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THE CONTORTIONS OF FORGIVENESS

BETRAYAL, ABANDONMENT, AND NARRATIVE: ENTRAPMENT AMONG THE HARKIS

VINCENT CRAPANZANO

I have been trying to indicate the extent to which the analysis of a psychological concept, if carried out with the widest objective reference, can expose the precariousness of our delineations of the human condition

Rodney Needham

In memory of Raymond Firth, certainly one of anthropology's greatest fieldworkers, I would like to recall an "old tale" he recounts in his essay on bond friendship among the Tikopia (Firth 1967:108-115). I offer only a brief summary. Two bond-friends went out to net birds. They lowered a sinnet in order to climb down to a ledge where the birds were. One of them, Pa Raropuka, returned earlier than the other, climbed back up, untied the sinnet, leaving his friend, Pa Fatumaru stranded. Days later, Pa Raropuka returned, thought his friend was dead—his friend, who had bathed his body with eggs was covered with flies – went snaring. Pa Fatumaru climbed up the sinnet and untied it, leaving Pa Raropuka stranded and wailing. He eventually died. Pa Fatumaru, so the story goes, continued snaring birds. Firth's informant concludes the tale: "But the bones remained there in a cave. My grandfather saw the bones." The only explanation Firth's informant offers is that Pa Raropuka had tried to get rid of his friend in order to take possession of his family orchard.

Though Tikopia of the nineteen twenties is as remote as one can get from the Harkis—those Algerians, now living in France, who sided with the French during the Algerian War of Independence—Firth's "old tale" raises several of the themes I explore in this essay: betrayal,

abandonment, revenge, retaliation, storytelling, and—singularly absent from Firth's tale, (though perhaps not in Tikopian life) -- forgiveness and apology. And, in an appendix, I describe my encounters with the Harkis.

Strictly speaking "Harki" (from the Arabic for movement, military movement) refers to those Algerians civilians of Arab or Berber descent, numbering around two hundred sixty thousand, who served on a contractual basis (without the usual military benefits) as auxiliary troops (supplétifs) for the French, but the term is often used loosely for any Algerians who served with the French military or police forces during the war.¹ The Harkis have been called les oubliés de l'histoire; for, until recently, they have been ignored by both scholars and the press and have lived, for the most part, in abject silence. Although some of the Harkis sided with the French because they believed that Algeria would be better off under them than independent or because they or their fathers had served in the French army, most of them, poor, illiterate peasants, did so because they desperately needed whatever they could earn in an impoverished, war-torn country. Many had suffered at the hands of the F.L.N., the militant, often brutal Front de Libération Nationale, which led Algeria to independence and, according to the Harkis, among others, has been responsible for the chronic violence and dilapidation of the country

Despite warnings of likely bloodshed from officers who had fought alongside the Harkis, the French government ordered their demobilization after the signing of the Treaty of Evian on March 18, 1962 and sent them, unarmed, back to their villages. The treaty offered them no protection, and in the months surrounding its ratification on July 3, 1962, between 60,000 and 150,000 Harkis were tortured, mutilated, and killed by the Algerian population at large. I myself heard stories of Harkis whose throats were cut in front of their wives and children, and there have been reports of others who were impaled, roasted alive, or even forced to eat chunks of their own flesh. One man I interviewed was thrown, after being tortured, into a dry well where he was kept for eleven months, fed couscous mixed with sand and blood when he was fed at all.² He was never given a change of clothing nor was the well cleaned and his excrement removed. Many of these deaths were instigated by the army wing of the F.L.N. or by the so-called Marsiens (from the month of March—mars); that is, those Algerians who suddenly identified with the F.L.N. in March 1962, when they realized it would come to power and wanted to prove their loyalty it for reasons of self-interest.

Overwhelmed by the arrival in the spring of 1962 of nearly a million pieds-noirs, or Algerians of European origin, many of whom supported the O.A.S. (Organisation Armée Secrète), which had attempted a coup d'état in April of the previous year, de Gaulle's government did almost nothing to halt the blood bath. As little sympathy as de Gaulle had for the pieds-noirs, he had even less for the Algerians. On May 16, 1962, in a now famous telegram, Louis Joxe, the Minister of State for Algerian Affairs, prohibited individual efforts to settle Harkis in France, as

some officers who had fought with them had tried to do. Following Joxe's order, fifty-five Harki families who had tried to land in Marseilles were sent back to Algeria where, as the Harkis I talked to insisted, they were massacred. Despite the efforts of de Gaulle, Joxe, and the Army Minister Pierre Messmer, 48,625 French Muslims officially arrived in France by September 28, 1962. It is likely that another sixty thousand were able to make it to France by 1967.

