Some lyrics of old country music deal with violence and death. We can find examples of love-and-murder in those lyrics. This paper cites two traditional country lyrics: "Knoxville Girl" and "Banks of the Ohio." A man brutally kills a woman without any reason of doing it in a song. Why is it? In order to study reasons of murder, this paper takes a historical and social approach toward the problem. It also discusses how and why men wanted to have their own way. And this paper verifies the continuity of gothic elements transferred from the traditional country music to the modern country music.

Key Words: country music, lyrics, violence and death, gothic, murder

“The traditional British folk song, especially the ballad, is the original source of American country music,” says Jennifer Lawler. Therefore it is assumed that country music has had a variety of ballads in its music reservoir. This paper deals with the gothic embedded in love-and-murder ballads or songs of country music. Teresa Goddu writes about a gothic atmosphere portrayed in country lyrics, which conveys horror and mystery to us. And she elaborates on the nature expressed in traditional country lyrics and modern country lyrics. Goddu says that characteristics of traditional country are: gothic, violent murder, unatoned sin, ghostly visitations, morbidity, horror, violence, perverted sexuality, gro-
tesque, and so forth. Charles Reagan Wilson also studies the medieval gothic element found in modern country music. It is this gothic element that formed one of the bases of country music. But why were those horrible lyrics written and popular? This paper reviews materials, both in traditional and modern countries, that have the gothic element in their lyrics and it tries to find a clue for solving this question with a help of Southern literary works and books on social studies.

1. Violent Murders in Traditional Country Music

First of all this paper briefly examines a typical horror type of country song “Knoxville Girl,” which was transposed from the British ballad “The Oxford Girl.” This is one of the typical country songs that have elements of horror, violence and grotesque.

“Knoxville Girl”

I met a little girl in Knoxville, a town we all know well
And every Sunday evening, out in her home I’d dwell.
We went to take an evening walk about a mile from town
I picked a stick up off the ground and knocked that fair girl down.

She fell down on her bended knees, for mercy she did cry:
Oh Willie, dear, don’t kill me here, I’m unprepared to die.
She never spoke another word, I only beat her more.
Until the ground around me with her blood did flow.

I took her by her golden curls, and I dragged her round and round
Throwing her in the river that flows through Knoxville town.
Go down, go down, you Knoxville girl with the dark and roving eyes.
Go down, go down, you Knoxville girl, you can never be my bride.

They carried me down to Knoxville, they put me in a cell.
My friends all tried to get me out but none could go my bail.
I’m here to waste my life away down in this dirty old jail
Because I murdered that Knoxville girl, the girl I loved so well.

What we observe here is obvious: madness and cruelty. In the first stanza above we can see that a man was living a happy life with a girl in Knoxville and that he had a pleasure of spending every Sunday evening with her in her home. In other words the lyrics are saying that a man and a woman had an intimate relationships with each other. There is no doubt about their satisfaction of mental and sexual lives. But the third line of the first stanza changes drastically. They go out for a walk a mile from town, and a man beats her with a stick without any explanation and he continues to do so until she falls down on the ground, which is thought to be a mystery in terms of motive. We are likely to wonder,
“What happened?” In any case we think that a man should not knock a woman down even if he has a legitimate reason to do so. It is naturally believed that there should be some kind of reason behind his madness. But the lyrics do not inform us of his motive to do his insanity, therefore we come to look for some clues of this horrible conduct. According to Goddu’s assertion the murders depicted in country songs are characterized by either a lack of explanation for the violent acts or an explanation based on the man’s jealousy and desire to possess the woman (Goddu, 1998, 52), therefore listeners of “Knoxville” are not likely to find out what the real intention for this killing was.

In terms of bloodiness, we need to observe other lyrics similar to “Knoxville Girl,” where a man viciously pushes his fiancée into the Ohio River to drown. And he completes his killing on the bank of the Ohio and cries for help to God. In this song we see an ugly scene where he shows off a man’s physical strength used as a means of murder: pushing a woman’s head in the Ohio to kill her:

“Banks of the Ohio” (traditional)\(^\text{10}\)

I asked my love to take a walk just a walk a little way.  
As we walked along we talked all about our wedding day.

I held a knife close to her breast  
As into my arms she pressed.  
She cried: Oh, Willie, don’t murder me.  
I’m not prepared for eternity.

