

Forgiveness and Moral Solidarity

Alice MacLachlan

Abstract

The categorical denial of third-party forgiveness represents an overly individualistic approach to moral repair. Such an approach fails to acknowledge the important roles played by witnesses, bystanders, beneficiaries, and others who stand in solidarity to the primary victim and perpetrator. In this paper, I argue that the prerogative to forgive or withhold forgiveness is not universal, but neither is it restricted to victims alone. Not only can we make moral sense of some third-party acts and utterances of the form, “I can or cannot forgive...” but also, we ought to recognize them as legitimate instances of third party forgiveness. Concern for the primary victim’s autonomy tends to exaggerate a need for moral deference, while ignoring how others are called upon to support and mediate for victims of violence and oppression. I advocate a cautious extension of the victim’s prerogative to forgive, one that grounds forgiveness in a double relation of sympathetic identification and attentive care. Following Jean Harvey’s recent work, I call this relationship moral solidarity. Furthermore, I argue, there are important moral and political reasons to acknowledge third party forgiveness; these reasons are particularly evident in contexts of oppression. In fact, third party *refusals* to forgive may have particular moral significance. In situations of abuse, oppression and damaged self-respect, third party refusals may protect the agency of victims who too easily forgive.

Key Words: forgiveness, third-party forgiveness, moral solidarity

1. Introduction

Consider two very different views of who can forgive. According to the first, the ability to forgive wrongdoings is universal. Forgiveness is, among other things, an act of moral reappraisal: a wrongdoer either ought, or ought not, to be forgiven. Anyone who is capable of making the correct judgment that X should be forgiven is therefore capable of forgiving X, whether or not she had any previous relationship to X’s wrongdoing.¹ The second, and far more popular, view is best expressed in John Dryden’s famous quotation: “forgiveness to the injured doth belong....”² In other words, only the direct victim of a particular wrong is in a position to forgive it.³ The prerogative is hers and hers alone. Ignoring her prerogative, advocates of the second position argue, risks appropriating and even silencing

the victim's voice. In this view, third-party efforts to forgive involve, at best, a dangerous paternalism; at worst, they are morally or logically incoherent.

In this paper, I want to chart a middle ground between these two views. The prerogative to forgive is not universal, I argue, but neither is it restricted to direct victims of harm. Instead, we can understand at least some third-party efforts to forgive as morally legitimate, insofar as they are grounded in a relationship I describe as moral solidarity.⁴ My argument takes the following form: first, I reject arguments against third-party forgiveness. In doing so, I also consider reasons *for* third-party forgiveness, that is, reasons why potential acts of third-party forgiveness are morally important. These reasons include a more accurate understanding of the relational nature of harm and moral repair, the need for third-party forgiveness or self-forgiveness when victims are absent, incapacitated or particularly recalcitrant, and - perhaps most significantly - the role of third-party *refusals* to forgive, when victims are coerced by abuse, oppression and damaged self-respect. In the second part of my argument, I turn from the possibility of third-party forgiveness to the relation in which it is grounded. I suggest this is not correct moral judgment or even care alone, but the particular deferent, 'caring attentiveness' that Jean Harvey calls moral solidarity.⁵ I conclude by mentioning some risks and rewards of third-party forgiveness.

Throughout my discussion, I refer to a 'prerogative' to forgive. Prerogative, at least as used in the philosophical literature on forgiveness, is a normative concept: an ability in virtue of some authority or authorization. Having a moral prerogative to forgive does not entail that all subsequent exercises of it are morally good - and some prerogatives are more risky than others - but it does create a normative space in which they are potentially good. There are, no doubt, many arrogant, inappropriate or morally insensitive instances of third-party forgiveness, but acknowledging the possibility of legitimate third-party forgiveness gives us a finer tool for their critique.

2. Arguments for and against Third-Party Forgiveness

Arguments against third-party forgiveness are plentiful in the philosophical literature.⁶ For the most part, they take one of two forms: either critics argue that third parties 'go wrong' in some way whenever they attempt to forgive or they suggest that third parties may well be doing something morally valuable, but their morally valuable act does not count as *third-party forgiveness*, per se. I call the latter 'debunking' approaches, as they attempt to explain away supposed acts of third-party forgiveness as acts of moral imagination or uses of figurative language, on the one hand, or variations of victim's forgiveness on the other. I begin by considering direct attacks on acts of third-party forgiveness, in themselves.