In France, most Harkis were interned in camps, like Rivesaltes near Perpignon and Saint-Maurice-l'Ardoise near Avignon, forced to live in miserable conditions, subjected to abusive discipline and constant humiliation. Many suffered – and continue to suffer—the pathologies associated with abjection: identity loss, anxiety attacks, idées fixes, delusions of persecution, depression, bouts of violence, suicide, and among the men alcoholism. Their identity was so brutally undermined that many of them have never been able to find firm footing again. Many of those who are still alive are lost in themselves – in a haunting silence.

Eventually, fourteen thousand families were moved into seventy-five remote forestry hamlets scattered across southern France where they worked on an enormous reforestation project. Although these hamlets were purportedly designed to integrate the Harkis into French society, they served, in fact, to isolate them -- to render them invisible, the Harkis like to say. Those who could find work outside the camps, often through personal contacts, left as soon as they could. Many remained, some for more than sixteen years, until, after violent protests by the Harkis and their children, the last of the hamlets was closed in 1978.

Although there are still concentrations of Harkis in the south of France, often near the camps where they were interned, and in the industrial north, many Harki families are scattered across France. They, and to a lesser extent their children and grandchildren, have remained a population apart. Though they have the rights of any French citizen, they find themselves treated as half-citizens: mistrusted, marginalized, and often subject to virulent racism. The old Harkis are, for the most part, lost in themselves, their despair and their story, which, paradoxically, they keep to themselves. When they do speak of their past, they focus obsessively and with little elaboration on their abandonment and betrayal by the French.

"Abandonment" and "betrayal" have become icons of the wounds the Harkis and many of their children have suffered—indignation, humiliation, disorientation, marginalization, and, as one of their children put it, "the loss of a future, any future." They are also condensations of their all-consuming narrative: one that so insistently frames its subject matter – indeed, the narrator and his or her interlocutors—that there is little room for escape, as I myself often experienced as I listened to them. Turned in on itself, on its reproduction, it seems to lead nowhere. Repeated over and over again, often legalistically, as testimony, it loses its vitality and foreshadows what many of the Harkis and especially their children know but prefer not to acknowledge: namely, that their story, their suffering, will slip out of memory, becoming at best, a line or two in a history book.

The children, particularly those who were raised in the camps, have assumed their father's wounds and articulate their identity in terms of those wounds. They share, if vicariously, their parent's sense of having been duped. Like their fathers, they are haunted, but not as consumed, by the Harki story. With rare exceptions, they stress their father's silence with a sympathy that barely contains their disappointment, their anger even. They cast their fathers as victims, broken men, devalued, dishonored, and emasculated lost. They remember them, sitting alone or in groups, leaning against a tree or wall, ruminating. Some speak of their father's depression, their drinking, their drunken rages, which were often directed at them or their mothers. Rarely did they want me to meet their fathers. "They wont talk to you," they said. "They didn't talk to us. They're old. Why bother them? Why bring up a painful past?"

However knotted by conflicting emotions, the fathers have to acknowledge their decision to join the French. They can regret, they can justify, they can self-righteously blame the French, and indeed the Algerians, for what they had done to them. However overwhelmed by what Flaubert calls "the dark immensity of history" and others simply destiny, they have to assume some responsibility (Crapanzano n.d.). But the children can take no responsibility for what they inherited from the cradle. They are doubly wounded – by their own experiences and their fathers' haunting silence. They are tortured by an absence: an unknown they can never know and the imaginative possibilities that ignorance evokes. Unlike most of their parents, some of them have taken an activist stance, forming political associations lobbying for the recognition of the sacrifices their parents made forbearance, claiming compensation for the losses their parents sustained, and demanding an apology for their parents' betrayal and abandonment.³

Paradoxically their quest for recognition—the legal and administrative maneuvers that are required—perpetuate their marginalized status. Victims of a stigmatized identity, which they have had no choice but to accept, if only because that identity affords them a means of claiming the recognition and the compensation they believe, not without reason, they and their parents deserve. They are caught in a paradox. To free themselves of this stigma, they have to accept it; to cease being a victim, they have to be a victim. Given the assault on their identity, they do not have the distance to play the victim. Their demands for recognition, compensation, and apology have, I believe, to be seen in this light. They cannot simply be dismissed, as some French and Algerians try to do, as playing the system for only material gain. They have, in fact, been given some recognition and compensation, but they have not yet received the apology many of the younger generation believe would restore meaning to their parents' lives and, indeed, to their own. Realists, however, they assume the French will never apologize.

