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The Civilized and the Barbarous: Honor in French and Turkish Contemporary Societies

Cover Page Footnote

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The Civilized and the Barbarous: Honor in French and Turkish Contemporary Societies¹

From anthropological studies describing social representations of Mediterranean countries,² to the outskirts of Paris,³ to the analysis of its evolution and role in contemporary society,⁴ honor holds a privileged place in humanities research. Although there have been a significant number of studies describing cultural differences emanating from this principle, honor is nonetheless a common element of various societies. While the term varies from one culture to another, what it designates is quite similar.

The principle of honor confers a specific place and status to the individual, allowing her or him to exist in a given society. It allows individuals to situate themselves within the collectivity in which they evolve, prescribing codes and conducts relative to their age, sex,⁵ or social status.⁶ Previous studies have given rise to a multitude of descriptions of honor, showing that this principle is present in numerous spheres of existence, but especially that it can take on various meanings: honor can be a “feeling,”⁷ an “entitlement to respect,”⁸ a combination of certain qualities such as “strength,” “courage” or “integrity,”⁹ the “moral value of an individual,”¹⁰ a moral principle and a duty,¹¹ “an ideology,”¹² or even “the need to attain a certain prestige within society.”¹³

Honor is a complex principle that on various levels influences daily life. Often judged as outdated and ill-suited to modern society, honor can be seen as too rigid a concept, which is too “engaging” in a “liquid society.”¹⁴ However, honor cannot be abandoned without engendering a feeling of unease. If discussions of honor in daily life may seem

irrelevant to today's world, forgoing it and living without honor remains inconceivable to people living in both these societies.

The goal of this research is to understand the place of honor in today's world, in an increasingly rationalized and profit-oriented world, in which individuals are characterized by their interchangeability. Mainly, this paper seeks to reveal how honor is expressed in today's consumer society and globalized world.

To conduct this research, I chose to analyze the honor principle in France and Turkey, which, although in geographical proximity, represent distinct traditions. The goal was to grasp the multiple understandings of honor among twenty to twenty-seven-year-olds in these two societies, focusing on identifying similarities, but also differences.

France and Turkey were chosen for comparison for specific reasons. In Turkey, three terms exist to describe the concept of "honor," namely *şeref*, *onur* and *namus*. Although closely related, each term refers to different spheres; public, private and intimate.¹⁵ These three words are used in the everyday life and are considered by the Turkish population as more important than life - in Turkey, people can kill for honor, they swear "on their honor," and they drink to one's "honor." The concept of honor seems to play a totally different role in French society. It is considered obsolete, harkening back to the principles of Musketeers and the chivalry of the Middle Ages. In short, for the French population, this term tends to be poorly suited for life in modern society. Starting from this observation, this paper shall analyze the divergences of these two perceptions. For the purpose of this paper, honor shall be represented by the concepts of "*honneur*" in French and "*şeref*" in Turkish, which seem to share similar denotations.

The basis of this research is informal interviews were that conducted with young adults, between the ages of twenty and twenty-seven-years-old. This age group offered the opportunity to study the transformation of this principle. The Turkish young adults interviewed for this research were born in the 1980s, a period during which the country open its borders to foreign products. A liberal market emerged, having a huge impact on society. This generation grew up in a context in which the Turkish, the foreign, and market values all existed together. Life for these adults is now characterized by its apolitical nature and a lifestyle based on unrestrained consumerism.¹⁶

By looking at the 1980s generation of French people, it is possible to note similar transformations. These young people's lives have been changed not only by social and economic factors, but by a general transformation that also occurred as wealth and production migrated to newly industrializing economies. The spread of technology and popular culture metamorphosed the habits of this generation. In France, this age group grew up in a society characterized by its political and social instability, causing a high rate of unemployment, and engendered by the ideology of 1980's, "neoliberalism." In 1981, in an attempt to lower unemployment, the French government's priority was to help companies become profitable and to encourage investment. France entered into a period of austerity, which the French population had no other choice but to accept. In the 1990s, the economic situation changed, and diverse categories of "have-nots" (such as the unemployed, the homeless and undocumented immigrants), who were until then considered victims of capitalism, stood up for their rights. This period was characterized by important movements, which tried to question the nature of the capitalist system.