I took her by her lily white hand  
Led her down where the waters stand.  
There I pushed her in to drown  
And watched her as she floated down.

I started home between twelve and one  
I cried: My God, what have I done?  
I murdered the only woman I loved  
Because she would not be my bride.

We can confirm the fact that folk ballads tend to focus on the details of murders as we have seen them in two country songs so far. In “Banks of the Ohio” above, a man terrifies his fiancée with his knife and takes her to the bank of the Ohio and then pushes her head to drown. G. Malcolm Laws, Jr. adds his comment on this horrifying lyrics; “A young man drowns the girl he loves, after threatening her with a knife, apparently because she wishes to abide by her mother’s decision that she is too young to marry” (Laws, 1964, 194). Laws seems to have gone a little too far as to the cause of the killing, because an existence of her mother is only a mere presumption of his. But he has a point in that the woman refused to get married with him for some reason or another. Laws further adds some
information about "Banks of the Ohio," saying that "The history of this piece has not been traced, but its similarity to certain English broadsides has been pointed out" (Laws, 1964, 194). That means that there were many other examples of this sort in England, and those dreadful ballads were brought to the Southern States of America with aspiring immigrants. Laws shows us sixty-three other ballads of this kind under the titles of "Ballads about Criminals and Outlaws" and "Murder Ballads." It can be said that old country songs retained gothic characteristics of British ballads in reference to men's cruel conducts toward women without good reasons.

When we come across the phrase "her blood did flow" in "Knoxville Girl" or "pushed her in to drown" in "Banks of the Ohio," there arises one question: why did they use such horrible words or phrases in a song? This paper would like to refer to other materials that may help solve this question. A novelist Catherine Marshall reveals, in her book Christy, lives of Southern people from North Carolina to Tennessee in 1910s. We can see the way they lived in the mountains and their beliefs through a nineteen-year-old protagonist Christy. Christy hears a cruel story told by a Quaker mission worker Alice Henderson as follows:

Like the crippled nine-year-old girl who was beaten over and over by her mother's lover, day after day, then finally brutally raped by the same man. . . . Or there was the day I walked into a cabin over on Hog Back Mountain and discovered a woman strung up from the rafters—swinging—dead. Her imbecile husband was there gaping at the body. He was the murderer. When I asked him why he had done it, his only explanation was, "A woman what can't stand hanging a few hours ain't no woman a-tall."13

What is immediately apparent in this extract is that the South was full of violence, a savage place to live in, and it is not unusual for men to inflict a serious blow or death on women without a good reason. In addition to that we can confirm such a Southern trait from a novel Kit Brandon written by Sherwood Anderson. In this novel Kit tells us, "Drunken fights—stabbings, and shootings sometimes among the hill men, horse trading —thus, men always lived, horse trading. It was a part of the game being played" (Anderson, 1936, 7). Violence and death were everywhere in the South.

Therefore in "Knoxville Girl" and "Banks of the Ohio" it is natural for Southerners to use bloody expressions in its lyrics considering the situation where violence and killing took place here and there in the South. As David Hackett Fischer reports, "male dominance was very high in the South," it is understandable that there were men's dominant actions toward women in the South, which are thought to be ruthless violence to the weak.

2. Why Murder?

One of the things in which this paper is interested is the reason for the killing in lyrics because there remains the mystery of a murder. "Knoxville Girl" lacks a good reason to
convince us to believe that the man could not help committing a felony. Goddu picks out three characteristics of traditional bluegrass country music: killing a woman, a cruel murder and no explanation (Goddu, “Bloody Daggers,” 52). There seems to be a man’s insanity out of a man-woman love affair, because a man confesses at the last line, “I murdered that Knoxville girl, the girl I loved so well.” The lyrics are telling us that however irrational or unreasonable the motive of a murder may be, a man could resort to violence to have his intention realized. He utilizes anything that he thinks is useful and effective to meet his strong wish. In “Knoxville Girl” we presume that a man gradually came to notice his lover’s trivialities, which will rarely be the cause of manslaughter in our everyday life. Considering the fact that the lovers spent their sweet Sunday nights together, a sudden madness must have sprung up in him and was out of control. He shows us that love and death have opposite characteristics in their nature but they are closely related to each other, so he embodies two different qualities through his awful actions. Charles Reagan Wilson calls the theme of this song as “lover killing lover.”

