of conjectural theorizing which was "better fitted to clarify the nature of things than to expose their natural origins." He does, however, repeatedly employ ethnographic references to various behavioral and cultural features of contemporary "savages" who were described in the accounts of world-travelers.

Hence we must not be astonished that the Hottentots of the Cape of Good Hope see ships on the high seas that the Dutch see with their telescopes, or that the American savages scent Spaniards on the trail as well as do the best dogs; or that all these barbarous nations endure their nakedness without discomfort.

This reference, and several others like it, suggest that the "noble-savage" paradigm upon which he elaborated in "Discourse" is, though certainly imaginative at points, fundamentally based on his having studied and scrutinized these previously mentioned travel accounts. Essentially, in constructing a hypothetical ideal state of human affairs Rousseau was also constructing a "referential allegory" of the colonial Other, or "noble savage," as the embodiment of this ideal.

This "noble savage" theory had an extremely significant impact on the discourse surrounding colonialism in the eighteenth-century. Rousseau, whether intentionally or not, created an image of natural man as both animalistic and pre-societal and then inextricably connected this image to the inhabitants of the colonial and pre-colonial regions. By denying to these "natives" even the basic characteristics of humanity as Europeans saw it, Rousseau created an insurmountable sense of alterity and wrapped it in an undeserved aura of anthropological fact. These "savages" were, in the mind of many Europeans, not really human. This, in turn, clearly had the effect of destroying any meaningful basis for understanding between the French and those under their colonial dominion. Conveniently, the dimension of Rousseau's work that constituted an acerbic assault on the foundations of Western civilization was duly disregarded by most. What Rousseau's audience readily grasped was that these primitive peoples were akin to beasts in almost every respect and were thus in dire need of instruction on their path to civilization. Providing this guidance was a role that Europe readily appropriated as its duty.

Two highly representative examples of eighteenth-century French colonial writings, *Letters from a Peruvian Woman* and *New Voyages*, strongly reflect the "noble-savage" trope as promulgated by Rousseau. *Letters from a Peruvian Woman*, an epistolary novel published by Francoise de Graffigny in 1747, presents the reader with a young

Peruvian princess named Zilia. Zilia, the story's heroine, after being kidnapped by Spanish conquistadors, is transferred to a French ship and upon arrival in France is invited by the ship's captain, Déterville, to live at his mother's chateau in the countryside. Zilia agrees and the rest of the novel is principally concerned with her first impressions of French institutions, habits, and customs "which are defamiliarized and as a result denaturalized under her ingenuous gaze." Years pass and Zilia assimilates herself to French culture. Though she kept "souvenirs" of her Peruvian past in her personal library, these objects seem to be displayed in a staid and rather uninspired manner. Rather than being representative of something living and vibrant, Peruvian culture was clearly consigned to an inferior position and was firmly fixed as "a pre-colonial tradition." The civilizing mission was thus complete. The erstwhile savage had undergone an internal transformation, a revolution of mind, and had, both in body and spirit, become civilized simply as a result of her contact with "superior" French culture. *New Voyages*, a non-fiction work published by Baron de Lahontan in 1703, is similarly dependent on the noble-savage paradigm in its depiction of the Other. The primary structure through which "noble savagery" is presented therein takes the form of a discourse that occurs between Lahontan and an Amerindian he encounters named Adario. The reader learns through this dialogue that Adario's tribe, the Huron, lack all attraction to material goods and enjoy "robust physical constitutions." Furthermore, Adario asserts that in his tribe property rights do not exist, and as a result the gradations of wealth and the social interdependence they necessarily bring are entirely absent. Adario also exclaims at one point, in reference to his tribe, that "the scope of our imagination cannot extend one thumb's length beyond the earth's surface." As Sankar Muthu asserts in *Enlightenment against Empire*, "Hurons are free because they are their own masters, enslaved neither by their appetites nor by other people who claim superiority." These characteristics are highly evocative of the savage, natural and fundamentally pre-cultural simplicity which Rousseau attributed to his primitive man in *Discourse*. As such, Lahontan and Madame de Graffigny's works both present their colonial "subjects" as essentially void of all prerequisites for culture or civilization and thereby as imaginative caricatures of the European mind. This view, popular as it was, tacitly reinforced the ideology of empire that Diderot categorically rejected in *Supplément*.