For forgiveness to occur, the wrong-doers and their victims have to acknowledge the wrongdoing, appreciate each other's perspective, and recognize the role it has played in the way

they have each configured their individual and collective lives (as, for example, a central trauma, an excuse for inaction, a source of resentment). And, as the philosopher Charles Griswold (2007: 174), argues, they have to “re-envision” or “reframe” both the offense and their sense of self. The forgiver has to forswear revenge, moderate rancor and resentment, and not vindictively remind the offender of his or her wrongdoing; the offender has, of course, to agree not to repeat the offense or retaliate for having had to apologize. Ideally, the offender should acknowledge the truth of what he or she has done and resist rationalization and self-justification.

Irreversible events of magnitude, like the massacre of the Harkis, always figure dramatically in the self-constitution – the identity – of both aggressors and victims. Paradoxically, forgiving and being forgiven for such tragic events can have a devastating effect on both the forgiver and the forgiven: the rug is, so to speak, pulled out from under them. As Emmanuel Brillet (2001:4) argues, and as I have suggested, were the French (or the Algerians) to apologize for their treatment of the Harkis, the Harkis’ sense of self and community (insofar as it is centered on the French refusal to apologize) would be threatened. “Because all recognition, and a fortiori, that which confers pardon, is at once comforting and a little death [petit mort] for a community marked by the proof of disaster,” Brillet (2001:4) observes.

I suggested on several occasions in my conversations with the more sensitive Harki children that the only way they could be liberated from the burden they bore as Harkis was by pardoning the French, but, as they knew and I knew, this was impossible, for they had no platform from which to proclaim forgiveness. What were they to do? Stand up in front of the Elysée and say, “La France, je vous pardonne.” One woman said she had thought of this but realized that it was impossible and was, in any case, quite certain it wouldn’t work. Another suggested that I was being “too Christian.” (I had not thought of this.) And the others could make no sense of what I was saying. Forgiveness was simply impossible. “And if the French apologized,” I asked. It would still be impossible, they insisted.

Were the Harkis confronted with the paradox Jacques Derrida (2001: 31-33) noted in his essay, “On Forgiveness”: that you can only forgive what is unforgivable. If you are only prepared to forgive the forgivable, Derrida argues, then the idea of forgiveness would disappear. I am by no means convinced of this argument. It is important, as Derrida himself recognizes in Christian terms, to distinguish between different types of sin. I would argue that there is a difference between the conventional forgiveness of—or, more accurately, excusing—those trivial acts, however hurtful they may be, that are taken to be remediable, dismissible, or annulable, and the forgiveness of serious ones – the ones Derrida would claim to be unforgivable—which are irreversible. These demand unconditional forgiveness, a forgiveness that, if understood Derrida (2001:44-45) must, in its purity divorce itself from the conditional – “from what is heterogeneous to it, namely the order of conditions, repentance,

transformation, as many things as allow it to inscribe itself in history, law, politics, existence itself." The conditional and unconditional are absolutely heterogeneous, irreconcilable, and yet indissociable, if forgiveness is to become effective within concrete historical situations.

Derrida's aim here is to free forgiveness from its political implication, say, reconciliation, and its insertion in an economy of exchange. It is within the aporetic tension between the conditional and the unconditional that decisions are made and responsibilities assumed.

By referring to "trivial and serious acts", rather than "venial and mortal sins," I want to avoid, as best I can, the culturally-specific Christian presuppositions of much of the theorizing about forgiveness and the postulation of the requisite spiritual condition (e.g., remorse, contrition, repentance) for its success. It is by no means certain that the apology the Harkis demand of the French requires a real change of heart. They are realists, and they know that the events for which they are asking an apology are given, irreversible, and ultimately unforgivable. Many suspect that, were the French to apologize, their apology would be conventional and ultimately dismissive. (See below.)

