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Understanding complicity: Memory, hope and the imagination

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Abstract

This paper addresses the thorny issue of complicity with wrongdoing under conditions of systemic political violence, such as authoritarianism, totalitarianism or military occupation. The challenge of dealing with collaborators – those who colluded with the apparatus of repression or who benefitted from its existence – is central to subsequent processes of justice and memory-making. This paper proposes several arguments. Firstly, it claims we need to think about complicity and resistance not dichotomically, but as a continuum of locations individuals can occupy. Secondly, these locations are influenced by the agents' positionality within the social world, each agent being situated at the intersection of several axes of distinction: class, gender, racialisation, and religion, among others. Thirdly, to understand complicity we also need to draw a connection between individual's experience of time and their actions: temporality is experienced from within a social position, through the interplay between memory, imagination and hope. Positionality thus affects one's memories and self-understanding, the scope of one's imagination, as well as the type and intensity of one's hopes. Therefore, individuals' capacity to build on the past to imagine a future, to invest emotionally in the future and act accordingly are interrelated aspects of their experience, which will influence how they navigate the muddy waters of systemic wrongdoing, more or less complicitly. To give concreteness to these three theoretical arguments, the paper discusses several forms of complicity with violence during the Vichy Regime in France.

Keywords: complicity; imagination; memory; hope; Vichy France

Introduction

This paper addresses the thorny issue of complicity with wrongdoing under conditions of systemic political repression, such as authoritarianism, totalitarianism or military occupation. The challenge of dealing with collaborators – those who colluded with the apparatus of repression or who benefitted from its existence – is central to subsequent processes of justice and memory-making. France's purges of Vichy supporters or the lustration laws unmasking secret police informers in Eastern Europe after 1989 are just two examples of official attempts to illuminate the 'grey zone' beyond the victim-perpetrator binary. This paper proposes several arguments. Firstly, it claims we need to think about complicity and resistance not dichotomically, but as a continuum of positions individuals can occupy. Secondly, these positions can only be accounted for by reflecting on agents' positionality within the social world, each agent being located at the intersection of several axes of distinction, such as class, gender, racialisation, or religion. These axes make possible different forms of intersubjective relationality. Third, to account for complicity we need to account for the temporal nature of human beings: temporality is experienced from within a social position, through the interplay between memory, imagination and hope. Positionality affects one's memories and self-understanding, the scope of one's imagination, as well as the nature and intensity of one's hopes. Individuals' sense of time, their capacity to build on the past to imagine a future and to invest emotionally in that future are interrelated aspects of their socially embedded experience, which have repercussions on how they act and navigate the muddy waters of systemic wrongdoing, in more or less complicit ways.

The first section reviews existing theories of complicity, criticising the dominant moral-legal philosophical account. The second section invites us to calibrate our assessments of practices of complicity by considering the relationship between positionality and one's temporal horizon of expectations and hopes, as well as the socially situated reach of one's

imagination, given the fragility of trust and the uncertainty of the future under repressive circumstances. The third section substantiates these theoretical claims by sketching three forms of complicity in Vichy France.

Before delving in the argument, one clarification. This is a critical-hermeneutical exercise, reflecting on *how* we need to think about complicity. The aim is to invite the scholar of complicity to embrace a broader perspective on a complex, slippery phenomenon, with a view to imagining a different political future. Thus, the paper is not motivated by a search for the guilty, but by the challenge of taking political responsibility for the future, given the unsavoury past and given that most people are not heroes. It is with the non-heroes that this paper concerns itself: with how they responded and positioned themselves in relation to human rights violations, from within their own social island and temporal horizon. This exercise is crucial for understanding how we can collectively prevent the emergence of socio-political conditions of systemic violence and, should we fail, how we can stimulate habits of solidarity with its victims.