Attributing a marked anti-colonial position to Diderot's *Supplément* makes it tempting to identify similar anti-colonial predispositions elsewhere in the vast corpus of his works. Such direct links are, however, exceedingly difficult to locate. It is, though, possible to note the presence of sentiments and insinuations suggestive of such a position in

several of his œuvres, albeit not the existence of an overarching anti-colonial system of thought outside of *Supplément*. For example, in the article he contributed to "L'Encyclopédie" entitled "Political Authority" and first published in 1751, Diderot states unambiguously that "No man has received from nature the right to command others" and that "power that is acquired by violence is only usurpation." Given the centrality of the colonial enterprise in state affairs during Diderot's time, it is difficult to imagine how he could have written these words without realizing their implications. Indeed, it is far more likely that he specifically had the colonial endeavor in mind but was cautious about being specific because of the well-known censorship powers that the Ancien Régime actively employed.

Other examples of this anti-colonial tendency can be drawn from Diderot's numerous uncredited contributions to Abbe Raynal's banned colonial history entitled *Histoire des Deux Indes*. Besides subtly and sometimes explicitly decrying the colonial enterprise, Diderot also made numerous allusions to a coming revolution in which he believed the European overlords would be overthrown by their colonial subjects. In Yves Benot's celebrated work *Diderot, de l'athéisme à l'anticolonialisme* the author pointed specifically to several such occasions. One such example can be found when Diderot, addressing himself to "injust, cruel, inflexible tyrants" exclaims "The world that you have invaded must free itself from the one in which you live. Then, the seas will only separate two friends, two brothers." In invoking such a radical liberationist tone and depicting an image of global unity Diderot was clearly demonstrating not only a disgust for the proponents of empire but also empathy for the plight of those under colonial dominion and hope for a future world in which cross-cultural relations were grounded in equality. Though these disparate and scattered points in the massive corpus of Diderot's work express strong anti-colonial sentiments they are not sufficient evidence to claim the existence of a coherent ideology outside of *Supplément*. They do, however, suggest that Diderot's radical assault on the foundations of colonial theory in *Supplément* was not entirely anomalous, but was rather indicative of strong convictions which had manifested themselves earlier in his career.

Supplément was based in part on an actual memoir written by the real Captain Bougainville upon his return to France after having circumnavigated the globe. The novella, which was published posthumously, specifically centers on Diderot's retelling of Bougainville's experiences in Tahiti during his travels. It begins with a conversation between two unnamed semi-narrative characters, A and B, the latter of whom claims to have previously read Bougainville's memoirs while the former has not. The two discuss for a time the specifics of Bougainville's voyage, lamenting the hardships he must have

endured and the dangers he surely faced. They then turn to discussing the fact that Bougainville writes about having encountered, on even the remotest of islands, various species of animals. In explaining this seemingly bizarre phenomenon to his companion, B begins to philosophize and states "Who knows the primitive history of our globe? How many spaces of land which are now isolated were once continuous?". Diderot was certainly making no claims to an evidenced scientific theory here, yet this seemingly idle speculation is ripe with meaning. Though Diderot does not further expound on this point he is undoubtedly implying that, to his mind, all of humanity has a shared ancestry. These foreign peoples, Diderot seems to say, are no more than a branch of the human tree which has developed in a different environment, thereby accounting for their radical differences. Therefore, from the very beginning of *Supplément*, Diderot posits a fraternal image of humanity which, if fully appreciated, provided a solid grounding for understanding and empathy which the noble-savage theory did not allow. Further along in this first chapter, A and B began discussing the story of a Tahitian named Aotourou whom Bougainville brought back with him to France. The pair briefly discuss several difficulties Aotourou encountered in attempting to adjust to French life. Evidently, soon after having disembarked Aotourou "threw himself upon the first European woman who came to encounter him, and was about to very seriously show her Tahitian politeness." He was also unable to learn to speak French because it gave his "inflexible organs" too much difficulty. Simply saying that these two pieces of information about Aotourou reflect the typical noble savage trope is, though on the surface true, far from what the author was implying. Diderot was suggesting, albeit subtly, that though Aotourou may appear outwardly savage, his inability to understand French culture or learn the French language are not therein derived. Indeed, they are rather a result of the fact that he had matured in the context of a profoundly different society. He was not savage, only unaccustomed. Aotourou did not live a pre-societal primitive existence; he was simply a product of his own culture. Diderot further addresses this theme, which turns the noble savage paradigm on its head, later in the text.

The second chapter, "Farewells of an Old Man," is essentially Diderot's fictionalization of a scene which took place when Bougainville and his crew were leaving Tahiti. Diderot employs the voice of an old Tahitian both to excoriate Bougainville and his rapacious crew and to lament the fact that Bougainville's visit undoubtedly augured the future implementation of their colonial designs. Early in the chapter the old man vehemently articulates a verbal assault on Bougainville's presumably ravenous intentions and, consequently, on the very logic of empire.