One can, of course, accept an apology without forgiving in return. Think of the expression, "Oh, forget about it," after someone has apologized for having wronged you. Does it imply forgiveness? Or is it simply an excuse—a way to get on with the business at hand? Griswold (2007:57) suggests, a bit too facilely, that excuses are backward looking while forgiveness is forward-looking. We – in Euro-American culture at least—normally think of an apology in terms of spiritual transformation, forgiving reciprocation, and in consequence reconciliation. But, let us suppose that at least some of the Harkis and their children see the apology (shkir) as simply an occasion for sparring, for getting the better of the French by forcing them into a humiliating admission by succumbing to the Harkis' demand, for "internalized" revenge.

It has been argued that reference to inner life does not have the same rhetorical weight everywhere as it does in confessional societies like those of Europe and America. One could argue that where the dynamics of mental life, such as forgiving, apologizing, exonerating, showing mercy, vindicating, judging, and intending are so highly valued that through metaphorical transfer they come to describe, explain, and even legitimate collective dynamics. In the event, I have heard *pieds-noirs* seriously question the existence of inner life among the "indigènes." This position reflects the stress on the raw, instinctual nature of the native – a view that was current in North Africa during the colonial period, thanks in part to Antoine Porot, the chief of psychiatry at the University of Alger, who even claimed to find cervical—
anatomical—evidence for it (Berthelie 1994:84 71-85). Such views are, of course, intolerable. Not only do they reflect cultural arrogance and pernicious racism, but they fail to distinguish between psychic reality and the rhetorical use of that reality in figuring other domains like the social, political, and legal.

Despite Koranic stress on knowledge of the heart, the old Harkis, in my experience, do not generally give rhetorical weight to the expression of inner experience. Their children, raised in France, are more open to revealing and metaphorizing their inner feelings. In part (Capanzano 2008) the lack of stress on the inner life can be related to the Harki experience itself; in part to the belief that it is only Allah—and not human beings—who has the power of forgiving the repentant; and in part, to the Harkis' stress on the manly virtue of *sabr*: that is, patience, endurance, forbearance, resignation, submission, and even renunciation (Wensinck 2009). For the Harkis, *sabr* is best understood as suffering the blows of fate in silence.

A number of writers have understood forgiveness as an exchange, most often referring to Marcel Mauss' essay on the gift, in which the French anthropologist refers to the reciprocal obligations (give, receive, return) in any exchange system and the power that resides in the gift itself. It has often been noted that, etymologically, "gift" and "forgiveness" are related to each other in many Indo-European languages: gift/forgiving, dono/perdono, Geben/Vergeben, etc. But can a gift and forgiveness be equated?⁴ Paul Ricoeur (2000:624) argues that, although both giving and forgiving are bilateral and reciprocal, their insertion in analogous circles of exchange precludes distinguishing between forgiveness (pardon) and payment (rétribution), which, he claims, equalizes the relationship between the two parties in the exchange. To distinguish the two, he suggests, (in Christian fashion), it is necessary to turn to the "radical commandment to love ones enemy without return" [without expecting anything in return, *sans retour*]. This "impossible commandment" appears to be the only one that can rise "to the height of the spirit of apology" [*seul à la hauteur de l'esprit de pardon*]. "The enemy does not ask for pardon; it is necessary to love him as he is." But, must all demands for forgiveness demand unconditional love? Must forgiveness be distinguished from retribution only in spiritual terms? Can it not be simply a formula for realigning the forgiver and the forgiven? Must any act of apology be inserted in a system of exchange? Or is a single exchange sufficient for forgiveness?

Ricoeur's model of exchange ignores risk. Even the most conventionalized exchanges are dangerous. The gift (like an offense) can be conceived as a challenge demanding a response, as Pierre Bourdieu (1965) suggests in his discussion of the dialectics of honor among the Kabyles. He speculates: "Perhaps every exchange carries in itself a challenge more or less dissimulated, so that the logic of challenge and riposte may only be the extreme limit toward which every communication tends, especially where the exchange of gifts is concerned." In offering a gift, the donors risk the recipient's refusal. In accepting the gift, the recipient risks the donor's withdrawal of the gift. Those approaches to gift exchange that focus on tangible gifts, as do most anthropological ones, fail to recognize that the acceptance of the gift is itself a counter-prestation insofar as it relieves the donors of the risk they have taken. By not withdrawing the gift, donors give, as it were, a double gift—a tangible and an intangible one — ensuring thereby their superior position. Unlike the recipients, who always remain in debt,

despite their “intangible” counter-prestation, donors appear to be debt-free, that is, until they are obliged, by convention, to accept a gift from the recipient.