Complicity/resistance: From dyad to continuum

Complicity as a concept makes the object of two – relatively isolated – literatures. On the one hand, ample conceptual work focuses on levels of human responsibility for injustice in moral and legal philosophy. On the other hand, political theorists have reflected on the structural circumstances within which uncoordinated yet mutually reinforcing acts of complicity take place unimpeded. This paper leans towards the structural perspectives, shying away from the individualism and intransigent moralism of legal and moral philosophers. It does not, however, fall prey to structural reductionism: just as there is no perfectly unencumbered agency, no order is ever so totalising as to annihilate all resistance. Acknowledging the constraining force of institutions, forms of sociality and power constellations over individuals, it contributes to the literature by problematising the relationship between complicity on the one hand, and temporal expectations, imagination and hope, on the other. To outline my contribution, I now turn to a critical engagement with these two existing bodies of work.

Moral and legal philosophy converge in their aim to provide a universal set of sharp analytical tools for differentiating between different levels of *individual* complicity in wrongdoing, thereby enabling legal reasoning and ascription of moral guilt.ⁱ Philosophers disagree about the conditions for counting somebody complicit: debates focus on the type and role of intent, the existence of a causal contribution, the degree of autonomy necessary, among others.ⁱⁱ Depending on one's level of involvement, complicity covers connivance, contiguity, collusion, collaboration, condoning, consorting, conspiring, and full joint wrongdoing.ⁱⁱⁱ These precise, distinct categories can illuminate the many faces occupying the *grey zone* for the purpose of legal accountability, according to the wrongdoer's relative degree of blameworthiness. Moreover, they help identify those instances when individuals cannot be held legally liable.

Thus deployed, methodological individualism produces a sophisticated account of complicity. However, because of the collapse of moral (and political) philosophy into legal reasoning, this literature embraces a rather simplistic notion of subjectivity and agency.^{iv} The criminal law paradigm colonises the imagination of the moral-political philosopher, whose object of study exceeds criminal law's blunt categories. This paper proposes to understand complicity as always enmeshed in complex social relations and influenced – though not fully determined – by one's location within those relations, as well as the temporal horizons opened by that location. While useful for ascertaining legal liability, moral-legal philosophical frames fail to capture diffuse, temporally enduring patterns of often unconscious complicity. To understand this complexity – in general and under circumstances of political repression – we

need to leave behind the philosopher's and lawyer's *ceteris paribus* and explore the temporal, positional and relational nature of human subjectivity.^v

First, complicity is mediated by power structures that normalise wrongdoing and render complicity invisible. Moral-legal philosophers focus on obvious, discrete, and intentional individual acts of implication in wrongdoing. The purpose is to determine the level of blameworthiness and/or the existing legal category under which to subsume such acts. They are not preoccupied with routinised, often unreflective, patterns of complicity or *series* of complicitous acts in temporally stable, structural violence.

Social and political theorists are more sensitive to how power relations shape *both* the contexts *and* the agents of wrongdoing. Mobilising historical and sociological knowledge, they give preponderant weight to the social, legal, political and cultural background against which practices and patterns (rather than acts) of complicity emerge, in often uncoordinated but mutually reinforcing fashion.^{vi} Reflection on the historical conditions that render abuses against certain groups habitual and permissible, part of the everyday repertoire of social interaction, paves the way for explaining first, how violations often go on unhindered for long periods^{vii} and second, why official mechanisms of redress are frequently met with societal resistance. The absence of reflection on facilitating conditions makes the moral-legal perspective only surgically effective – rather than politically transformative.

Therefore, second, we need a more sophisticated understanding of agency and subjectification to replace the highly individualised and temporally circumscribed account of intent. Moral-legal philosophers do not assume accomplices are persons with a history, occupying a certain position within the hierarchy of human worth that a society is structured by at a certain moment in time.^{viii} They work with a time slice that begins just before the commission of a wrong act and ends after its completion. The ways in which processes of subject constitution inform an actor's behaviour do not enter moral-legal philosophers' reasoning. Consequently, the individual's subjectification through the internalisation of certain ideas about the social world which she helps reproduce – the coordinates of her positionality – is left out from standard accounts of complicity.