The insecurity provoked by this social instability led to the dependence of the youth on the older generation. For example, numerous young adults still live with their parents and depend on them financially. In France, this population represented 11.6 percent of the twenty-five to thirty-four-year-olds in 2011, although they were only 8 percent in 2007.¹⁷ True, it seems that this phenomenon is not only prevalent among French young adults: the 2012 ING International Survey on Homes and Mortgages¹⁸ found moving back home was also prevalent in Turkey, Romania, Italy and Spain. The American crisis of subprime mortgages also intensified this global phenomenon. New terminology emerged to describe this group of young adults remaining in the parental home for extended periods; generation “boomerang,” “kangaroo,” “hotel Mama” or “altricial,” referring to a species of birds who are born blind and helpless, depending completely on their parents for warmth and food until they have developed enough to leave the nest. This generation has then lived with the consequences of the economical, social and political transitions of their generation. They grew up in a world characterized by *planétarisation*,¹⁹ in which individuals have to adapt themselves to a rationalized world, focused upon profit.

The aim of this study is to see how French and Turkish people born between 1980 and 1990 have adjusted the social expectations imposed by honor (such as restraint and constancy) to those dictated by the merchandise society based on exacerbate flexibility. To conduct this research, a convenience sample was utilized, which allowed the gathering of various representations of honor, and also an understanding the prevailing variations of the concept. The concern was not to set criteria which may have led to a biased analysis; for example, selecting a randomly drawn sample of people living in a specific quarter of Istanbul or Paris may have seemed appropriate from a methodological standpoint, but

wrong from a demographic standpoint, as the sample may not have been representative of a cross-section of Turkish or French populations. Defining additional criteria for this research would have been problematic as honor is relevant to everybody, without any distinction of race for example. To conduct this research, fifty men and fifty women in each society were interviewed. All of our interviewees were city-dwellers, aged twenty to twenty-seven-years-old, university students and graduates, born, raised, and currently living in Istanbul, or in the Ile-de-France region, which includes Paris. The present sample, while not representative of these two entire populations, provides a large panel of “exemplary cases,” allowing us to analyze honor as a personal, but also in certain cases, as a cohesive principle. The results of this study show that in these two different societies, the concept of honor for young adults tended to share similarities, most likely due to globalization. The “planetaryisation” seems to have redefined the interactions and the social values, and standardized the concept of honor. These interviews offer great insight into how individuals view the honor principle today, as well as how this may be a principle of resistance to contemporary barbarism.

Honor as a Self-Imposed Principle

Whether *honneur* in France, or *şeref* in Turkey, the interviewees described honor as a principle imposing on individuals guidelines for their behavior. To the French, honor appears to be a significant personal principle: a set of values that allows for the preservation of one’s integrity. Honor is a line of conduct and morality in which the individual believes, and to which he or she conforms as a guideline for his or her existence. In spite of its importance, young French adults seem to prefer to use other terms in their daily life, such as “dignity,” “self-esteem,” “pride,” and “integrity,” rather than to speak of honor: for

them, this concept is a “grand word” imbued with commitments, ill-suited to the modern world, which advocates detachment. However, a vast majority of respondents indicated that honor gives the individual lines of conduct that should not be ignored, so as not to lose one’s self-respect.

In Turkey, *şeref* has also been perceived as a principle which gives meaning to our actions. For respondents, it tends to comfort us in our existence and even confirm our place within society. If having *şeref* is not an ultimate goal, or even a principle to which the individual often refers, it must be perpetuated and intertwined with existence itself. “*Şeref is what allows us to live,*” “*Şeref is above everything else,*” “*Şeref is more important than life,*” are common statements heard among Turkey’s young adults. Similarly, it goes beyond the two other terms for honor: *namus* and *onur*, which signify respectively virtue-honor and dignity.

However, it is impossible to consider honor without taking into account its interactional dimension: all principles cited by French and Turkish interviewees are synonyms for honor and *şeref*, such as “respect for others,” “solidarity,” “loyalty,” “doing what you are told,” “do what you say you’ll do,” and “keep promises.” These represent principles essentially turned towards otherness and the correct functioning of social relations. Honor is inseparable from public space;²⁰ it corresponds to “face” and to self-performance²¹ in order to be recognized. In daily-life, individuals develop and define their honor based on shared social norms. They adapt themselves to rules of living, manners, and judge each other by these same criteria. Honor is inseparable from judgment as it is the moral value which individual possess in the eyes of society to which they belong.²²

Honor must be considered as something personal and political. To avoid any negative judgment of one's actions, morals and intentions, as well as the tarnishing of one's reputation, the individual must restrain gestures and words; he or she must self-constrain²³ to demonstrate their knowledge of the rules of civility,²⁴ and to entitle them to the respect and consideration of peers. This self-imposition aimed at recognition is far from superficial: rules of living are essential for society to function. They regulate relations, while imposing forms and manners²⁵ allowing each person to respect interactional distances. Each individual imposes her or himself as a complete member of society, with rights and duties towards oneself, but also towards others; each can expect consideration and require recognition of one's own value. This means that every individual has the right, as an ethical necessity, to minimal recognition. For this, each must respect others as much as he or she wishes to be respected.²⁶ Each person is responsible for maintaining this equilibrium in societal relations, through the government of self and others. Only if each person commits to respecting manners in society, to contain impulses, and through this to possess honor, social order can only be perpetuated.