This country is yours! And why? Because you put your foot here! If a Tahitian landed on your coast and engraved on one of your stones or on the bark of one of your trees: This country belongs to the inhabitants of Tahiti, what would you think?

It was certainly a radical notion for an eighteenth-century Frenchman to conceptualize a "savage" claiming ownership of European territory. Diderot thereby exposes the logic behind the flawed equation of physical presence and colonial ownership by simply stating its logical opposite in a cogent *reductio ad absurdum*.

The old man then details how Bougainville and his crew have been undeserving and ungrateful of the kindness and hospitality shown to them by the Tahitians. He also claims that, because of the Europeans' intrusion, "The idea of crime and the danger of sickness have entered with you among us." Here Diderot clearly intended to attack the notion of European moral superiority and the supposed translatable universality of European culture which were found at the heart of the colonial endeavor. He suggests not only that European culture should be imposed on none because of its fatally flawed moral depravity, but also that it could never exist peacefully in Tahiti because it was too different from native habits and customs. As a result, forcing the juxtaposition of European culture and Tahitian culture would serve no good whatsoever and would only sow strife and discontent.

The third and fourth chapters in *Supplément* revolve around the story of a chaplain who had accompanied Bougainville and was invited by a Tahitian native named Orou to stay in his home during the ship's sojourn in his country. Through their conversations the reader learns of the tremendous amount of social planning which occurs in Tahitian society. Furthermore it becomes clear that this social planning is focused on harnessing natural instinct for the common welfare instead of repressing it, a tendency which Diderot explicitly attributes to Europe. On the first day of his stay with Orou the two begin discussing the religion to which the chaplain claims to adhere strongly. Orou has much difficulty understanding the fundamentals of Christianity not only because of his incredulity about the existence of an omnipotent divine-being but also because he cannot understand why so much of Christianity seems focused on suppressing sexual urges. Furthermore, the chaplain readily admits that Christian religious protocol is often transgressed by even the most pious, including monks and nuns. He also concedes that adultery and incest are rampant. When the chaplain inquires as to how the Tahitians keep their sexual urges in check without the imposition of religious mandate, Orou responds: "Such is the principal object of domestic education and the most important point about our public mores." He then continues to detail the utilitarian practices which have engendered healthy sexual attitudes that appear aimed at increasing the Tahitian

population (which serves the interests of all). Instead of vilifying sexual relations which occur outside of marriage, the Tahitians encourage all sexual liaisons between fertile partners and celebrate the birth of all children regardless of their parental status. After reflecting on all he has learned of Tahitian culture the chaplain remarks plainly "this passion which produces so many crimes and ills in our countries would be here absolutely innocent." The significance of this phrase is twofold. For one, the chaplain (and through him Diderot) is saying that "this passion" has an equivalent in Tahitian society and is thereby identifying a cross-cultural similarity which could serve as a basis for understanding the shared humanity of Tahitians and Europeans. Secondly, the chaplain is asserting that the Tahitians have made out of this instinct a culture which does not ascribe to nature the status of sin but was rather a system for the greater good. He seems to laud this achievement and is thus implicitly admitting that Tahitians have admirably reconciled their natural urges with the demands of their civilized existence.

Later in this dialogue between Orou and the chaplain the Tahitian speaks more of the negative aspects of life on his native island. The reader learns that the Tahitians constantly have "neighboring enemies to fight" and a "need for soldiers." All is most certainly not peaceful and innocent in this supposedly primitive society. These "savages" do not live an almost heavenly, edenic existence. Societal structures exist not only for reproductive purposes but also for common defense. Tahitian culture evidently interacts with other groups as a cohesive unit; it is a cultural group which, like any other, defines itself by what it is against, both figuratively and literally. Diderot thereby directly contrasts Tahitians with Rousseau's pre-cultural, peaceful and fiercely independent image of the "noble savage."

The fifth and concluding chapter of *Supplément* revolves around a dialogue between A and B in which they review the stories that they have read and discuss their implications. It is at this point that Diderot brings his discourse full circle and posits what was surely a major component of his philosophical outlook (not only in relation to colonialism). Early in the chapter, upon being asked by A how he understands the meaning of the word "mores," B responds "I understand a general submission and a consequent behavior to good laws or bad ones. If the laws are good, the mores are good. If the laws are bad, the mores are bad." Here Diderot again forwards his image of human beings as profoundly cultured and formed in large part by the society in which they find themselves. The mores of Tahitians were not determined by something etched into nature, but were in fact malleable and determined by the Tahitians themselves. Tahitians were, like Europeans, products of their environment. To compare their two

cultures side by side would be to assume that they had enough common bases, besides their shared humanity, upon which to base such a claim. European civilization, therefore, could not have been superior to anything. It could have only been different and incomparable. Diderot thereupon subverted the "civilizing mission" that rested on this supposed superiority and was at the center of the logic of empire.