Thirdly and relatedly, most moral-legal philosophers assume the subject is essentially rational and transparent to herself and that different levels of intent – from full intent, to encouragement and ratification – can be parsed out easily.^{ix} This paper argues that any attempt to redress wrongs and think politically (rather than merely legally) about the future must rely on a moderately sceptical account of the possibility of reflexivity in the face of violence. The analysis of the social, political and cultural context can help us understand that collaborators, beneficiaries of violence and bystanders often have mixed motives for action, that long-term, indifferent collective passivity elides reflexive intent, and that the effects of complicity are often ambiguous and difficult to isolate.

Fourth, this paper argues that complicity is a matter of degree, not one of dichotomic choice. The 'moral purity/legal innocence versus unambiguous guilt' paradigm does not capture the myriad of positions one can occupy on a temporally dynamic continuum between complicity and resistance.^x Where an individual finds herself on this continuum is a function of her social position, which influences – but never fully determines – the horizon of expectations regarding her own agency and the others', the type of sociality she inhabits, her level of social trust, the scope of her political imagination, as well as the content and intensity of her hopes and fears. Most importantly, this position is not fixed, but changes over time, reflecting changes in both the context and the agent herself.^{xi}

To sum up, any evaluation of complicity must recognise individuals as socially embedded, located within a temporally and intersubjectively experienced social world, with which, in a deep sense, they are inescapably complicit.^{xii} This embeddedness influences their participation in more or less complicit practices and patterns of behaviour, in ways that can

only be partially captured by the moral-legal paradigm.^{xiii} In what follows, I focus on the relationship between positionality – which is always relational – and complicity, via a discussion of other interrelated aspects of individuals’ socio-temporal experience: memory, imagination, hope.

Situated complicity: memory, imagination, hope

As temporal creatures, with sophisticated cognitive abilities to understand ourselves and others as temporally enduring beings (Calhoun 2008), we build on past experiences – captured in our memories – to project ourselves in a hoped-for future, which we know to be uncertain and not fully within our control. The faculty of the imagination intervenes in the twin process of building a coherent narrative of our past (Keightley and Pickering 2012) and of experimenting with strategies and potential trajectories into the future we hope for (Bovens 1999). Thus, hope mediates our relationship with our future, in light of our past, though not straightforwardly or manifestly. In hoping, we explore imaginatively what we might achieve through our actions, notwithstanding our limitations, our fears and the negative evidence available.^{xiv}

We continue to have hopes for as long as we believe in the possibility of a future (Fletcher 1999): hope provides us with ‘a sturdy enough bridge to the future in this life.’ (Urban Walker 2006, pp. 40–41)^{xv} When we fail, the imagination helps us refocus our hopes on alternative objects. These processes of orientation to the future do not happen in a vacuum: hope is always situated. I have already pointed to how memory influences hope, both in terms of the objects it latches on and its intensity. Memories are themselves underpinned by ongoing processes of intersubjective self-constitution, which influence the kind and range of objects the imagination conjures in hoping. Our social embeddedness impacts the scope of our imagination, i.e. the type of things we fear and hope for. Therefore, visions of the future will be informed by past experiences that constitute the self, by the types of sociality it encounters and cultivates, the norms constituting it and the levels of social trust it enjoys: situated memory and experience provide the imagination with an anchorage and delimit the content and strength of our hopes.^{xvi}

Depending on what future we can imaginatively project ourselves into, we act differently in relation to personal and political goals. Both psychological (Snyder 2002, Miceli and Castelfranchi 2010) and philosophical texts (Downie 1963, Bovens 1999, McGeer 2004, 2008, Pettit 2004, Calhoun 2008, Meirav 2009) have highlighted the effect hope has on the assessment of one’s agency in relation to one’s future. Hope can kindle our trust in our own capacities to achieve our goals – whatever they might be – even when the odds are measly (Pettit 2004, Urban Walker 2006). They can mobilise our attention, emotional and rational faculties, pushing us to devise effective, flexible strategies. Hope fortifies and sustains us through adversity, fuelling our resilience and ability to act, sharpening perceptions and helping us adjust our plans in response to obstacles. The pleasure we get from imaginatively anticipating the hoped-for state of affairs energises us when facing set-backs (Bovens 1999).