Few philosophers see the victim's sole prerogative as a logical claim or a matter of definition: as "only the president can issue a pardon" might delineate a restricted performative power, for example.⁷ That we can understand third-party forgiveness as morally problematic suggests, at the very least, that would-be third-party forgivers are aspiring to something minimally coherent. Instead, the victims-only argument usually takes the form of a moral claim: there is something disrespectful, even *unfair*, they argue, when third parties appropriate something that belongs to the victim.⁸ I call this the argument from moral deference.⁹ In its strongest form, it suggests that third-party forgiveness negates the moral agency of the victim.

I am sympathetic to the sentiment behind this critique. The intuition that victims require respect, and that the victim's experience of the wrongdoing ought somehow to be central to any act of forgiveness, is not misguided. As Martha Minow remarks, "restoring dignity to victims... should at a minimum involve respecting their own responses," even if we do not, in the end, agree with them.¹⁰ Yet it is not clear that attentiveness to victims' experiences, credence to victims' voices and acknowledgment of their suffering add up to an exclusive entitlement to forgive: a priority, perhaps, but not necessarily the only prerogative.¹¹ The victim's subject position does not guarantee the kind of exclusive authority that many writing on forgiveness have assumed it does - nor is it necessarily in the victim's best interest that it do so. There may be victim-centred reasons to advocate for third-party forgiveness.

Harvey makes a very strong version of this claim, in discussing victims of systemic oppression: "there is nothing in fact that places the victims in an 'authoritative' role as distinct from a morally central role."¹² This is, perhaps, a difficult thing to hear, particularly when victims are those whose voices are not typically heard or recognized in the first place. Note that Harvey is not suggesting we discount or ignore the victim's standpoint, only that we remain open to the possibility of reflective critique. While the victim's experience may be the central and defining feature of appropriate reasons to forgive, it is not *always* the case that the victim's own recounting of that experience must be the authoritative version, or that only she can have access to the kind of experience sufficient for forgiveness. The danger here lies in conflating correlation with philosophical necessity. We tend to pay careful attention to our own slights and harms, to recount our injuries in greater detail, and to draw deeper conclusions about their consequences.¹³ But serious victimization is a brutal and damaging process: among other harmful consequences, it can even damage the victim's character, that is, her dispositions to react appropriately to the world around her. The victim may have a 'special relationship' to the wrong, in light of actually having undergone the experience, but this relationship may be as epistemologically problematic as it is advantageous.

The most stringent objection to third-party forgiveness (that it negates the victim's agency) assumes the question really arises only when the victim herself refuses to forgive. This construes the moral work of forgiveness too narrowly: more forgiveness beyond the victim's own is not necessarily redundant. There are cases in which a third party may be called upon to *reinforce* the victim's own decision. Even if the victim has not forgiven, or perhaps is not able to forgive, a third-party decision to forgive is not necessarily a presumption or a command for the victim to do the same. The third party may see her forgiveness as a partial contribution in the absence of the victim's forgiveness, and may communicate it as such to both the victim and wrongdoer; in doing so, she may offer relief simultaneously to a repentant, remorseful wrongdoer and a wounded, vulnerable victim. That a third party is, in certain cases, able to lift some of the burden of wrongdoing may be particularly relevant when the victim is no longer capable of doing so, e.g., when she is absent, incapacitated or even dead.¹⁴ Of course, in these cases, interested third parties may have particular reasons to respect, and resent, the victim's suffering (and thus refuse to forgive) but - equally - may be invested in respecting the victim's wishes, where these entail forgiving when she can no longer do so. Insisting on a strict victim's prerogative would have the peculiar consequence of rendering every infraction - however minor - against a (now) deceased, incapacitated, or even a particularly stern victim thereby unforgivable.¹⁵