Risk is equally at play in the pardon. Those, like the Harkis, who demand an apology, are, in effect, challenging the French—the wrongdoer—but in so doing they place themselves in the inferior, vulnerable position of a petitioner, for the wrongdoer – the French—need not apologize, maintaining, thereby, the superior political position and perpetuating the petitioners’ humility. But, by refusing to ask to be forgiven, by rejecting the petitioner’s demand, wrongdoers tacitly admits their guilt and, more devastating, their defensiveness; that is, when the facts are as clear as they are in the Harki case. They find themselves in a morally compromised position, one that is intensified in case in point by their ostensible (Christian) commitment to forgiveness and the change of heart it demands. Thus, they are at once in a superior and inferior position vis-à-vis the petitioners. The Harkis have a moral hold over the French. If the French were to apologize, they would surrender their political superiority and strengthen their moral superiority. but, however praiseworthy their newly acquired moral stance, it is always tarnished by the wrongdoing they have committed. The taint can be removed, if at all, by the Harkis’ acceptance of their apology. Were the Harkis to refuse to accept the apology, the risk the French had taken would be worthless. The Harkis would have gained the upper hand—revenge—by humiliating them. Would the Harkis’ have surrendered their moral superiority by refusing the pardon? By French standards, yes. But do the Harkis share this standard? Is their approach to forgiveness premised on another set of presuppositions? Another etiquette of Forgiveness? One correlated with revenge (tar)?

The old Harkis are enraged but cannot direct their rage at the object of that rage in any active manner. They cannot avenge themselves. Elsewhere, I have argued that, on occasion, through political activism, personal rage – anger—is transformed into social outrage, but that outrage, that indignation, is fragile and frequently reverts back to the anger that undergirds it (Crapanzano 2008). Here, I ask if forgiveness can ever free a victim of wrongdoing of anger, hatred, or resentment? Aristotle (1126a) argued in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1126a), however, that one of the ways in which anger is dissipated, is through (appropriate) revenge. He considered anger, but not forgiveness (*sungnômê*), as one of the virtues. It has often been observed that rural Algerian society is vengeful. Its history is one of family feuds, some lasting for generations. The French were quick to seize on this stereotype in their attempt to understand why villages were often split between the F.L.N. and the Harkis. Many French officers and some Algerians, argued that the Harkis often joined the French to avenge themselves. I have even heard French say that Algeria is a society of vengeance and France one of forgiveness. Such stereotyping is inexcusable on many grounds, including racist and supremacist ones.

I do not want to deny Harkis the capacity to forgive or to love unconditionally any more than I want to deny the French the possibility of revenge. I am arguing that the assumptions we make about forgiveness as an occasion for a change of heart, an expression of unconditional love, the expiation of guilt, and the extinction of shame are not necessarily universal. To argue that the Harkis' demand for apology without reciprocation is embedded in a culture of the vendetta, in which honor is always at stake, would be to deny the Harkis and their children a transformational response to their historical experience. They would become wooden figures. But to ignore the possible effect of the values of traditional Algerian society on their response would be to deny an important dimension of that response. Nor do I want to deny the importance of revenge in the "Christian" understanding of forgiveness. Given the historical circumstances in which the Harkis and the French found and find themselves, it would be egregious to ignore the interpenetration of desires for forgiveness and revenge in both of them.

(I should note, parenthetically, that there may well be a marked difference of attitude toward—indeed conceptualization of apology (*skir*), forgiveness (*smaha*), and revenge (*tar*) -- between the Harkis themselves and their children who were brought up in France. I cannot pursue this argument here other than to note that, in my experience, attitudes toward forgiveness vary considerably among the Harki children. I remember an impassioned discussion between two Harki sons: one, an adamant political activist, would not hear of accepting an apology; and the other, far more psychologically insightful, was far more ambivalent about forgiving.)