Hope does not have this effect on agency only self-referentially: our hopes about others can facilitate their engaging in actions that can contribute to success. Our hopes about others’ actions encourage and sustain *them* in their endeavour to live up to our expectations. Thus, our hope provides a scaffold for their actions (McGeer 2008). Conversely, *their* hopes about us sustain *us*. Because of this dynamising tendency, hope feeds trust and solidarity. There is a strong connection between hope and the very possibility of collective action (Pettit 2004), whatever its goals. This connection has important repercussions wherever individuals and groups position themselves politically on the complicity-resistance spectrum in the contexts of interest to this paper.

However, to thrive, hope needs a responsive world that at least partially supports our efforts (McGeer 2004). Otherwise, its dynamic tendencies fail to nurture individuals’ and collectives’ agency. In hoping, we take ‘an agential interest in the world’ (McGeer 2008, p.

246) in our own – but also others’ – future. Losing hope can be dramatic – through war, famine and genocide – or gradual, through the slow erosion of the capacity to imagine a future – through resilient poverty, social marginalisation, or encroaching dehumanization.^{xvii} When a future is not imaginable, whether because of physical or social death, hope has no place: ‘To find oneself utterly unable to imagine a desirable, possible future, is to lose the basis for taking an interest in one’s own agency.’ (Calhoun 2008, p. 29)

How does this all bear on the issue of complicity with systematic wrongdoing? I have so far argued that, to comprehend the complex dynamics of complicity, we must account for the agent’s social and temporal positionality, a function of processes of subjectification that influence her experiences and their sedimentation in memory, her hopes for the future and the role she ascribes to her own agency in bringing about that future. Under circumstances of political repression, visions of the future will vary in their hopefulness, but all will be affected by the historical context, some in enabling, others in constraining ways. No context is experienced uniformly. In what follows, I sketch a few points on the relationship between memory, imagination, hope and agency for several positions on the spectrum of involvement.

For willing collaborators – informers, propagandists or *délateurs*^{xviii} – the future looks promising as various hoped-for benefits feed their moral disengagement from the victims. Ideological commitment ranges from zealotry to mere opportunism, depending on past political experience, socio-economic status and one’s immediate community: political views, religious beliefs, personal ambition or greed animate their hopes and the actions they undertake in their pursuit. Physical and economic safety, career boosts, access to scarce material goods, a higher life quality are just some of the benefits derived from willing collaboration.^{xix}

For by-standers who do not directly collaborate, various futures are imaginable, depending on their social capital, access to resources, prior political engagement, the sense of their own agency and capacity to navigate circumstances, as well as the availability of opportunities to maintain or form new relationships of trust.^{xx} Some navigate along the continuum, becoming collaborators or even perpetrators, especially if they share – more or less consciously – the repressive regime’s ideology. One could simultaneously be a by-stander in one area of social interaction, and a resister or a collaborator in another. During long periods of intense political violence, in the absence of a credible temporal horizon for change, bystanders become collaborators to fulfil some personal or professional hopes. Under such circumstances, solidarity in resistance remains improbable. To understand everyday life in totalitarian Romania (1945–1989), Pârvulescu (2015) asks us to ‘borrow the psyche of someone who knows that it is highly likely that her entire life will go *like this*, moment by moment and year by year, till the end. And that, after her death, the life of her own children will also be, moment by moment, and year by year, *like this*.’ In a stable climate of fear, refusing all compromises requires a doubly heroic attitude of courage and endurance.