Honor and *şeref* dictate to individuals certain required behaviors - they must be modest, discreet, humble, avoid any exhibition, and not be ostentatious.²⁷ In her research, Marie-Luce Gélard shows how the vocabulary of honor can vary according to gender. The words concerning women's honor evoke an honor closed in on itself (remain a girl, keep one's honor), whereas that of men is turned towards the outside world (face the world, show who you are). Both are expected not to be slaves to their impulses, to channel their passions, and overall, to exercise exemplary conduct, in order to correspond to a super-human model. Portrayals of honor take root in the body itself: it can be seen as much in the head, which

must be bowed as a sign of deference or covered to hide any sign of femininity, as in the genitals, but also in the face, hands, blood. Is it not the biggest mark of disapproval situated in the “arm of Honor” (“*Bras d’honneur*”) in some countries, and “the finger” in others? Honor has a privileged link with the body, as much in self-performance as in self-governing.²⁸ Moreover, public honor signifies the progression from the simple affirmation of presence, to the elaboration of presentation, displaying the art of living, to one’s grasp on politeness, decorum and manners. In order to correspond to precepts dictated by honor, the body must be controlled, constrained, tamed and trained, and this must be reflected in the body’s extension, that is, how it is dressed. The body and its impulses must be dominated, because through the body, individuals take their place in the world, situating themselves with regards to the otherness that recognizes them. Through self-constraint, individuals prove their good manners, which imply that they are virtuous (and therefore honorable). In this way, they gain the respect of their peers. Honor and *şeref* are necessary as personal principles, geared towards the social recognition of others, made possible through self-control of body and impulses. For respondents, this meant a principle of containment and restraint, forming a civic honor which attempts to be “civilized”.

Although interviewees affirmed that their own honor depended upon restraint and containment, they tended to refer to another type of honor that they qualified as “barbarous,” and impulsive. In their eyes, this belonged to populations with which they did not share the same vision of honor.²⁹ This could signify populations, cultures, or even entire “stranger” civilizations.

For Turkish respondents, “barbarous” honor brought to mind three distinct practices with which they did not identify. The first practice young Turks considered barbarous is

honor killings (*namus cinayetleri*), aimed at cleansing any offence to virtue-honor, and called *namus* in Turkish. These crimes are notably perpetrated in order to punish woman who have extramarital relations, or a men who question a woman's virtue.³⁰

Barbarous honor is also, for young Turks, associated with *crimes of customs* (*tore cinayetleri*). These are committed when an individual breaks the rules of their collectivity. For example, refusing to marry according to a decision made by other members of the community would be a crime of customs. By doing so, the individual puts into question not only his or her family's honor, but also the entire system of tradition and custom to which individuals are bound. Family members designate a family member who must eliminate the perturbing individual according to this collectivity's own rules.

The final barbarous type of honor as identified by young Turks is *the vendetta* (*kan davası*). This refers to relations between families for whom ancestral vengeance persist. The individual must avenge family honor in responding to the collectivity's expectations.³¹ Through such actions, courage, belonging, and dutifulness are proven. Hesnard has referred to this as "*self-affirmation through negation of the other*".³²

For Turkish respondents, these three practices reflect "barbarous" honor. These practices can be seen in south-east Turkey, which belong to "another time" for the respondents. For them, they do not correspond to values promoted by society, in particular to the notion of gender equality, nor do they adhere to the very definition of honor itself. Honor is a principle that attempts to be personal and subjective, and not determined exclusively by outside laws. More significantly, these practices ruffle the established social order, since they establish themselves based on local, communitarian rules that question the country's official laws. In addition (still according to respondents), populations practicing

crimes in the name of honor are slaves to their impulses: they do not demonstrate self-constraint, nor respect for others, principles which are at the core of honor. Young adults go as far as to designate these populations as “individuals ruled by their impulses,” “barbarians,” or even “monsters.”