Diderot further addresses this issue through A and B later in the chapter. When A asks B if it is in fact necessary to civilize the Tahitian "savage," B responds pointedly in saying,

If you intend to be the tyrant, civilize him. Poison him as best you can with a morality contrary to nature...Do you want him to be happy and free? Don't intervene in his affairs.

"Civilize" as used in this quote essentially implies raising the Tahitians to the cultural standard that was Europe. Since, however, the Tahitians were in Diderot's mind radically different people, "civilizing" them was a course of action which would flout the moral equivalency of their culture with that of Europe and would only yield tyranny. The two previously demonstrated points that Diderot makes in this final chapter, that culture forms morality and that "civilizing" is thus implicitly moralizing, are tied inextricably together with a short yet profound phrase which A pronounces in the last lines of *Supplément*. "Take the frock of the country where one is going and keep that of the country where one is." The moral here is quite clear: morality is a relative, fluid concept which fluctuates widely in different contexts. The Tahitians were their own people and should thus be allowed to continue to pursue their society's vision of the "good life" as they saw fit. Colonialism, as Diderot suggests in this text, inevitably sets one culture above another regardless of the fact that cultures are context specific and thus incommensurable. If one takes "frock" to be a metaphor for culture Diderot was therefore promulgating a culturally relativist worldview which, as expressed in *Supplément*, argues specifically against colonialism and its discontents.

There are many historians and literary theorists who scoff at the possibility that Diderot was assaulting the foundations of colonialism in *Supplément*. Their arguments typically take one of two positions. First, they claim that the novella is more of a clarion call to sexual libertinism than anything else. This, however, is a *prima facie* reductive view which virtually ignores the multifaceted centrality of sex to the human experience and thereby its tremendous metaphorical capacity. Secondly, there are many who say that *Supplément* is primarily a critique on European culture done through the mouthpiece of the Tahitian foreigner. This claim is certainly true in part. It is hard to imagine, however,

how Diderot could have chosen such strikingly current interlocutors and used such referential diction without having understood what they implied. In literature everything is included by choice and as such nothing can be said to exist in a vacuum.

Denis Diderot was, even in a period noted for its sparkling minds, a radically unique talent. One specific way in which this radicalism manifested itself in his career was through the assault he launched on the lucrative state-sponsored colonial enterprise in his work entitled *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*. In undermining the image of the colonial Other, which had been largely defined through the noble-savage trope, and in asserting the fraternity and common origin of all humanity, Diderot postulated a view which framed colonialism as wildly unjust and necessarily inhumane. In the epoch following the writing of *Supplément* both the colonial enterprise itself and the field of anti-colonial literature which it influenced were to be tremendously expanded.

Supplément, however, appears to have been largely forgotten or misconstrued because of its genesis in an era noted for a widespread support of the colonial endeavor.

Historians would do well to eschew assumptions of cultural uniformity in future studies of anti-colonial thought. Indeed, such presumptuous generalizations are indicative of a superficial approach to historical research. *Supplément*, more than two centuries after it was first published, should now be allowed to take its place in the pantheon of anti-colonial literature.

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Andrew Menfi

Committed to the End: Confederate Soldier Combat Motivation in the Final Days of the Confederacy

In his wartime diary on January 1st 1865, Private Henry Robinson Berkeley of the Confederate Army lamented the coming of the New Year. Berkeley had much to anguish over, for over the preceding months the Confederacy had suffered a miserable string of disasters, rendering the cause of Southern independence all but hopeless. Union forces had overrun the Confederate strongholds of Atlanta and Savanna, and had put the capital of Richmond under a desperate siege. The Federals also had all but destroyed the Confederate Army of the Tennessee in December, the second largest Southern fighting force in the field. Confederate supplies and troop strength stood at an all-time low, while desertions were at an all-time high. On a more personal level, Berkeley had suffered the life of a nineteenth-century soldier for four years; living in miserable conditions, experiencing the horrors of combat, and seeing friends die before his eyes. It was for these reasons that on January 1st 1865, Berkeley grieved in his diary, "The old year is gone with all its hopes, sorrows, losses, trials, dangers, sufferings, bloody battles and still more bloody heartaches and anxieties. ...The future looks gloomy, and almost hopeless. I wonder if I shall live to see 1866." Berkeley, like most Southern soldiers at that point in time, believed the Southern cause to be almost certainly lost.