The last line of “the girl I loved so well” is very important. What Wilson means is that there arises an extremism after lovers’ affairs, which could be a simple hatred or evil wish to kill his lover. It might be called antimony. Although they loved each other every Sunday evening, madness accumulated in himself without knowing it. Richard A. Peterson and Melton A. McLaurin also explain this point using the phrase of “a world of dualistic forces” underlying old country lyrics and modern country. If “dualistic forces” means two forces that exist in opposite positions, then they might be both “flames of love” and “insanity of killing a lover” in “Knoxville Girl.”

On the other hand there is another opinion that love and death form oneness that does not have a notion of dualism. Goddu maintains that “Showing sex to be anything but safe, love in these songs becomes just another type of death” (Goddu 1998: 52). Goddu says that death is to come at the end of a path where a young man and a woman loving each other walk along. Love and death represent two sides of the same coin.

Whichever opinion we may take for “Knoxville Girl,” dualism or oneness, it is obvious that a new dimension of a man appears abruptly because he feels a strong force of love. Without a strong force of love, Willie, narrator, would not have been driven by a mighty force to kill. It could be seen as a universal phenomenon when it comes to love-and-murder ballads. From a cultural point of view, Curtis W. Ellison argues that country songs are often concerned with death, using the term “a culture of death” in the South. He says that from the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century Southerners surely had a culture of death, which is conspicuously expressed in country music, citing a country song “Some Gave All.” It may be right to argue that Southerners from the nineteenth through the twentieth century lived with a culture of death and that we can confirm it in country music. At least we can say that the level of sensitivity to death was very high in the South.

It is widely believed that songs should be something to entertain us or to comfort our dreary moods with melodies and lyrics. But is “Knoxville Girl” a song that denounces a murder a young man committed or is this a country song that implies a lesson to deter
others from committing another felony? We also have to pay attention from a historical and social point of view to other elements that constitute country music. Dorothy Horstman writes about song preferences of Southerners in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.20

Long before the Revolution, Americans had shown a distinct preference for songs of tragedy, disaster, death, and sorrow. Of the English and Scottish folk ballads that accompanied the early settlers to the eastern seaboard, song like “Black Jack David,” “Fair Ellen,” and “Barbara Allen” --piteous tales of tragic love, broken promises, and murder--survived the best. They were, in fact, among the earliest songs recorded by hillbilly artists in the early twenties.

According to her research, there are many songs and ballads that lament tragic deaths and sad stories in those days and survive to this day. Horstman is trying to speculate on the reason for the South's penchant in terms of love-and-murder songs and she says that those songs are “an index of the misery experienced by the country music fan and provide an outlet for his own unhappiness” (Horstman, 1975, 71). Therefore it can be said that people in the South were able to share a distressing life through country songs and they alleviated their misery because they found an outlet for their pain in life. This is supported by the fact that the death rate in the South was higher than the national average (Wilson, 1992, 114), and that the Southern States were losing out in the competition with an urban way of life (Horstman, 1975, 71–72). We can understand that the South had a base for songs of sadness that were historically and socially wanted by the local people. Surrounded by a strong demand for sad songs, “Knoxville Girl” was created and sung by the people, therefore it survived.

3. Murders in Modern Country Songs

Though there are ballads and songs that have terrifying lyrics like “Knoxville Girl,”21 it is appropriate for us to authenticate Goddu’s theory about country lyrics in modern times. She asserts that in order to appeal to the younger generation of today, “the new country music tries to exorcise its gothic elements by disassociating itself from particular regional stereotypes, many of which are associated with the gothic: horror, violence, perverted sexuality, the grotesque” (Goddu, 1998, 46). But she does not say that new country incorporates no gothic elements at all in their lyrics any more. In reference to the gothic element in new country, we can see some traces of it in its lyrics, which means country music, whether it is a traditional bluegrass or modern country, keep up their gothic elements at least in mild nature. Goddu mentions fifteen modern country songs,22 which have something to do with the gothic element in their lyrics. Compared with so many songs produced almost everyday in Nashville as country music, those fifteen songs Goddu chose are scarce when we study the gothic in country music, but the discussion about those songs can be a clue to the problem of modern country lyrics.
Citing Richard Peterson and Paul DiMaggio’s ideas, Goddu states “country music is no longer a Southern phenomenon; instead, it now plays to a national audience of the religiously and politically conservative working class” (Goddu, 1998, 47). What she means is that country's image is no longer seen as being horrifying music as a whole but as being rural nostalgia and traditional values. She calls attention, however, to the fact that even in our time there remains violence in modern country. As to violence in country music she acutely points out:

Violence still erupts, but it is well-contained now by the music's image of sexual and social order. In order to understand how this domestication was accomplished, it is crucial to understand “new country’s” relationship to its older counterpart, bluegrass. It is through its connections to bluegrass, in which a broad range of gothic associations still persist, that mainstream country’s hauntings—and exorcisms—become more visible. (“Bloody Daggers” 50)

As one of the examples of performers singing modern country’s violence, Goddu reports that Tanya Tucker established herself as the young singer of such gothic hits as “Delta Dawn,” “Blood Red and Going Down,” “Would You Lay With Me” (Goddu, 1998, 48). At first, let's take a look at one of Tucker’s songs and then some of other modern country songs that keep violent lyrics.

Blood Red And Going Down (by Claude Putman Jr.)

Daddy said: “Now come girl, we're heading down the road to Augusta.”
And thinking through his clenched teeth, he called Mama’s name, then he cussed her.
He said: “Girl, you're young, but some dude has come along and stole your mother.”

“Where did I go wrong, girl? Why would she leave us both this way?”
At times like these, a child with tears never knows exactly what to say.
That Georgia sun was blood red and going down.
That Georgia sun was blood red and going down.
We searched in every bar room, and honky-tonk as well.
And finally Daddy found them, but Lord, you know, the rest is hard to tell.
He sent me out to wait, but scared, I looked back through the door.
And Daddy left them both soaking up the sawdust on the floor.
That Georgia sun was blood red and going down.

In this revenge song, one of the title words, “blood,” is associated with the last scene ending up with gunshots or strikes with a knife that is not clearly described in the lyrics. The title itself suggests its gothic association in the first place. The story is not so complicated, but Jimmie N. Rogers writes in his books, we have to note that “to say that the words used in most country songs are easy to understand is an overstatement.” In the song above there arises a question about why Mama left Daddy and her child and how this
couple has come to hate each other. Or why did Daddy have resort to violence without legal procedures? As Catherine Marshall describes Southern people's lives in her book "Christy," we will be able to recall that in the Southern States they used to believe in their tradition that "family loyalty comes before everything else and they think that private war, ambush, assassination, murder—are justified." And Laura Mandell Zaidman also reports that "murders in the South often result from quarrels between acquaintances or fights between lovers or family members." Through those sources it is suspected that Southerners used to solve domestic problems with their own way whether or not they employed violence against family members. Therefore contemporary country songs keep the track of old country songs or of the spirits of the old South. The lyrics above do not elaborate on how Daddy killed the dude, but his inner emotions are explicit, because he had "his clenched teeth, cussed his wife." What Daddy had in his mind is grudge. But did he get his grudge dissolved after the assault toward his betrayers? Probably not. And the lyrics leave us unsatisfied and make us think again about our relationships in our domestic situations. In a sense country lyrics make us aware of problems that range from a family matter to a social plight.

Here is another modern country song "Papa Loved Mama" that represents a family trouble and the death of Papa's wife. According to Goddu's explanation, "Papa Loved Mama" is a story that "describes a man ramming his rig into a motel room in order to kill his cheating wife and her lover" (Goddu, 1998, 59). Papa seems to have acted ruthlessly and recklessly, but the problem is not so simple as it appears.

Papa Loved Mama (by Garth Brooks and Kim Edwin Williams)
Papa drove a truck nearly all his life.
You know it drove Mama crazy being a trucker's wife.
I guess she needed more to hold than just a telephone.
Papa called Mama each and every night.

Mama would wait for that call to come in.
When Daddy'd hang up she was gone again.

I heard him cry for Mama up and down the hall.
Then I heard a bottle break against the bedroom wall.
That old diesel engine made an eerie sound.
When Papa fired it up and headed into town.

Well, the picture in the paper showed the scene real well.
Papa's rig was buried in the local motel.
The desk clerk said he saw it all real clear.
He never hit the brakes and he was shifting gears.
Papa was a good'n.
But the jealous kind.
(Chorus)
Papa loved Mama.
Mama loved men.
Mama’s in the graveyard.
Papa’s in the pen.