In addition to its impulsive aspect, respondents noted that “impulsive honor” stems from individuals illiteracy and lack of education. As Banu, a twenty-seven-year-old woman from Turkey said, “Those who do it, they do it out of habit. They lack education and so they believe in values from another time, from the past, which they attempt to apply to the 20th century. Maybe I shouldn’t judge them on a social level, since they do not have the same values, the same education. But they should stop killing each other.” When a twenty-seven-year-old man in Turkey named Tamer was asked, “But why do they kill?” his response was, “There is no reason. They kill because of namus. They kill the one who has tarnished namus. I don’t know anyone who has practiced töre. It comes from a lack of education, since we don’t see it among educated people like us.”

Young adults used the term “education” to mean not only scholastic knowledge, but also manners, codes of behavior, and ways of being in society. In affirming that people who practice honor crimes were “without education,” respondents implied that they were characterized both by lack of schooling and an absence of manners. They were thus thought to be individuals mastering neither codes of collective living, nor their own bodies; they refuse self-constraint imposed by societal rules and are guided by their impulses, which could often lead to crime. This confusion between civility and knowledge was very significant, since it shows that the individual who does not correspond to these expectations

has no place in the public sphere, and represents a danger and an annoyance, due to a lack of “right” visions of the world and “right” conduct characteristic of honor.

In France, “barbarous” and violent honor were also designated as a principle belonging to “othernesses,” with which respondents claimed not to identify. Here, “barbarous” honor was characterized as excessive, exteriorized, with rigid honor present in every situation. Behaviors associated with “barbarous” honor were considered in total opposition to the type of characteristics advocated by respondents, notably, reserve and restraint. Although it was not a question of honor crimes as in Turkey (such practices being mostly unknown to French interviewees), numerous alterities designated as exercising violent honor were cited. French respondents associated these ideas with different ethnic groups. For example, the interviewees had opinions about populations they described as Mediterranean. Denis, a twenty-six-year-old male commented, “It sounds particularly Mediterranean: warm blood to avenge family honor, they are ready to use any means at their disposal to kill, to defend this honor in any situation.” They also associated these behaviors with African cultures. Nathan, a twenty-six-year-old man in France noted, “Actually, if someone kills for honor, it’s an Honor crime. Genocide in Rwanda was against humanity, but for honor, since the Hutus put their hearts into it.” Many also had associated this negative type of honor with Latin behavior, as twenty-three-year-old Alexandre thought this type of honor existed among, “...hot-blooded populations, in Latin culture, in Africa too...”

Michel, a twenty-seven-year-old man from France, associated this idea of honor with Muslim cultures, stating, “In Africa, especially with lapidating, among Muslims for example, because the woman slept with another, so the man must kill the woman and the other. OK, I think that’s horrible.” Jennifer also had preconceived notions about honor in

Afghanistan, saying “We saw those women in Afghanistan getting lapidated because they were suspected of having an affair, or did not satisfy their husbands. I think that’s scandalous. Today, people are still killing for honor. It’s ridiculous.” Jennifer, a twenty-seven-year-old woman in France, had definite opinions about Corsicans, stating “When you look at family vendettas, they start with the father..., and they last for generations, and families hate each other because someone pulled a jack-knife, or because of a neighborhood problem. They consider everything as a question of honor. I think that’s unrealistic. It means they don’t even really think. “I consider that you dishonored me, that my honor was shaken. So I’m killing you.” Who do they think they are, to go killing someone else?”

Some French respondents also associated this type of honor with other Frenchmen, namely the inhabitants of the suburbs (“*banlieues*”). Michel, mentioned earlier, said “I don’t think I share the same definition of honor as those people... I take a lot of photos in those places and I like to talk with them, those ones who always try to attack me and rob me at first. OK, I think of it as dogs who sniff each others’ bottoms, they need to bark at each other, to show our position. But we don’t have the same honor codes at all, it’s really weird. I think that they are afraid of everything... of being an idiot, which is the supreme insult. So for them, defending their honor must be done through physical violence. Why not? But that’s not the right way to defend one’s honor.”

All these dualities in the understanding of honor, apparent in French and Turkish views, give rise to an “Us” and a “Them,” established according to divergences in conceptions of honor. On the one hand, there is “civilized” honor, based on restraint in behaviors. This seeks to respect alterity, yet without giving much importance to its judgments. On the other hand, there is honor qualified as “barbarous” that is violent, destructive, constraining,

totally subject to others' opinions, which relies on principles of otherness with which the respondents claim not to identify. This otherness seems to have a restrictive vision of honor, connected to feminine sexuality and chastity, conception considered by our interviewees as the product of an obsolete and "outdated" mode of thinking. The young adults extolled a more "modern" and better adapted conception to the democratic and liberal society they live in.