Hannah Arendt (1958:237) suggests: that "Without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover; we would remain victims of its consequences forever, not unlike the sorcerer's apprentice who lacked the magic formula to break the spell." Arendt's metaphor is far more penetrating than she realized. Forgiveness does not necessarily "release us from the consequences of what we have done." It neither undoes the irreversibility of time nor the deeds done,) though it may, magically, as it were, diminish the psychological consequences of those acts and facilitate their burial in forgetfulness. It gives us at least the illusion that we are rid of the past and thereby open to the future. Forgiveness relates to notions of atonement, expiation, contrition, and redemption, all of which, in Arendt's terms, serve to "release" us from the witting and unwitting harmful consequences of our acts—to undo or give the illusion of undoing history. Arendt's depiction of what would happen if forgiveness were impossible bears an uncanny resemblance to the situation in which the old Harkis find themselves. They ruminate. They are fixated on their having been betrayed and abandoned. Does this fixation spare them acknowledgement of their fatal decision? Or do they dwell on the decision itself, as was implied by several of the Harkis with whom I talked?

The Italian sociologist Gabriella Turnaturi (2007:8) argues that betrayal presupposes a shared experience – “a We relationship,” which, I would add, need not be symmetrical. Its artifice and fragility may be recognized or defended against by all parties to it. It may be fraught with tension and suspicion, which are controlled, if they are controlled, by custom, law, or institutional (military) regulation, as it was for the Harkis and the French. Of necessity, it is intensified in combat situations where dependency on one another is a matter of life and death. But even in such circumstances, mistrust is not infrequent. Betrayal occurs, Turnaturi argues, when the relationship is attacked from within the confines of the We (9). It always involves abandonment. One does not betray a person or group but a relationship, she argues (13). It is not an aggressive act directed toward the other or others but a “more or less intentional act aimed at destroying that relationship or withdrawing from it” (13). (Similar arguments have been made for forgiveness.) Whether or not one can separate the relationship from the person – I have my doubts about that– the betrayed personalize the act of betrayal and understand it as an aggression directed at them. (The betrayer per contra can depersonalize and justify the betrayal by focusing on the relationship, legalistically, pragmatically, rather than on the person.) Certainly, the Harkis personalized what they took to be a betrayal. They had no doubt that it was directed at them. Though they sometimes referred to specific officers who sent them home without arms or without explaining their choices, for the most part they depersonalized the betrayer – paradoxically, in act of (how to put it?) condensed personification. It was the French who betrayed them; the officers were simply following orders. It is, of course, possible that the betrayer became more abstract for the Harkis as time passed, and as they subsumed their own experiences in the Harki story. As the Harkis have been continually reminded of their collaboration by people around them, most notably by Algerian immigrant workers and, at times close family members, the “treachery” attached to their decision or non-decision, regardless of their motives, echoes forward to their being betrayed. Betrayal is a breach of trust—of implicit if not explicit promise – and with that breach, the future loses whatever certainty it may have had. It is the promise, Arendt (1958: :217) argues, that attenuates “the chaotic uncertainty of the future.” As such, it, too, can offer no escape from what one of the Harki children referred to as the “prison of memory.”

I should note—but cannot pursue here—that the Harkis I spoke to never expected recognition of responsibility, recompense, or an apology from the Algerians. They were simply infuriated by them. When I asked them why, several said, What can you expect from the Algerians? Others did not hold all the Algerians responsible. They stressed the fact that the carnage was committed or triggered by the A.L.N. –the military wing of the F.L.N.—and the Marsiens. But none of their answers seemed satisfactory. They were not, in my observation, being evasive. They had not asked the question, or preferred not to think about it at all. They too are—or were—Algerians.

I have heard from both the French and Algerians, as well as several American colleagues, that the Harkis cannot expect anything from the Algerians, that they cannot even blame them, because they are guilty and, accordingly, direct their rage at the French with inordinate intensity. Such answers are pat; they coordinate with our psycho-mechanics. And they may soothe us, at least the French and the Algerians, but they certainly do not conform to my experience of the Harkis and their children. I found little evidence of guilt among them. If anything, they were ashamed of having been duped by the French, I prefer to leave the question open. We are concerned with breaches of the most fundamental requirements of consociation and the taboos buried deep within the psyche.