“Blood Red And Going Down” and “Papa Loved Mama” are similar in their message that a husband might kill his wife with his own hands when she betrays him. This is one of the things that modern country wants to convey to us. But is this solely an individual and domestic trouble in the present day? We have to take elements of social problems and historical backgrounds into account. Papa may be the one who only followed the Southerners’ belief that private war and murder are justified, even though Papa is living in the modern times. Many years have passed since the turn of the twentieth century when traditional country songs or ballads were sung by Southern local people, but modern country has not completely erased old images from their lyrics. We might as well say that modern country tries to put itself on the old track in order to remind us that they want to keep up with their old Southern traits. The only difference we can find in traditional country lyrics and modern country lyrics is that modern country does not depict a horror scene in detail. But the effect of gothic element is retained. In “Papa Loved Mama,” a husband does not stab his wife with a knife nor drown her in a river, but he uses a modern machine, a rig or a truck, for the same purpose as in “Knoxville Girl.” At the chorus part we need to pay attention to the fact that Mama is now in a graveyard and Papa is in a penitentiary. Mama was murdered for sure by her husband, and it becomes clear that Southern gothic atmosphere still lingers in messages expressed in the country lyrics.

4. The Continuity of Gothic Elements

Charles Reagan Wilson elaborates on the Southern character that has been passed on to the new generation in modern country: “the country songs retain the regional context as well. . . . They continue to embody the idea that death should not be segregated from the rest of life, but should be dealt with openly as a natural and profound human concern” (Wilson, 1992, 126). It is a matter of course that not all modern country songs retain old traditions of the South, but some really do in reference to the theme of violence and death, and they are trying to hand down their tradition to the new generation. Therefore it is rational to think that troubles Southerners have stemmed mainly from families, private matters and domestic social life. Curtis Ellison reiterates on this point, “The culture of country music is a complex phenomenon promoted aggressively by its business interests through print and electronic media, record companies . . . yet for nearly seventy years this culture has maintained a distinctly personal tone and a strong focus on domestic social life.”28

Jimmie N. Rogers writes his ideas in his book introducing Malone’s assertion that “country music has been consistently reflective and representative of the society which
nourished it and of the changes in that society” (Rogers, 1989, 38). Therefore lyrics are considered to be equal to the society where country songs have long been composed by lyricists in order to get accepted by the society. Modern country lyrics, which inherited old Southern country songs or ballads brought from England, Scotland or Ireland, show us how they express their feelings with melodies and lyrics which are deeply rooted in a gothic heritage. It is a well-known fact that bluegrass is notable for its gothic stories even now (Goddu, 1998, 52). And modern country lyrics also cannot hide their inner feelings of Southern people when they depict bloody scenes in their lyrics even though modern country lyrics show less bloody lyrics than older ones did. Or there might be young performers’ tradition of taking over the essence of country songs from an older generation. Bill Malone observes this point and writes about the country tradition from a songwriter and performer’s perspective:

Induction into the show’s cast remains a ritual that permits older stars to “lay hands” on young and deserving entertainers, and young country singers do not simply revere the “mother church of country music,” they also generally make a point of showing respect to veteran country performers (even if most of the young stars have grown up listening to the Beatles, the Eagles, Billy Joel, or Bruce Springsteen).30

We become aware that “country music is about real things happening to real people” (Lawler, Songs of Life, 42). The important point is how we express our inner feelings with “the use of simple words in uncluttered patterns” (Rogers, 1989, 13). It would be safe to believe that we are allowed to express ourselves in any way we like, and we know in modern country lyrics that human emotions and sensibilities are molded after traditional country lyrics and ballads at least in a mild nature, although country lyrics have changed.

In 2001 we were advised to learn what country music really is by Garrison Keillor, honorary chairman of Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. He contributed his comment to The Journal of Country Music and says, “Country music is still devoted to the lyric and to the telling of stories, which people love and people need. . . . Those people are all of us, people who have ever been lost or confused or sad or felt excluded.”31 It is no wonder that there are sad songs or songs of sorrow or death in country music, for these are realities that we must face in everyday life. Ellison stresses, “Country songs are dominated by stories of broken hearts and hard times, but this emphasis masks the culture’s assumption that such traumas can be overcome” (Ellison, 1998, 125). What this passage tells us is that as we cannot get away from sad realities and heavy burdens in life, country music honestly tries to convey this message. “Open up your eyes to realities” is the true message from country lyrics. Therefore country songs are bold enough to address issues and concerns that other music genres have avoided.