These divergences in conceptions are even naturalized by geographical distinctions: honor crimes, most visible in southeastern Turkey, were considered by interviewees as practices coming from the whole Eastern region of the country and sometimes even all of Anatolia. These symbolic borders may imply a distinction between the conception of honor in Istanbul and that of, not even the southeast, but the entire "rest of Turkey." In French discussions, violent honor is described as belonging to certain civilizations, cultures, societies, or populations – that is, highly diversified abstractions. Through these numerous representations of violent honor, the individual comforts his or her own honor: even while not allowing oneself identification with the "Other," honor lets individuals judge each other and situate themselves based on this otherness.

The Principle of Honor in Consumer Society

Today, new values seem to raise questions about the criteria for honor: in an increasingly fragmented society ruled by serial social relations, "to have honor" does not guarantee the individual a place in society. In this context, wherein materialism prevails, the individual's personal value no longer depends on morality, but is measured by what is shown and what appears to be. To be and to have tend to be indistinguishable, to show what you have is thus to show who you are; to show the self-reduced to a self that is fragmented,

hacked into pieces, on display.³³ Reputation is determined not according to moral precepts, but by the fact of being “in” or “out,” according to criteria of consumerism. Comments made by many of the interviewees note this, including one from Nathan who felt that “Society makes it so we are honorable when we own things.” This quest for recognition which emphasizes being “seen” in order to be accepted corresponds to “tyranny of opinion.” The judgment of others determines the individual’s place in society, making him or her a winner or a loser.³⁴ In addition, society is constantly creating more and more productivity-based requirements, making all former criteria for success quite obsolete. All criteria for success, and even for simple recognition, tend to be difficult to meet. Basically, never obtaining the conviction that one’s life has meaning, and being influenced by unobtainable ideals put forth by consumer society in which “excess becomes the norm,” the individual is submerged in “anxiety over losing one’s place, not being worthy of the ideal, of not knowing how to respond to paradoxical requirements...”³⁵

Consequently, the instability of contemporary society, and its characteristic lack of guidelines, submerge the individual in constant worry: faced with the fast pace of transformations in the surrounding world, people become aware not only that their place in their own society is not guaranteed, but also that their lives, even if they are stable, are not protected from existential upheaval. These situations of rupture have been acknowledged in statements of respondents regarding “crisis” and “precariousness”. Both correspond to situations dreaded by individuals, since they can perturb the course of their existence, and especially can throw them into life conditions that threaten their dignity and their integrity. At any moment, the tide of one’s existence can turn and plunge into precariousness. The individual becomes aware of the need to fight to impose oneself, through one’s own

means.³⁶ As the respondents affirmed, in today's world the goal is not to "live" but to "survive."

In this climate of social instability, combined with ever-increasing needs, the individual becomes aware that honor and/or being honorable no longer guarantees a place in the world, and that to exist, there is no other choice but to submit to new social requirements. In the capitalist society, values are redefined: individuals have to be "seen" by others for whatever reason to obtain the social approval. In the contemporary societies, the quest to be seen is a necessary part of individual existence and recognition. For this, they have to expose themselves to prove to others that they deserve to be recognized.³⁷ The example of the use of networks in the digital era can be given here: it has become necessary to "live" in that world in order to be "truly alive." In other words, if you are not *viewed*, you are among the *invisible*. This feeling is all the more unbearable in a world where social recognition is established by views. People want to "stay in view" on the Internet, causing them to "go over the top," by generating a lot of hype so that others will not pass them by. For these reasons, many Internet users are eager to stand naked and unveil intimate parts of their lives; in the modern world, presentations of the self are no longer based on a private-public distinction and they undermine the concept of shame.³⁸ These new values, such as exposure, flexibility, and rationality, which come with the capitalist system, seem to be incompatible with the principles associated with honor, namely constancy and restraint.³⁹ That is why honor is no longer a principle assuring recognition and consideration for individuals. Today, "being honorable" or acting in an honorable way is not enough to be considered as a virtuous person. To obtain the respect of the others, individuals have to be seen (for whatever reason), and have to try to exist through their consumption of goods.

The more they expose themselves and their brands for example, the more they become visible and appreciated. Morality is then no longer primordial. In modern society, honor is only felt when it is struck, lost or questioned; it is not self-evident. In the perspective of social transformations and anxiety engendered by the struggle for survival, it is not surprising to see the emergence of entirely negative abstractions symbolizing the loss of honor, as if honor could no longer be seen positively.