Consequently, many remain passively compliant, muddling through everyday hardships. *Attentisme* (Rouso 1997) – waiting to see how things develop before occupying the most advantageous position – is often initially embraced. As change becomes unimaginable, people adjust their hopes and actions to the situation^{xxi}: hope sometimes attaches to a future that does not get worse, while the imagination fails to conjure a vision of solidarity with victims. And since societal wrongs grow in communities that tolerate them, adjustment and accommodation feed repression.

Avoiding complicity need not require irrational or heroic hopes. In a climate of terror and generalised suspicion, individuals tend to anxiously exaggerate the danger triggered by modest – yet crucial – resistances, short of armed struggle and sabotage. This is not to say that risks are always overestimated, but only to point out that passively standing by cannot always be justified by invoking risks to oneself.^{xxii}

Some by-standers slide towards the other end of the spectrum, resistance. Resistance can be motivated by various hopes, whose objects translate personal, political or ethical commitments, all of which, however, are inextricably related – more or less directly – to an orientation towards the political world. Resistance ranges from armed struggle and sabotage to protest, clandestine publishing, refusals to collaborate, pay taxes and obey laws. Madres de Plaza de Mayo marched against the Argentine juntas in the hope of burying their disappeared children, the French *maquis* fought for national sovereignty, communist ideals^{xxiii} and redeeming French masculinity, while intellectual dissidents worldwide invoke the harm silence inflicts on their integrity.^{xxiv} Just like complicity, different forms of resistance correspond to different positionalities within a community's lifeworld, influenced by structures such as gender, class, profession and religion.

Which brings us to the intersubjective dimension of hoping, imagining and acting. A responsive social world is a precondition for hope and '...shared hopes become collective when individuals see themselves as hoping and so acting in concert for ends that they communally endorse.' (McGeer 2004, p. 125) This is valid for both wrongdoing and resistance against wrongdoing. As will emerge from the case study, perpetrators and collaborators offer each other the necessary scaffolding for their hopes, mobilising to act more efficiently in pursuit of their vision. On the other hand, while no two repressive regimes are alike, social trust is eroded. Fear of violent reprisals for dissent, anxieties about potential betrayal and general hardships usually have an atomising effect.^{xxv} The social scaffolding that hopes for a different future need to flourish is often unavailable. The opportunities for solidarity – which depend on cultivating hope in others' capacity to act in concert – are diminished, and with them the possibility of effective resistance. Invoking the earlier examples, without the mutual support that their shared hope made possible, the Argentine Mothers may have caved in. Without the Allies' aid, the moral and concrete support by local populations or communist comrades, the Maquis would not have contributed to the France's liberation. Without friends' and families' trust and faith, many dissidents would not have found the strength to sustain their struggle.^{xxvi}

To substantiate these theoretical ideas about complicity, I analyse certain complicitous practices in relation to time, positionality, relationality, memory and hope in a complex context of collaboration: France under the German Occupation (1940–1944). The last section does not provide an exhaustive account of collaboration, only a discussion of three forms thereof, highlighting the socially embedded nature of action.

Complicity during the 'Black Years'

France was partially, then fully occupied by Germany between 1940 – 1944. This section analyses three forms of complicity: collaborationism, seeking employment with repressive institutions and denunciations. My analysis is organised around the temporal and structural (legal, economic, ideological, gendered and religious) vectors that frame the French population's response to the occupation.

Temporally, several elements need mentioning. The painful memory of WWI – which killed almost 1.5 million Frenchmen – made pacifism widespread before 1939. (Rousso 1992) Pacifism paradoxically motivated various collaborators, who hoped for an enduring reconciliation between France and Germany (Joly 2011, p. 14). *La drôle de guerre* – the short, quiet period between September 1939 and May 1940 – blunted the spirits and made the shock of the defeat worse. Following the defeat, everyday pressures and relief that 'the war was over' made most people acquiescent supporters of Vichy, incapable of imagining a way out (Diamond 1999, p. 72). Finally, 1942 brought a major shift in French people's horizon of hope as it marked both the occupation of France's entire territory and the moment Germany's defeat became imaginable. These temporal vectors affected the scope of individuals' imagination and the

courage of their aspirations, as well as the relationships they entertained and the practices they participated in to pursue their goals.