To sum up what this paper discussed so far, we can see that modern country songs and lyrics continue to be produced without interruption because Southern traditions originated by British immigrants drives many songwriters to do their jobs. Our society is now flooded with many kinds of music and many kinds of country songs as we can see a variety
of music CDs on the shelves of a record shop. Of course this means that even country music is changing and developing as Lawler says, “Melodies may change, become more complex and difficult; the vocals may become more polished and refined” (Lawler, 1996, 150). But the essence of exploring human conditions through well-thought-out lyrics, which characterizes country music, will continue, for we have seen so far some examples of country lyrics keeping their traditions.

Viewed from another angle, the continuity of country traditions could be traced to a country radio live program of Grand Ole Opry, broadcast for 80 years now, which is a great pride of all country fans, musicians and songwriters. We may be able to find invisible traditions of country world by attending this radio program aired from Nashville to all parts of the United States. As Malone introduces in his book a veteran country disc jockey’s warning, a circle of country musicians is bound with the tradition so that old country performers’ intentions can flow naturally to younger performers’ minds with a long tradition of Grand Ole Opry. They have the right place and chances where they can hand down their words, melodies, and spirits of the South.

NOTES

This research obtained permission from JASRAC (Japanese Society for Rights of Authors, Composers and Publishers) to use country music lyrics for academic purpose. The permission number is 0605282-60.


5 This paper uses the phrase “traditional country” as a form of people’s music before 1923, because it was when the first country music record was made by Fiddlin’ John Carson. And it is also the fact that American people had a rapid diffusion of


9 Lyrics come from Louvin Brothers’ “Knoxville Girl” included in their CD album titled Tragic Songs of Life. (Nashville: King Records, Inc., 2003)

10 This song comes from Peter Wernick, Bluegrass Songbook (New York: Oak Publications, 1976), 26.

11 A country historian Bill C. Malone illustrates on this point: “Hillbilly music (a once universal designation for country music) evolved primarily out of the reservoir of folksongs, ballads, dances, and instrumental pieces brought to North America by Anglo-Celtic immigrants. . . British immigrants to the United States brought a great storehouse of lore and song, but three thousand miles of ocean and radically different historical experiences wrought a similar divergence in musical expression. . . English, highland Scots, Scotch-Irish, Catholic Irish, and Welsh elements intermingled on the southern frontier, as they had previously done in the British Isles.” Malone, Country Music USA, 3-4.


14 Roger Lane gathers many cases of murders and deaths from colonial era through the present time, and shows us facts about the murder rate in the South from the Civil War to World War I. He writes, “And under native white rule after 1877, the South remained the most murderous section of the country; . . . during 1878, just after Reconstruction, these three states (Texas, Kentucky, and South Carolina) had a ‘murder rate’ roughly eighteen times that for New England.” Roger Lane, Murder in America: A History (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997), 149.

15 Sherwood Anderson, Kit Brandon (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936), 7.


18 Peterson and McLaurin, “Introduction,” in You Wrote My Life: Lyrical Themes in


Marshall, *Christy*, 141.


29 There is an opposite theory on this point. Peterson and McLaurin write, “In the often repeated dictum of practitioners, fans, and commentators alike, ‘country music tells it like it is,’ and in so far as this view is correct, the music is a mirror of the thoughts and feelings of a people and their time. Unfortunately, however, music lyric sheets, whether country or another genre, do not accurately reflect all that is on people's minds, and thus cannot be read as a complete assessment of the collective consciousness of the country music audience.” Peterson and McLaurin, “Introduction,” 6. This paper is on Roger’s side that music is a mirror of the thoughts and feelings of people and their time.


33 Malone writes, “Veteran country disc jockey Hugh Cherry is not alone when he warns of the music’s loss of heritage and history: ‘Let us remember what happens when you kill the roots of a tree—it dies.’ Country musicians also should never forget the admonition that so many of them grew up with: ‘What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?’” Malone, Country Music USA, 415.

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