Despite these circumstances, the thought of desertion never came up in Berkeley's diary, because for him it was never an option. Two days later, Berkeley received the first piece of good news in a long time: his commanding officer gave him permission to visit home on a furlough. Berkeley had the opportunity to remain at home and abandon his commitment to the Confederate army. Thousands of Confederate soldiers were deserting; many had gone home on furlough and simply had not returned. It was certainly understandable for Berkeley to do the same. Berkeley admitted that his cause was lost and he knew that he might certainly lose his life for nothing concrete if he remained in service. However, Berkeley's motivation, although intangible, was powerful enough for him to continue to fight. The day before he returned to the front, Berkeley wrote, "Many sad and hopeless thoughts [were] running through my active mind. Tomorrow I leave for the army under the darkest auspices I have ever done. I have but one wish, that is, that I may have courage, strength and grace, in this coming campaign, to do my whole duty to my God, my country and my fellow man. If I must fall, I want to fall at my post of duty." Berkeley believed that the Confederacy was going to lose, but he returned to service and remained until war's end because he believed that it was his duty to do so and that his honor was at stake.

Private Henry Berkeley was representative of the thousands of Confederate soldiers who fought in the final months of the American Civil War; they chose to keep fighting out of a higher commitment to duty and honor. Though thousands of soldiers deserted when the cause seemed lost, thousands more chose, remarkably, to remain in service. Despite the hardship that Confederate soldiers experienced and the clear signs in the final months that victory was impossible, their dedication to these tenets of ideology overrode any practical expectation of military victory. Although other motivations certainly influenced Confederate soldiers, they most commonly stressed duty and honor over other factors for remaining in service.

Understanding this motivational underpinning is significant because it reveals much about nineteenth-century Southern culture. In the American Civil War, a diversity of initial motivations prompted Southern men to join the army. Likewise, various sustaining motivations kept men in the army. However, specifically studying the group of soldiers who continued to fight at the end, when circumstances were at their worst, reveals some of the strongest motivating factors. Men remained committed to duty and honor even in the face of inevitable defeat, which exemplifies the importance of these cultural factors in the nineteenth-century South.

This study utilizes a carefully chosen source base in order to ensure a representative and reliable sample. The soldiers chosen represent a diverse geographic distribution as well as varying ranks. The sources are exclusively published letters and diaries of Confederate soldiers. There is no more reliable way to ascertain motivation of Confederate soldiers in the closing nine months of the war than closely studying the written words of the men themselves. The study purposely excludes memoirs and regimental histories because of potential inaccuracies and biases that inevitably stem from such sources. It was common for veterans, in writing material intended for publication, to misrepresent themselves and their comrades, usually in a much better light by emphasizing commendable actions and ignoring immoral ones. Soldiers did this both for personal and political reasons. Furthermore, unlike letters and diaries, soldiers often wrote memoirs years after the conflict, which led to significantly more mistakes stemming from poor memory.

Historians have written detailed and extensive studies of Confederate soldier combat experience and motivation, but they do not sufficiently explain motivation late in the war. Bell Irvin Wiley's *The Life of Johnny Reb* is a comprehensive study of Confederate soldiers during the Civil War. Gerald Linderman's *Embattled Courage*, Reid Mitchell's *Civil War Soldiers*, and James McPherson's *For Cause & Comrades* all cover the experiences and motivations of Confederate and Union soldiers. Even though these are all excellent surveys of Civil War soldiers, none of them focus on Confederate soldier ideology in the final desperate months of the war. Some of these studies touch upon the subject, but none go into great detail. This lack of sufficient

study is a problem that needs to be addressed in order to get a complete understanding of Confederate soldier ideology. This study therefore fills an under-emphasized gap and rectifies this problem.

Jason Phillips' *Diehard Rebels* is the most in-depth study that discusses why Confederate soldiers fought in the final actions of the war, but it is limited. Phillips specifically focuses on the men who refused to stop fighting and "submitted to unending carnage and squalor because they expected to win." Optimistic beliefs in invincibility and inevitability of Confederate victory certainly contributed to late-war combat ideology. However, Phillips' study is not comprehensive enough because Confederate soldiers who stayed committed because they always believed in victory were a minority. Phillips does not mention soldiers who continued to fight yet did not necessarily believe in absolute victory.