Furthermore, respect for another person does not always entail complying with her wishes or even remaining silent about them. Sometimes, respect for another's moral agency means communicating when and where she has gone wrong, and even attempting to provide a different or better example of moral action. While Claudia Card is right to acknowledge that victimization may introduce particular moral powers, these 'powers' do not render the victim immune to moral judgment.¹⁶ We can all recognize bad decisions to forgive and equally, unreasonable or cruel decisions to withhold forgiveness. We can even make inferences of good or bad character from those decisions. Finally, insisting on the need for 'moral deference' to the victim of wrongdoing, at all costs, risks over-moralizing the victim's position.¹⁷ We may forgive agents for particular acts they have committed against us, but in many cases, isolated incidents of wrongdoing take place in the context of an ongoing interpersonal relationship, which in turn takes place against a broader background of social and political power dynamics. In very few of such complicated scenarios are the parties involved easily identified as 'victim' or 'wrongdoer' *simpliciter*. As a result, there are often cases where the 'victim' of a discrete wrong is more dangerous to the wrongdoer than vice versa.¹⁸ Forgiveness has multiple functions in the aftermath of wrongdoing, and so can be a good - something *sought* by either party, and with good

reason - even when further relations (even the minimal contact needed to communicate or instantiate forgiveness) between them is not a good idea.

In ignoring the multiple roles played by forgiveness (both by victims and third parties), the philosophical literature has tended to advocate what Sharon Lamb calls “a hyperindividualized notion of personal harm.”¹⁹ Griswold suggests that this picture is a matter of ‘common-sense’ moral individualism.²⁰ But, as Lamb notes, such an approach ignores the role of group identities and identifications in situations of trauma and harms - nor does it reflect the often fragmented and multiple nature of our identities, nor the ways in which we are always selves-in-relation to one another.²¹ While it may be conceptually tidy to describe scenarios of forgiveness as singular, isolated incidents, complete with a single, easily identifiable (and morally uncomplicated) ‘victim’ and ‘wrongdoer’, these paradigms bear very little resemblance to most actual situations in which we are called upon to forgive or be forgiven. If we treat ‘hyperindividualized’ paradigms as normative frameworks for evaluating our more complicated moral experiences, we risk distorting the particularities of our moral reality.²²

At the beginning of this section, I mentioned two forms of argument against third-party forgiveness. The victims-only objection directly criticizes attempts by third parties to intervene. ‘Debunking’ accounts, on the other hand, recognize that those beside the direct victim and perpetrator may well contribute to moral repair but resist the thought that third parties are forgiving. Some suggest that utterances such as “I can’t possibly forgive X for what she did to Y” are actually figurative uses of forgiveness language; no one is *actually* refusing X forgiveness. The speaker (Z) is using ‘unforgivable’ as a measure of X’s wrongfulness or indicating that if she were in Y’s place, she would not forgive. Her own forgiveness does not enter into the question.

It’s true; we do engage in imaginative speculation regarding the harms of others, and we do use ‘unforgivable’ as shorthand for ‘heinous’, ‘awful’, ‘evil’ etc. But not all instances of third party forgiveness can be assimilated to this model; if they could, we would be unable to explain why inappropriate acts of third-party forgiveness seem to matter, why third parties are sometimes called upon (by the victim or perpetrator) to forgive, or why I seem even less qualified to forgive an atrocity to which I have no connection than someone who deeply identifies with (or cares for) the victims. My lack of prerogative is not, among other things, a failure to employ figures of speech appropriately.

Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd have suggested that recognizing ‘multiple’ victims of wrongdoing is a better approach than allowing for third-party forgiveness. In doing so, they avoid the ‘hyperindividualized’ approach of many writing on forgiveness, and I appreciate the handiness of their model. Yet there are many cases in which a

more flexible and shifting measurement of one's relationship to the injury is required than a strict primary/secondary/tertiary division will allow. Furthermore, it mistakes the *object* of a third-party's concern; insofar as she forgives as a third party, it is not her own distress that motivates her but her appreciation of someone else's - even if she can also, rightly, claim distress as a secondary (or tertiary) victim. Equating the two, a Norlock notes, commits a version of the psychological egoist fallacy: I may be the subject of distress without being the object of it.²³ Finally, third parties may involve themselves in the question of forgiveness through their proximity to the wrongdoer - even if they subsequently come to empathize with the victim's suffering.