Figures of Honorlessness in Contemporary Society: The Homeless and Politicians

The homeless are the first category cited frequently by French interviewees to incarnate the loss of honor. For interviewees, they correspond in the social imagination to individuals who no longer have the capacities to participate in the struggle for survival. They are marginal both economically and socially. Victims of precariousness and social factors forcing them to live in unbearable conditions, they have been destabilized at the very core of their own integrity. Following a life crisis that determined their social downfall, begging is their only means of survival. The need to depend on others to continue to live necessarily requires the individual to put honor aside. This means that begging is always, everywhere, a shameful act, an act that implies the loss of personal autonomy, the negation of honor.⁴⁰ Indeed, honor belongs to people who are able to fight for their reputation and compete with others for their place. Beggars, being by definition in a position of dependence and even sometimes of total dependence, cannot take part in exchanges of honor; they are not considered as participants in the quest for power. Moreover, already representing the ultimate degradation in our society, beggars cannot be humiliated. In this situation, there is “no more honor” left to degrade.⁴¹

Even if the homeless are considered as having lost their honor, respondents displayed no negative judgment of them, and even hinted at some empathy. This feeling is revealing of common fears in modern society. It seems to suggest that honor can be cast aside when the individual is submerged in a precarious situation, without resulting in negative judgment from members of society. In this circumstance, shedding honor is not perceived as a personal choice or a sign of immorality, but rather as the result of contemporary social factors. Socially, begging corresponds to an “imposed” action due to an absence of choices. Indeed, respondents frequently noted when talking of someone who has to beg, “He had no choice.” Secondly, it seems that the feeling of empathy shown by French interviewees towards the homeless is the result of their own anxiety regarding how their own existence might be shaken: the homeless are paradigmatic reminders of a situation that threatens all individuals. The homeless incarnate both the typical example of an unpredicted breakdown, and also a situation in which individuals must avoid at all cost so as not to become “default individual(s).”⁴² The figure of the homeless person makes individuals aware of the fragility of their existence and the humiliating situations of contemporary capitalism.⁴³

Since the figure of “the homeless person” does not exist in Turkey, no reference to it was made. Even though the term “homeless” (“evsiz”) exists in the Turkish language, this figure cannot be compared with the one we find in Europe or in America. The first reason is that homeless people are not as numerous in Turkey as they are in Europe, for example; because of that, they do not represent a social problem taken into consideration by social policies, or even by academic researchers like it is in others countries. Moreover, the lack of homeless can be explained by the importance of the family ties and the concept of shame: in Turkey, kinship is so important that it would be considered as shameful for the

whole family to let one of its members live in the street or beg to survive. In Turkey, the honor of a member (and by definition the shame as well) is directly connected to the community's one in which the person evolves. That is why, when it is soiled by a certain act (in this case, begging), the shame rains down upon the rest of the family. As Sirman shows, "it is in these types of societies that honor emerges as both the identity of the person vis-à-vis others and the sense of worth that a person has of himself or herself; it is the internalized form of a person's social standing."⁴⁴ However, in Turkish discourses, even if actual "precariousness" was not mentioned, young adults nonetheless emphasized their incertitude when faced with the future. They hoped never to have to beg, never have "to hold out their hand," an act they considered as a sign of destitution and even of dishonor.

The second figure of honor loss cited by the interviewees is politicians. Whereas the homeless are a source of empathy, victims of society's flaws that threw them into precariousness, causing their loss of honor, this is not the case with politicians. Politicians represent the second abstraction cited by French and Turkish respondents to designate the struggle for survival in which today's individuals are submerged. According to them, politicians represent the part of the population that tried to survive the difficulties of social transformations like any other individual, except that they chose to cast aside all ethical principles when doing so. They chose to accept a life of confinement to degenerate principles that are instrumental to consumer society. The "political figure" symbolizes the individual who succeeded in surviving, not by fighting nobly, but by "stepping on others" to serve one's own interests, causing by this same act the loss of honor. This same figure is found in Turkish discourses: in Turkey, the typical example of *şerefsiz* (honorlessness) for

the respondents is that of the politician. He represents a selfish person who takes advantage of position and power to subjugate others.

We can affirm that these two abstractions, that of the homeless and that of the politician, represent two figures allowing individuals to situate themselves in society. On different levels, they represent examples not to follow. The figure of the homeless corresponds to social destitution, the incapacity to struggle to survive, leading to symbolic death of the individual. The homeless person has excluded him/herself from social relations, and is no longer part of exchanges of power, nor of honor. She/ he is the victim of society's difficulties. The figure of politician represents casting off of morals in favor of materialism, fame, and power. These individuals have chosen to meet their own interests to the detriment of other members of society. They are characterized by French and Turkish interviewees as "without honor," "without *şeref*." These are counter-examples that should not be followed, which help individuals to construct their own principles using reverse examples. Honor imposes itself not only as a self-constraining principle, but as a principle for survival: with it comes "go-gettiness," a "capacity to talk back, to rebel," "a summersault," or "an inspiration" in view of attaching oneself to life in order to stay afloat. It is the awareness of the sanctity of our being and our existence that makes us react when the boundary of what is acceptable is crossed. It promotes self-respect, respect for one's body, but also gives the individual an image and self-esteem to protect. Honor justifies what we are fighting for; it gives meaning to our lives.