Several structures framed individuals' locations on the spectrum of involvement: gender, socio-economic and professional profile, anti-Semitism, religion, the split ideological horizon that predated the war, the political memory of WWI, and the laws and policies passed by Vichy and the Occupier. As I show below, these temporally dynamic structures *incited, elicited, inspired* or *facilitated* various forms of collaboration that cannot be reduced to discrete, intentional, fully reflexive acts.

Immediately after the defeat, Pétain launched the doctrine of 'state collaboration' with Germany, kick-starting the 'National Revolution' in the free zone: a fascist cultural revolution replacing 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' with 'Work, Family, Motherland.' 'Motherland' excluded 'groups that, due to their 'race' or convictions, could not or would not subscribe to the primacy of the French nation: foreigners, Jews, masons, communists, internationalists of all origins and loyalties' (R. Gillouin cited in Rouso 1992, my translation). Anti-Semitic laws were passed, mostly (not exclusively) by the Occupier, unequivocally tapping in a history of French anti-Semitism (July 2006, 2007b, 2012b, 2015, Joly and Passera 2016).^{xxvii} In adopting administrative and economic collaborationism and embracing the Occupier's cause, Pétain hoped to maintain French sovereignty.

The first form of complicity, collaborationism, was rare. Few individuals were true collaborationists,^{xxviii} or *collabos*, supporting the institutionalisation of anti-Semitism without scruples (July 2011): Jacques Doriot's Le parti populaire français, Marcel Déat's Rassemblement National Populaire and Eugène Deloncle's Mouvement social révolutionnaire were virulent vehicles for anti-Semitic, anti-Communist and anti-Masonic propaganda, tapping into a history of extreme right politics and militarism. They printed newspapers – *Le Francisme*, *Le cri du peuple* and *Au pilori*. Intellectuals were not immune: some collaborated out of interest or conviction, promoting racist propaganda (July 2011). Thus, Le Groupe Collaboration assembled writers, scientists, clerics, artists aspiring to get famous, while the newly-founded Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions organised the anti-Semitic exhibition 'The Jew and France': 200,000 French citizens, including pupils, paid the entry ticket in 1941 (Rouso 1992, p. 98). These institutions provided the necessary scaffolding for *collabos'* collective contribution to the Occupier's mission.

Moving along the spectrum, we find those who applied for jobs within the repressive state apparatus, an important target of post-war purges: the *milice* (the 80,000-strong institution that transformed Vichy into a police-state) and the General Commissariat for Jewish Questions (controlling Jewish persons and the spoliation of their property). 'Economic aryanisation' required an army of clerks (Bruttman 2013). Two categories of employees emerge from the archives. First, those recommended by personal contacts in Vichy's bureaucracy. One's political connections and belonging to certain political and professional networks – one's relational positionality – framed one's image of professional success and the means for achieving it: working as a public servant. The second category is the 'bureaucratic proletariat' developing after 1940, stuck on temporary, underpaid jobs: secretaries, accountants, office personnel of businesses and publications discontinued after 1940. Many applied to the commissariat – seen as an ordinary institution – to secure financial stability (July 2016). Thus, a different positionality, of economic vulnerability, pushed especially older unemployed and underqualified men and women – some of them war refugees or repatriated POWs – to apply for salaries above average before 1942. (2016, p. 170) The number of fervent anti-Semites among the applicants was low, around 10%.^{xxix} After 1942, the change in public opinion, the general hope in an Allied victory, budgetary cuts as well as a dramatic decrease in unemployment, led to a recruitment crisis. The commissariat started hiring unqualified personnel, even with criminal records (2016, p. 172).