3. Third-Party Forgiveness and Moral Solidarity

Implicit in my account is the claim that we forgive for *reasons*, and while these reasons draw on intimate aspects of the victim's experience, not only the victim has access to them, necessarily. Others may discover such reasons through attentive, empathetic engagement. Does that mean that anyone at all who gets the decision to forgive 'right' is thereby engaging in morally legitimate forgiveness? Not exactly - my extension of the prerogative to forgive is more cautious than that. Forgiveness remains a *personal* reaction to harm; to forgive is, in some sense, to claim that I take the wrongdoing personally. Clearly there is at least one person other than the victim who has reason to take the wrongdoing personally: the wrongdoer.²⁴ Indeed, I think we are often more critical of our own wrongdoing not because we hold ourselves to a higher standard, but because it rankles *personally* in a way that the failures of others do not: my misdeed is *mine* and I must live with it. I have good reason to take it personally and to be personally invested in how it is taken up, redressed and remembered. If the wrongdoer has good reason to take it personally, then legitimately "taking it personally" is not the same as "having been victimized." Our prerogative to forgive, I would argue, emerges from how we behave in light of the former (personal involvement) and not the latter (victimization).

So what gives third parties the right to take a wrongdoing personally? Creating a typology of appropriate reasons is a daunting and unwieldy process. Instead, I think we would do well to note how third parties are 'called upon' or 'drawn in' - either literally, by one of the primary figures, or in light of their own commitments, identification and care, for those involved. The figurative and the multiple victims account both get something right: it seems that some of us (those close to the victim, or wrongdoer) are *better* placed to assume a forgiver's prerogative and, at the same time, some imaginative effort must be involved, even for these. In other words, it is not enough simply to care for the victim (to stand in a particular relationship to her) or enough to 'get it right' regarding the decision to

forgive.²⁵ Instead, *both* conditions must ground the legitimacy of third party efforts. A potential forgiver must be committed to the interests of the victim (that is, getting it right) while, at the same time, must demonstrate *some* deference to her understanding of those interests even if this understanding diverges from the forgiver's own. This commitment is more likely - though not guaranteed - to emerge in relationships of personal or political solidarity. If the forgiver is no longer able to communicate or understand her own interests then, as Griswold describes, third parties are called upon to begin the long - and possibly open-ended task - of imaginatively reconstructing what these might have been.²⁶

Thus a third party prerogative is doubly grounded: first, in a prior relationship of identification with or care for the victim or wrongdoer, and second, in a careful and attentive empathetic engagement with the victim's experience of having been wronged. The latter condition very much resembles Harvey's account of moral solidarity: a personal, "caring attentiveness" owed to victims and their experiences, which differs - significantly - from automatic deference to their personal accounts of that experience.²⁷ Moral solidarity means not just aligning myself with the victim and her interests, but to view those interests in light of my best imaginative reconstruction of *her* voice and experience while acknowledging that such efforts are, at best, asymptotic and in need of constant reassessment and readjustment.

It seems to me that third parties who stand in a relation of *moral* solidarity to victims of wrongdoing are rightly granted a prerogative to forgive.²⁸ Many examples of moral solidarity are found in intimate relationships of care: friendship and family ties. Friends and family may be best placed to listen and gauge appropriate reactions. But I believe that Harvey's notion, applied to the question of forgiveness, can be equally fruitful when considering allegiances formed through shared social and political identifications: that is, when those involved share social or group identities, especially when these identities are partly responsible for making the victim more vulnerable to harm. I think here of members of minorities, those who have been affected or have witnessed hate crimes, or bystanders to particular kinds of social exclusion and violence. Indeed, relations of moral solidarity may be built through common experience; perhaps those victimized by similar crimes are most able to form the appropriate kinds of sympathetic attention. Lamb explores solidarity among female survivors of sexual (and other violence) and suggests that often, decisions to forgive - or, equally important, to refuse forgiveness - are appropriately grounded in a sense of solidarity with others in the same situation.²⁹