Griswold (2007) and other philosophers have argued that the state and other institutions can apologize, but they cannot normally ask for forgiveness, that such apologies are by proxy, and, as public events, differ from the moral intimacy – the singular interlocution—of personal apologies and acts of forgiveness. After all, one cannot expect a change of heart from the state, a corporation, or some other institution, except, perhaps, at an extravagantly metaphorical level. No doubt analytically correct, the philosophers' arguments (despite their historical examples and their psychological presuppositions) fail to acknowledge the ritual- the dramatic – force of public apologies on even the most cynical representative of the offending institution and the most skeptical of its victims. (I am not referring here to those apologies that are written, say, in a letter or legal instrument.) A political apology, at least in its public performance, is a performative and to be efficacious requires among its felicity conditions the conventionally appropriate attitude of the performer. The representative of the French state would have to express in a sincerely personal manner contrition, remorse, and repentance, even if he or she were, in no way, responsible for the offence. It is reasonable to assume that many porte-parole are "carried away," by their performance whether through heartfelt sympathy, real or vicarious remorse, or as a defense against their own hypocrisy or that of the performance itself. Put another way, the proxy is caught between personal performance and public representation—between a personally presumptive ritual form and a morally disquieting content the responsibility for which he or she cannot assume.

The victims of the offense are also caught: in an emotionally charged asymmetrical relationship with the proxy. The proxy speaks for the state but addresses a group of individuals who are not necessarily institutionally conjoined. In the Harki case, though there are around eighty important activist associations, none of them can claim to represent the Harki community as a whole, if indeed the Harkis can be said to form a community. I have called, them, following Francesca Cappelletto (2003), a mnemonic community – in case in point, one that is loosely united by memories of a common set of stigmatizing experiences – a story that subsumes individual experience in its frozen narrative. There is, in other words, no authorized representative of the Harkis who can accept or reject the apology and offer or refuse to offer forgiveness. It is individual Harkis who would have to respond to France's

apology. I am quite certain that were France to apologize they would not be immune to quality of the proxy's performance – his or her expression of sincerity, contrition, remorse, and repentance – even as they recognize the artifice of the performance. (Such responses to institutional apologies are not uncommon.)

It could be argued, if there is any validity to my assumption, that the personalization of the proxy's apology sets the stage for either forgiveness and the possible reduction or erasure of resentment or its refusal. Both the vindictive refusal to forgive and the cynical, albeit realistic, recognition of the artifice of the apology might serve to protect the Harkis' from the identity loss I mentioned earlier that might well follow an act of forgiveness. This is, of course, speculative since France has not apologized and the Harkis have not forgiven.

APPENDIX

Betrayal and abandonment, the desire for recognition, the insistent demand for an apology – for an impossible revenge – figured in the meetings I had with the Harkis and their children. By “figured” I mean that they affected both the substance and the dynamics of our conversations. If they agreed to talk to me, the old Harkis wanted, so it seemed to me, affirmation of what they had suffered. Neither they nor their children wanted expressions of what they considered to be excessive sympathy. That would have been to appropriate their feelings. For the most part, the old Harkis remained silent, waiting for one of their children or someone whom they felt could mediate between them and whoever I was for them.

Experiencing prolonged silence requires patience, the ability to remain silent, and an empathy that I liken to those moments in Japanese No theater in which the actors say nothing, do nothing, but yet convey something, a battle, for example. The wives of the old Harkis who were present at my interviews often expressed the emotions that their husbands seemed incapable of expressing, at least in my presence. I were like the chorus in a Greek tragedy. There was something protective about the wife’s role in these interviews. Sometimes I thought that they were afraid their husband’s anger would explode or that he would fall into paralytic sadness, escape from which lay in drink.

The children’s response was far more variable than their parents. After all, they had grown up in France, were younger, had other interests, family and work, and were comfortable with the speech genres, including the interview, that remained foreign to most of their parents. I worked with a number of activists, who immediately co-opted my interviews, turning them, into testimonies (*témoignages*, they called them) that were so legalistic that they sounded like legal briefs. Their immediate response to me was that of a *porte-parole*, who would bring their plight to the attention of the English-speaking world and elicit their support. I explained that I could not be their advocate, however sympathetic to their cause I might be. I promised to tell their story as accurately as I could. With one exception, they all accepted my position, even though some of them must have thought that with time I would become their advocate. For them at least, facts always had a rhetorical function. I often felt bullied by their intention – their insistence. They repeated their story – the Harki story – again and again, not just to me but to themselves as they spoke. They subsumed their own stories in the Harki story. With each repetition, their story lost more of its vitality. It had become frozen, but still it offered them a sense of identity, membership in the Harki community, and protection through membership in that community from an unwelcoming, at times hostile world. They often spoke to me about French racism.