In contrast, this study of late-war Confederate soldier combat motivation is comprehensive. Phillips does not mention notions of duty and honor that permeated soldiers' writing because these concepts do not fit within the scope of his specific argument. Though my study found evidence of some soldiers continuing to fight out of belief in eventual military success, my study also found that repeated military disasters caused soldiers' belief in victory to deteriorate. However, repeated defeat did not have as noticeable an effect on soldiers' dedication to duty and honor, by far the most commonly cited reasons for fighting. Phillips also overstates soldiers' belief in inevitable victory because the time-period for his study is significantly broader than my own. While this study focuses on the final nine months of conflict, Phillips looks at the final two years of the war after the Battle of Gettysburg. Thus, Phillips was much more likely to find belief in victory in the final two years, rather than the final nine months. Even though Gettysburg was one of the infamous turning points of the war, Confederate forces still had a chance at victory.

This study looks at the final nine months of the conflict, right after the fall of Atlanta to Union forces in September of 1864, because this moment arguably marked the end of the Confederacy having any chance at victory. The fall of Atlanta was significant because not only was it a huge tactical victory for the Union, but it was also a huge political victory that occurred at a key time. The Confederate strategy never required a full military victory; it only required Confederate forces to hold out long enough for a Northern peace movement to gain enough momentum and force an armistice, or for foreign powers to intervene on the side of the Confederacy.

The political stakes were high at this point because in November of 1864. President Abraham Lincoln was up for re-election against George McClellan, who ran on a platform of peace. In the early months of 1864, Union forces incurred catastrophic casualties with relatively little gain, causing the war to lose popularity in the North.

Given the unpopularity of the war at the time, and the persistence of peace democrats in Congress, McClellan's victory was a distinct prospect. If elected, McClellan could have potentially forced a peace with slavery intact and a possibly independent Southern nation. The capture of Atlanta gave Northerners enough renewed hope and support in the conflict that Lincoln won the election and continued the war.

Many Confederate soldiers realized their abysmal chances at victory after the fall of Atlanta and Lincoln's re-election. On September 8th 1864, Private Henry Berkley wrote in his diary that he "heard of the fall of Atlanta" and that "the future looks dark and hopeless for the South" because of it. Many soldiers had similar responses of hopelessness a few months later with the re-election of Abraham Lincoln. South Carolinian Henry Lewis deserted his post after he heard of the election results. He wrote home that he "could not stand the idea of hardship of four more long years of war". After this point, the Confederacy had practically no chance to continue the war long enough to force a peace, and many soldiers knew it.

The desire to preserve a sense of personal honor constituted a main contributing factor for Confederate soldiers to remain tethered to a desperate cause. In the context of the nineteenth-century South, this study defines honor as a code of morals or a set of social norms that society expected men and women to follow. For Confederate soldiers, Southern honor compelled them to fight against the northern invaders and endure in the name of their country, even if defeat was unavoidable. The implications of a soldier breaking the code of honor could be severe personal guilt, for their peers to revile them as lesser men, or for their actions to reflect poorly upon their families. As historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown put it, "Honor or perhaps dread of dishonor was a major factor in keeping soldiers at the front. The threat of ridicule and reprisal... was a powerful incentive against straggling or desertion." This threat of dishonor was very real for Southern soldiers. Private Henry Berkeley wrote in his diary of a group of Confederate soldiers who dishonored themselves by turning themselves over to Union soldiers in order to escape further service. Henry wrote that these men "are utterly scorned and despised by all other Confederate prisoners, and are... men of the very lowest standard and have little or no sense of honor." Just like these soldiers, peers often condemned and alienated Southern men who disgraced themselves.

It was for these reasons of personal, familial, cultural and peer pressure that honor was a significant force behind keeping Confederate soldiers from deserting in the final frantic months of the war. In April of 1865, Alabamian Edmund Pettus knew that the Confederacy was toppling down, that thousands of men were deserting, and that the war would soon be over. Despite this, on April 28th Edmund wrote in a letter, "Though others may desert and disgrace themselves, & their kindred, let us stand together and obey orders! In this way we best contribute to our safety, and comfort; and preserve our characters untarnished." Edmund put great value on preserving his

honor, and he refused to desert his cause and shame himself. Lieutenant Thomas J. Key from Arkansas had a similar view on honor and desertion. On November 7th 1864, Thomas wrote bluntly in his diary that "desertion was disgraceful" and he would never consider it. Thomas feared disgrace, which kept him fighting until his regiment surrendered in the final days of the conflict. Many Confederate soldiers stayed faithful to a futile cause and rejected desertion as an option in order to uphold their honor by staunchly fighting for their homeland.