However, honor also implies a line of conduct, a set of ethical principles that prevent us from biting the hook of gain and fame, to trade "being" for "seeming". Honor represents the will to give oneself principles and morals to avoid being swallowed beneath the ever-

increasing requirements of consumer society. Honor means saying “no” to alienation, reification, contemporary barbarism; it also means refusing primitive impulses, the thirst for power, and the loss of self. It is a form of resistance to the contemporary capitalist system. Honor corresponds to survival by one’s own means while following a personal morality: it is wanting to “confront the precipice”⁴⁵ and to decide to control our existence without being subject to insidious humiliations inflicted by social circumstances, since “recognizing barbarism means one can begin to exist.”⁴⁶

Conclusion

This paper focused on principles of honor and *şeref* in the Ile-de-France region, which includes Paris, and in Istanbul. It based its conclusions on “representative cases,” “fragments” formed from a sample composed of young adults who were twenty to twenty-seven-years old. Through this comparative work, we have attempted to grasp the place of honor, in two societies with different traditions but both now defined by consumer society. The aim was to analyze how these two populations situate themselves in regards to their respective representations of honor. We have seen that honor, though an ethical principle of a given society, is nonetheless a common element in various societies. Honor can provide a specific status and place for individuals in a given society. It allows them to situate themselves within the collectivity in which they evolve, claim minimal recognition,⁴⁷ while imposing on them rules of conduct. Any individual refusing to bow to this behavioral code demonstrates another sort of honor, qualified as violent, impulsive and even servile.⁴⁸ In addition, this duality in the understanding of honor leads to the emergence of an “Us” and a “Them,” which respectively correspond to a “civilized honor” and a “barbarous honor.” These divergences determine not only the contours of otherness, but also create

geographical naturalizations. Although it has been designated as a “foreign element,” we observe that currently, in consumer society, barbarism is an integral part of daily life: it takes on the form of civilization itself and is at the heart of the “civilized.” It is through brandishing their honor that individuals now attempt to make a place for themselves and to exist in their own society.

Endnotes

¹ Some of the arguments presented here have been discussed previously in Julie Aleva Dilmaç. “L’honneur: principe de résistance à la barbarie contemporaine,” *Barbaries Contemporaines*, ed., Christiana Constantopoulou (L’Harmattan coll. Logiques Sociales, 2012) 83-99.

² Pierre Bourdieu, *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique précédée de trois études d’ethnologie Kabyle*, (Geneva: Droz, 1972); Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Raymond Jamous, *Honneur et baraka. Les structures sociales traditionnelles dans le Rif*, (Editions de la maison des sciences de l’homme, 1981).

³ Claire Calogiro, *Sauver son honneur: Rapports sociaux en milieu urbain défavorisé*, (L’Harmattan, 1997).

⁴ Peter Berger, “On the obsolescence of the concept of honor,” *Archives européennes de Sociologie*, 11, no. 2 (1970): 339-47; Michael Walzer, *Spheres of justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*, (New York: Basic books, 1983); Edward Shils, “Déférence.” *Communications*, 69 (Paris: Seuil, 2000): 215-49.

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⁶ Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean*, (Cambridge University Press, 1977).

⁷ Moritz Liepmann, *Die Beleidigung*, (Berlin: Puttkammer und Muhlbrecht, 1909).

⁸ Frank Stewart, *Honor*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁹ Liepmann.

¹⁰ Edvard Westermarck, *The Origin and the Development of Moral Ideas*, (London: Macmillan, 1912).

¹¹ Eugène Terrailon, *L’honneur: Sentiment et principe moral*, (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1912).

¹² Jane Schneider, “Of Vigilance and Virgins,” *Ethnology* 9 (1971): 1-24.

¹³ Carmel Cassar, *L’honneur et la honte en Méditerranée*, (Rouergue: Aix-en-Provence Edisud, 2005).

¹⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Life*, (Cambridge, 2005).

¹⁵ For further information, the following article can be consulted: Julie Alev Dilmaç, “Our” honor and “Their” honor: The case of Honor Killings in Turkey,” in *Gendered Perspectives on Conflict and Violence Part B: Advances in Gender Research*, eds., V. Demos and M. Segal, 18B, (BINGLEY: UK Emerald, 2014): 251-74.