4. Conclusions: Risks and Rewards of Third-Party Forgiveness

Third party prerogatives to forgive ought to be exercised with significant caution, as there are greater risks associated with them. While I have tried to suggest that we can meaningfully account for third-party forgiveness *as* forgiveness without making it a substitute for victims' forgiveness, there is still a real danger that the initiative to forgive, when taken by others, will feel like such to the victim. Here, a balance needs to be struck between the need for attentiveness to the victim's voice and the danger of being held hostage to it. Clearly there are times when victims have good reason to forgive and yet they do not, and certain third parties may recognize some of those reasons. The question instead is: How do we cope with the danger of stepping in too readily, or in such a way as to violate or disrespect the primary victim of wrong? Obviously there is no easy solution here, but one helpful approach may be the careful consideration of the relative power positions of those involved: in particular, the comparative social position of the victim and the third party and the amount of institutional or political power each may have individually or as members of a group. Thus, individuals from dominant social groups may need to be more deferent towards the responses of victims who are from oppressed or marginalized groups. Moral solidarity, as I have described it, may curb our initial moral deference; it ought not, however, replace it.³⁰

In certain situations, I have argued, third party forgiveness can play a valuable supplementary role to the primary victim's own forgiveness and may have a corrective or compensatory function in its absence. There are moral risks associated with even the most well-meaning efforts to third-party forgive, however, and for this reason I suggest that morally legitimate instances will always be grounded in a robust form of moral solidarity: a double relationship of sympathetic identification with, and attentive care toward, the primary victim of wrong. Where there is a significant power imbalance between victim and third-party, moral solidarity may take a back seat to moral deference.

There is an asymmetry, however, between this kind of discrepancy in forgiving reactions and the opposite: that is, when the victim forgives but third parties recognize legitimate reasons to withhold forgiveness or problematic aspects of the victim's own decision to grant it. While third-party forgiveness cannot substitute for victim's forgiveness, the victim's decision to forgive does not necessarily eliminate the third party's need to make a similar moral choice, either, or entail that third parties will also choose *to* forgive. Again, this is particularly true when we consider individual acts of forgiveness in the broader context of social injustice. Moral solidarity, like its political analogue, becomes particularly relevant. Moreover, in this case, the most respectful thing that others who identify with the victim may be able to do is meaningfully to withhold their forgiveness and to continue to hold the

wrongdoer accountable in ways that the victim is not be able to do. In fact, one of the most important reasons we have to recognize the possibility of third-party forgiveness is that this recognition allows, equally, for the possibility of its refusal. Third-party *refusals* to forgive may be important expressions of solidarity and moral community, whose value can only be wholly accounted for when we acknowledge that the power to forgive is not limited to immediate victims of wrongdoing.

Notes

¹ I am grateful to David White for introducing and defending this position to me, very convincingly, in conversation. Note that ‘X ought to be forgiven’ does not entail that a particular wrongdoer either *deserves* or does not deserve to be forgiven. The statement remains neutral with regard to the kinds of reasons for which we might forgive. Restricting reasons to forgive to the wrongdoer’s desert risks creating ‘paradoxes’ of forgiveness, such as that famously articulated by Aurel Kolnai, who noted that, if a matter of the wrongdoer’s desert, forgiveness was in danger of being “either unjustified or pointless.” A Kolnai, ‘Forgiveness,’ *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 74, 1973, pp. 91-106.

² Taken from “The Conquest of Granada.” Few who cite Dryden comment on the rather pessimistic tone of the following line: “...but they ne’er pardon who have done the wrong.”

³ For example, Berel Lang argues that “only the person who suffers the harm... is in a position to grant or refuse” a request for forgiveness. Piers Benn discusses forgiveness as an ‘entitlement’ analogous to waiving a debt, while H. J. N. Horsbrugh claims that even the verb ‘to forgive’ takes into account whether one has oneself sustained a serious injury. Jeffrie Murphy and Joram Haber also agree with Dryden’s quotation. See B Lang, ‘Forgiveness,’ *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1994, pp. 107; P Benn, ‘Forgiveness and Loyalty’ *Philosophy*, vol. 71, 1996, pp. 369-83; H J N Horsbrugh, ‘Forgiveness,’ *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 4, 1974, pp. 269-82; J G Murphy and J Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988; J G Haber, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Study*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 1991.