In addition to honor, the other key concept that kept Confederates fighting was their commitment to doing their duty. This study defines duty as the moral obligation to fulfill a commitment to a group, person, or idea. Many Confederates who participated in the final stages of the fighting expressed duty as their explanation for why they did not leave. For instance, the Alabamian James Williams wrote to his wife in December of 1864, "I am so wedded to my pride and my duty, that I would not leave my forts while a fight appeared imminent." It is important to clarify that for Confederate soldiers, duty was a multifaceted commitment. Combatants conveyed that they fought to fulfill their duty to multiple groups, ideas, and people. It is also important to explain that these different commitments often overlapped in some form.

Many soldiers expressed that they fought out of a duty to their country or to their state. Confederates often felt compelled to continue to fight for their country out of a sense of duty, even when defeat appeared inevitable. Private Henry Trueheart wrote in December of 1864, "We are rendering more services to the country than we could possibly do in any other capacity... I have come as near the performance of my duty as men generally do." William Clement from North Carolina conveyed a similar devotion to country. When offered a leave of absence in December of 1864, Clement wrote that he "would not accept that unless I thought my country did not need my services any longer." Duty to country was plainly a significant motivating factor for combatants at the end of the war.

On a more personal level, numerous Confederates also felt that they had a commitment to continue to fight to defend their home and their family. For almost the entirety of the war, Union armies invaded the South, and fought on Southern soil. Southern men felt that it was their duty to try and hinder northern armies intent on invading and devastating their homeland. This sentiment exacerbated toward the end of the war when Union armies adopted a total war strategy, which called for widespread destruction of civilian supplies, infrastructure and property. These actions by the Union inspired Thomas Key to keep fighting. Key wrote in his diary in November of 1864, "My heart is so much depressed with the sad intelligence from dear home that I have thought of but little save the barbarous treatment that my family received." Henry Berkeley likewise felt a compulsion to defend his home. In October of the same year, large numbers of soldiers in Henry's regiment left either on a

temporary furlough or permanently. Henry wrote in his diary, "I told them that I did not think this was a time for men to be going home, that General Early needed every man which he could possibly get and many more than he had, and that if we did [not] stand to our guns, the Yanks might get to our homes before we did." Henry's duty to defending his home is quite apparent. Even if victory proved impossible, many soldiers felt obligated to defend their home and their family from foreign invaders.

Most men who chose not to desert did so out of their personal adherence to honor and duty, and not out of fear of punishment. Punishment for desertion in the Confederate armies rarely ended in execution, even for repeat offenders. Given the numerical superiority of Union forces, the Confederacy could not afford to execute valuable servicemen. Most officers punished deserters with some form of temporary confinement, only to release them quickly back into service.

The already lax punishments became even looser later in the war when Confederate soldiers were in even higher demand. In August of 1864, President Jefferson Davis drafted an official pardon to every Confederate deserter in custody, releasing them from any punishments. This policy arose out of desperation for more men. Five months later, General-in-Chief Robert E. Lee wrote a second pardon, likewise releasing every deserter in custody at that time. The risks for desertion were not high for Confederate soldiers, especially in the final months of the conflict. This is most likely why, in the entire sample size for this study, not a single soldier expressed fear of punishment from deserting, while the majority expressed fear of not fulfilling their duty or dishonoring themselves.

Not only did most Confederate soldiers not express fear of punishment for desertion, but it was not difficult for soldiers to find an opportunity to desert and succeed if they had wished to do so. For instance, the Confederate Army's organizational system for record keeping was inefficient and clumsy. This inefficiency stemmed from the problems that came with the brand-new institutions that Confederate officials had quickly built for the use of their new country. In addition, confusion stemming from invasion and destruction of records also led to problems. Given the state of the country, not only was it difficult for the war department to keep track of soldiers, but to find and capture deserters as well. Another major factor was that Southern soldiers fought on southern soil, often only a few miles from their homes. It was common for soldiers familiar with the local land to just slip away from their post and go home.

Given the motive and opportunity towards the end of the conflict, Confederate soldiers deserted in droves. In a letter to his father in March of 1865, Private Edward Jones sorrowfully wrote, "The Army I am sorry to say is deserting very badly." In the same month, Captain Charles Blackford similarly reported home "our men are deserting quite freely." By war's end, the Confederate War Department estimated that

over 100,000 men deserted their posts. Desertion was common, relatively easy, and generally without harsh punishment for Confederate soldiers in the final months of the war. This demonstrates that most soldiers who chose to remain in service did so because of a commitment; most were not forced to remain by their superior officers.