¹⁶ Leyla Neyzi, “Object or Subject? The Paradox of “Youth” in Turkey,” *Autrepart* 2, 18 (2001): 101-17;

Nurdan Gürbilek, *Vitrinde yaşamak: 1980’lerin kültürel iklimi*, (Metis Yayınları, 1992).

¹⁷ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-11-052/EN/KS-SF-11-052-EN.PDF

¹⁸ http://www.ezonomics.com/polls/should_adult_children_who_move_back_in_with_their_parents_pay_rent

¹⁹ This term elaborated upon by Edgar Morin, corresponds to the process in which the different cultures move toward convergence, without, however, losing their own ways of life or identities.

²⁰ Jean-Michel Belorgey, “Grandeurs et servitudes de la transgression,” In *L’honneur. Image de soi ou don de soi: un idéal équivoque*, ed., Marie Gautheron, (Paris: Autrement, 1991), 190-9.

²¹ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Vol. 1-2, (Penguin, 1990).

²² Westermarck.

²³ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2000).

²⁴ Edward Shils, *The Virtue of Civility: Selected Essays on Liberalism, Tradition, and Civil Society*. (Liberty Fund Inc. 1997).

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- ²⁵ Claudine Haroche, *L'avenir du sensible. Les sens et les sentiments en question*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2008).
- ²⁶ Julie Alev Dilmaç, "L'honneur, c'est pour que les autres te respectent en retour," 22-4.
- ²⁷ Marie-Luce Gélard, *Le Pilier de la tente : Rituels et représentations de l'honneur chez les Aïts Khebbach*, (Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2003).
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- ³⁰ Julie Alev Dilmaç, "Les crimes d'honneur en Turquie: une vengeance familiale rationnelle," In *Faire justice soi-même. Etude sur la vengeance*, eds., Jean-Claude Bourdin, Frédéric Chauvaud, Ludovic Gaussot and Pascal-Henri Keller, (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010); Mojab, S. and N. Abdo, eds., *Violence in the Name of Honor: Theoretical and Political Challenges*, (Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2008).
- ³¹ Artun Ünsal, *Tuer pour survivre. La Vendetta*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990).
- ³² A. Hesnard, (Psychologie du crime, 202), cited in Artun Ünsal, *Tuer pour survivre. La Vendetta*, 127.
- ³³ Claudine Haroche, "L'appauvrissement intérieur de l'individu dans le capitalisme contemporain," In *Le sentiment d'humiliation*, eds., Yves Deloye and Claudine Haroche, (In press Eds, 2007), 15-37.
- ³⁴ Jan Spurk, *Du Caractère social*, (Parangon, 2007).
- ³⁵ "L'angoisse de perdre sa place, de ne pas être à la hauteur de l'idéal, de ne pas savoir comment répondre à ces exigences paradoxales exacerbe le sentiment d'insécurité (...)," V. De Gaulejac quoted by C. Haroche (in *L'avenir du sensible*, 2).
- ³⁶ Walzer, *Spheres of justice*.
- ³⁷ Claudine Haroche. "L'appauvrissement intérieur de l'individu dans le capitalisme contemporain." In *Le sentiment d'humiliation*, eds., Yves Deloye and Claudine Haroche, In press Eds, 2007, 15-35; Julie Alev Dilmaç, "Looking for the gaze: the case of humiliation in the Digital Era," *Journal of Academic Inquiries*, 19 pages, 2014c.
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- ³⁹ Julie Alev Dilmaç, "L'Honneur: Principe de prévention de la déviance," *Déviance et Société*, 25 pages, 2014b.
- ⁴⁰ Pitt-Rivers.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Robert Castel and Claudine Haroche, *Propriété privée, propriété sociale, propriété de soi : entretiens sur la construction de l'individu moderne*, (Pluriel, 2005).
- ⁴³ Haroche, "L'appauvrissement intérieur de l'individu dans le capitalisme contemporain."
- ⁴⁴ Nüket Sirman, Kinship, politics and love: Honour in Post-Colonial Contexts - The case of Turkey, In *Violence in the Name of Honour: Theoretical and political Challenges*, (Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2004): 39-57.
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- ⁴⁶ Edgar Morin, *Culture et barbarie européennes*, (Paris: Bayard, 2005).
- ⁴⁷ Walzer.
- ⁴⁸ Terrailon, *L'honneur*; Julie Alev Dilmaç, "L'honneur: principe de résistance à la barbarie contemporaine."