I soon realized that I was not reaching the Harkis and their children through interviews, and they were not reaching me. I changed my approach, entering immediately into conversation, even argumentative conversation, with them. They seemed (and I was) more comfortable with

this approach. It required monitoring on my part, lest I lead them in directions they might not otherwise have gone. I knew that my monitoring could only be partial since I myself was engaged in the conversation. I was not particularly troubled by this, since even the most objective, the most neutral, of interviews requires monitoring and is subject to the same failures. I find that the open-endedness of conversation permits freer expression and is more revealing of the dynamics – the plays of identity, for example – that lie behind that expression than are revealed in the more generically constrained interview.

For the most part, the men focused on their activism, their protests, their manifests, the bureaucratic entanglements they found in themselves in, and the organizational details of camp life and its aftermath. Like their fathers, many of them faced their situation with stoical outrage. But there were exceptions: men who could not contain their anger, or cried as they remembered the atrocities they witnessed, or were so emotionally knotted, as they described their father's shame, that they could not speak. It was as though they were participating in that shame. Often, it was difficult to determine when they were talking about themselves, their fathers, or the Harkis more generally.

Many of the Harki daughters I talked too, particularly the activists, were exceptionally eloquent. Often, once they found out what I was doing, they would launch into the Harki story, their story, their protests, the humiliation and insults they suffered, and, I hasten to add, their successes. Those who were educated were particularly proud of their education. Not only had they overcome the obstacles the French had created but also the objections of their fathers, who, traditionalists, did not want them to be corrupted by the "promiscuity" of school life. Though they also subsumed their own stories in the Harki story, the daughters' accounts of their experiences focused on everyday life, the little incidents that in some of their accounts became epiphanies, resonating with the emotional tenor of, yes, the incident, but more generally of the Harki story or some part of it. They injected it with the emotions that that story was losing in its repetition and its furtherance from the original. Loss, forgetting, effacement, and death were the undersong of much of what they had to say. And yet, beside their sadness, the traumas (their word) they and their families had suffered, they were often far more open to life than the Harki sons.

I am, of course, generalizing here. Each interview, each conversation, was in its way unique. Respect, mine and theirs, played an important role in all of them. I made friends with some of the Harkis. With others I maintained a collegial relationship. As many of them had had little contact with Americans, I became, I imagine, also a subject of their ethnographic interest. As an American, I had an advantage, I believe, over French researchers who were too implicated in fact and symbolically in the Harkis' experience. Sometimes I glimpsed a Harki's surprise at something I had said or revealed through a gesture or facial expression. The Harkis are, in my experience, keen observers. No doubt they have to be.

I am quite certain that forgiveness played a role in my encounters with the Harkis, but it would be presumptuous to assume what that role was. Certainly there were times when I wished that I could do something to undo their sadness and pain, but I, as they, knew, this was impossible. And they knew, as I came to know, that that undoing, were it possible, would be a demeaning appropriation of their experience.

FOOTNOTES

1. For details and bibliography see my book, *The Harkis: The Wound that Never Heals* as well as Crapanzano 2008, 2009, and 2010.
2. Muslims are prohibited from drinking or eating blood.
3. As the French do not distinguish family origins in their census, it is impossible to know how many Harkis, their children, and grandchildren are living in France today. Estimates range from 700,000 to 1,500,000. It is clear that the majority have disappeared into one sector or another of French society – some with extraordinary success. Others seem destined to remain in the ranks of the unemployed migrant workers.
4. Derrida would, no doubt, argue that just as forgiveness is impossible in his terms so is the giving of a gift (*don*) since the exchange of gifts is not unconditional. The receiver of the gift is in a debt relation to the donor. The two would find themselves in a chain of expectations and obligations. The present (*cadeau, présent*), like the excuse, is, of course, possible since the giving of a present assumes—or does not deny—its conditionality (Derrida 1991: 51-94. Caputo 1997: 160-161. See also Jankélévitch 2005 and *per contra* 1986). Its idiosyncrasy notwithstanding, Derrida's understanding of the gift challenges the Maussian assumptions that are generally accepted in anthropology.

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