Confederate soldiers expressed other reasons for remaining in service to the end, but for most soldiers they were secondary motivations when compared to duty and honor. Some other motivations for combatants included camaraderie, religion, and vengeance. Though several examples certainly exist of soldiers fighting for these motives, soldiers also professed fighting for notions of duty and honor, and did so in greater numbers and with more intensity. For instance, cavalryman W. W. Heartsill conveyed in the May 17th entry of his diary his great desire to "make one mighty effort to avenge our brothers who so nobly gave their lives for their country." However, in the final nine months of the war Heartsill did not express this desire for vengeance any more than this single instance. Yet, Heartsill wrote in his diary a month earlier his fear for "eternal shame and disgrace...if we do not rise in strength and, at least make one determined effort to retrieve our misfortunes." A month before this, Heartsill wrote that his regiment fought because "we feel that we do but our duty". Examples of Heartsill mentioning duty and honor as a motivation to continue fighting repeatedly occur, unlike vengeance. In this way, Heartsill is representative of the majority of Confederate soldiers in that duty and honor usually trumped other motivating factors.

The belief in inevitable Southern victory as a motivating factor that existed even in the late stages of the war, but over time it declined for most soldiers significantly. Repeated military setbacks made many of even the most stubborn soldiers eventually admit that their cause was lost. Sergeant Edwin Fay was one such soldier who believed that the war was winnable up until the final days. On May 5th 1865, after Union forces took the Confederate capital of Richmond and General Robert E. Lee surrendered the largest Confederate Army, Fay wrote in a letter to his wife, "I firmly believe that the Confederacy will gain its independence." However, Fay could only keep this faith for so long. A few days later, Fay learned of the surrender of the Army of the Tennessee, meaning that there was only a single substantial Confederate Army remaining in the field. After hearing of these events, Fay admitted in a letter home on May 10th, "Truly the Lord has forsaken his people-I fear the subjugation of the South." Given enough time, most Confederate soldiers gave up hope of victory.

Even though repeated defeats caused many soldiers to give up on victory as a motivating factor, most who refused to desert did not renounce their commitments to honor and duty. The majority of soldiers who remained did not necessarily connect duty and honor to victory. Many Confederates believed that they could fulfill their duty and stay honorable by fighting, even if they did not think they were going to

achieve independence. Texan Henry Orr explained such thoughts in a letter home, in which he wrote that the Confederacy would probably soon "be broken by the advance of a brutal foe, and if such is the case, it will behoove us as soldiers in defense of our state and our Confederacy and as freemen struggling for independence to confront and if possible defend our country from every attempt of invasion, devastation, and ruin." Even though Henry admitted the Confederacy would probably lose, this only compelled him to keep fighting out of a duty to defend his broken country. When belief in victory faded for soldiers, duty and honor still forced many Confederates forward.

Once the conflict was over, every remaining Southern soldier needed to admit defeat, but even though they had lost, many combatants did not regret that they had fought. Though Confederate soldiers certainly regretted that the Union defeated them, many were satisfied that they had fulfilled their duty and kept their honor. After Union troops captured Private Louis Leon and ended his service, he wrote in his diary, "The four years that I have given to my country I do not regret, nor am I sorry for one day that I have given. My only regret is that we have lost for which we fought." W. W. Heartsill felt quite similarly once the army he belonged to surrendered. On May 20th when he mustered out, Heartsill proudly wrote in his diary that "as a company of Confederate Soldiers, we have to the utmost of our ability DONE OUR DUTY...we have been honorably discharged, we can look back with pride... and we can honestly say that we regret not our action." Duty and honor was so significant for these soldiers that they remained in uniform as long as possible, and they were proud of the actions they took even after they lost their bid for independence.

This study demonstrates that notions of duty and honor motivated a majority of Confederate soldiers who fought in the last nine months of the American Civil War when defeat was inevitable for the Confederacy. Many soldiers feared disgrace in the eyes of their peers and family, and could not dishonor themselves by deserting their post. Combatants also compelled themselves to continue serving out of a duty to fight for their country, and a duty to defend their homeland and their family from invaders. Desertion from the Confederate Army was rampant, easy, and lacked significant punishment. This exemplifies that the majority of troops who stayed when the cause was hopeless did so out of higher commitments, not because they could not desert or because they were afraid to desert. Though other motivating factors certainly existed for Confederates at this stage in the war, they generally remained secondary to duty and honor. The belief in Southern invincibility also existed and motivated soldiers to continue fighting. However, this belief deteriorated over time when Confederate disasters piled up. Commitment to duty and honor usually did not deteriorate over time, and at war's end, many soldiers took solace in the fact that they remained dedicated to these notions.

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