⁴ In using the term ‘moral solidarity,’ I draw on recent work by Jean Harvey; see J Harvey, ‘Moral Solidarity and Empathetic Understanding: The Moral Value and Scope of the Relationship,’ *Journal of Social Philosophy*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2007, pp. 22-37.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶ Indeed, opinion on this topic is so close to uniform that the exceptions are worth mentioning. Kathryn Norlock argues forcefully against assimilating all

cases of apparent third-party forgiveness to secondary or tertiary victims' forgiveness in her doctoral dissertation. See K J Norlock, 'A Feminist Ethic of Forgiveness,' Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2001. Claudia Card notes that in many cases where we might want to dismiss third-party forgiveness, "the facts are not so simple," and Eve Garrard briefly mentions the possibility of third-party forgiveness in her discussion of forgiveness and the Holocaust. C Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p. 186; E Garrard, 'Forgiveness and the Holocaust,' in *Moral Philosophy and the Holocaust*, E. Garrard and G. Scarre (eds.), Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, 2002, p. 149. Finally, Charles Griswold allows for third-party forgiveness as a form of *imperfect* forgiveness, provided the third-party is able to provide a credible narrative in which the victim would herself have forgiven under different circumstances, C L Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007.

⁷ John Gingell is an exception, as he argues that third-party forgiveness is logically incoherent, J Gingell, 'Forgiveness and Power,' *Analysis*, vol. 34, 1974, pp. 180-83.

⁸ I do not have space here to consider in detail a version of the victim's prerogative that sits between the two: it could be called the 'psychological' version of the victims-only argument: only victims can forgive, because only victims can have the requisite self-pertaining emotional states (e.g., resentment). I do not believe forgiveness necessarily entails deep emotional change; certain instances of forgiveness may be primarily performative or ritualistic, for example, or may focus more on changes in *how* I see the wrongdoer (and behave towards her) than changes in how I feel about her. Moreover, insofar as forgiveness does frequently involve a shift in angry feelings, there is something question-begging in predicating it - by definition - on a version of anger that is *only* self-pertaining, then concluding that we can only forgive injuries to ourselves. It seems to me that the burden of proof then rests with the advocate of the victim's prerogative, who must defend why only resentment - and not indignation, condemnation, or blame, for example - is relevant. As Card notes, "one need not be a victim in order to blame or condemn." Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil*, p. 184. Those who argue resentment is necessary for forgiveness include Murphy and Hampton; H McGary, 'Forgiveness,' *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 4, 1989, pp. 343-51; M Holmgren, 'Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons,' *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1993, pp. 341-52; Lang; R C Roberts, 'Forgivingness,' *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 4, 1995, pp. 289-303; T Govier, *Forgiveness and Revenge*, Routledge, New York, 2002; P Hieronymi, 'Articulating an

Uncompromising Forgiveness,' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 62, no. 3, 2001, pp. 529-55.

⁹ For a detailed discussion of moral deference - though not in relation to forgiveness, see L Thomas, 'Moral Deference,' *Philosophical Forum*, vol. 14, nos. 1-3 1992, pp. 233-50.

¹⁰ M Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History After Genocide and Mass Violence*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1998, p. 8.

¹¹ This would be the case if third party forgiveness were always necessarily a substitute or a replacement for the victim's forgiveness; that is, if forgiveness were an act that could only take place once. But since forgiveness is a personal reaction to wrongdoing, there is no reason why several persons cannot take it upon themselves to forgive - as would be uncontroversially the case if there were several victims of the wrong.

¹² Harvey, p. 30.

¹³ Card cites studies by Roy F. Baumeister in describing discrepancies between perceptions of our harms done to others and their harms done to us. Baumeister notes that victims and perpetrators are equally likely to distort the facts of a wrongdoing, and to an equal degree, although victims will make the offense seem worse than it was, and perpetrators will distort facts to lessen it. R F Baumeister, *Evil: Inside Human Cruelty and Violence*, Freeman, New York, 1997, pp. 18-19 quoted in Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil*, p. 9.

¹⁴ Sophia Wong has drawn my attention to the role of third-party forgiveness in negotiating relationships between individuals with Alzheimers or dementia, their families and their caregivers.

¹⁵ Griswold cites this peculiar consequence as his motivation for 'softening' the force of the hard-line position against third-party forgiveness and recognizing it as legitimate, albeit imperfectly so.

¹⁶ See, for a discussion of 'moral powers', Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil*, p. 184.

¹⁷ Thomas, pp. 233-50.

¹⁸ Consider, for example, the 'victim' of a battered spouse who fights back.

¹⁹ S Lamb, 'Forgiveness, Women and Responsibility to the Group,' *Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 5, 2006, p. 45.

²⁰ Griswold, p.118.

²¹ For more detailed discussion of fragmented and relational identities, please see Norlock, "Why Self-Forgiveness needs Third-Party Forgiveness," in this collection.

²² Robin Schott makes this point, in responding to Card's discussion of forgiveness: R M Schott, 'The Atrocity Paradigm and the Concept of Forgiveness,' *Hypatia*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2004, pp. 202-09. Card has responded

that she did not intend her paradigm to represent ‘ideal’ forgiveness, only a conceptually unproblematic example: C Card, ‘The Atrocity Paradigm Revisited,’ *Hypatia*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2004, pp. 212-19. The danger of distortion remains, however, in relying on such examples. Moreover, Griswold does refer to his chosen paradigm as “forgiveness at its best,” see Griswold, pp. 38-53.

²³ See Norlock, pp. 128-63.

²⁴ See Norlock, in this collection.

²⁵ I can be extremely close to someone while having no idea of her experience in this matter and, equally, I can be *right* in my assessment that Pol Pot is unforgivable without therefore being the appropriate person to refuse his forgiveness.

²⁶ Griswold, p. 119.

²⁷ Harvey, p. 30.

²⁸ This does not guarantee that all third party acts of forgiveness, grounded in this particular way, are therefore morally *correct*, all things considered, any more than all acts of victim’s forgiveness are correct.

²⁹ Lamb, *op. cit.*

³⁰ This is particularly so when the third party in question wields institutional authority (for example, as part of a truth and reconciliation commission, or another amnesty-granting political body). I have focused on personal responses to wrongdoing in this paper precisely because the moral nuances of forgiveness are multiplied once institutional authority and representative agency enters the situation.

Bibliography

Benn, P., ‘Forgiveness and Loyalty.’ *Philosophy*, vol. 71, 1996, pp. 369-83.

Card, C., *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002.

_____, ‘The Atrocity Paradigm Revisited.’ *Hypatia*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2004, pp. 212-22.

Garrard, E., ‘Forgiveness and the Holocaust.’ In *Moral Philosophy and the Holocaust*, E. Garrard and G. Scarre (eds.), Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, 2002, pp. 231-246.

Gingell, J., ‘Forgiveness and Power.’ *Analysis*, vol. 34, 1974, pp. 180-83.

-
- Govier, T., *Forgiveness and Revenge*. Routledge, New York, 2002.
- Griswold, C. L., *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007.
- Haber, J. G., *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Study*. Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 1991.
- Harvey, J., 'Moral Solidarity and Empathetic Understanding: The Moral Value and Scope of the Relationship.' *Journal of Social Philosophy*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2007, pp. 22-37.
- Hieronimi, P., 'Articulating an Uncompromising Forgiveness.' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 62, no. 3, 2001, pp. 529-55.
- Holmgren, M., 'Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons.' *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1993, pp. 341-52.
- Horsbrugh, H. J. N., 'Forgiveness.' *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 4, 1974, pp. 269-82.
- Kolnai, A., 'Forgiveness.' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 74, 1973, pp. 91-106.
- Lamb, S., 'Forgiveness, Women and Responsibility to the Group.' *Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 5, 2006, pp. 45-60.
- Lang, B., 'Forgiveness.' *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1994, pp. 105-15.
- McGary, H., 'Forgiveness.' *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 4, 1989, pp. 343-51.
- Minow, M., *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History After Genocide and Mass Violence*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1998.
- Murphy, J. G. and J. Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988.
- Norlock, K. J., 'A Feminist Ethic of Forgiveness.' Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2001.

Roberts, R. C., 'Forgivingness.' *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 4, 1995, pp. 289-303.

Schott, R. M., 'The Atrocity Paradigm and the Concept of Forgiveness.' *Hypatia*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2004, pp. 202-09.

Thomas, L., 'Moral Deference.' *Philosophical Forum*, vol. 14, nos. 1-3, 1992, pp. 233-50.

Alice MacLachlan is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at York University. Her current research is in ethical theory, with a focus on feminist approaches to forgiveness, reconciliation, reparation and apology, as well as the philosophy of Hannah Arendt.