Women too joined anti-Semitic organisations and repressive institutions (including *la milice*) for political, religious, economic and personal reasons. Imagined political futures animated some *miliciennes*: a ‘new French order, national and socialist’ made an ideologically zealous young woman join the *milice* as ‘the only guarantor of the French order, the only hope for a brighter future,’ for which she was ready ‘to dedicate all her forces’ (Simonin 2010, p. 19). In general, however, women’s political hopes and the scope of their imagination was filtered through the matrix of gender, but also that of Catholicism. The post-WWI pacifism mentioned above pushed them to join the *milice*: ‘the end of all wars between France and Germany’ rendered collaboration natural. Religious duties of charity – often combined with *maréchalisme* (attachment to Pétain’s heroic past and fatherly image) – were yet another factor. Building on a tradition of ‘social citizenship’ going back at least to WWI, Catholic women joined repressive institutions to do social work for the wounded or the displaced, thus simultaneously adhering to their Catholic faith and serving Pétain (Fageot 2008). They became ‘universal mothers’ (Simonin 2010, p. 22). Gendered notions of work and citizenship informed their positioning on the complicity spectrum: their collaboration perversely enfranchised them, fuelling emancipatory hopes for public engagement, at a time when they could not vote.

Regarding their socio-economic status, statistics show *la milicienne* is a young, single, economically vulnerable woman with limited education, a secretary, dactylographer, or telephone operator.^{xxx} The socio-professional status determines women’s economic options, whose precarious situation is often manipulated. For example, Déat’s RNP recruited many women by promising to help bring back family members who were POWs.

These examples highlight gender, class and religion as important structures of the war experiences and their role in shaping the hopes and relations one could cultivate. Illuminating the structural factors is not meant to exculpate these applicants. Many were favourable to the agenda of the Vichy regime. Archives do show, however, that few were rabid anti-Semites: for most, economic gain came before ideology (Joly 2016, pp. 183–184).

Anti-Semitic legislation served as a propitious framework for a third, insidious form of collaboration: uncoordinated denunciations of Jews, communists, freemasons to the French police, the Gestapo or the General Commissariat for Jewish Questions (*délations*). The anti-Semitic press had dedicated rubrics for *délations*. The practice went back to the 19th Century: Édouard Drumont’s newspaper *La Libre Parole*, launched in 1892, contained ‘revelations’ about Jewish interference in French affairs – a clear precursor to the practices of the 1940s (Joly 2007c). Revealing this lineage simultaneously highlights the role of institutional and political memory in shaping patterns of behaviour, and the limits of the individualistic, act-based paradigm. Most *délations* – oral or written, signed or anonymous – were motivated by personal reasons: a neighbourly conflict, jealousy, greed,^{xxxi} bitterness and frustration linked to deprivation, a professional rivalry, excessive respect for the law, or duress (Joly 2013), always tainted by anti-Semitism – visceral or circumstantial, militant and cultivated or rough, normalised by legislation and the general atmosphere (Joly 2007c).

Temporally speaking, the numbers of denunciations spiked around the main round-ups, when Jews went into clandestinity. Emboldened by the official policy, which legitimised hate and scaffolded the hope for a Jew-and-communist-free France, some French citizens used this well-tested instrument to settle personal and professional scores, but also to feed their political aspirations, often with bravado or self-righteous outrage. Writing, finding the address and mailing the letters presupposed a strong personal investment in the matter, especially since few were remunerated (Joly 2012a). The world was responsive to the *délateur*’s hopes: Jews were arrested and deported, thus encouraging repetition. Spouses, neighbours, in-laws, friends and colleagues are denounced in response to numerous public campaigns soliciting information in the name of justice or the law, with deadly consequences for victims.

More diffuse, non-official acts of collaboration took place in the occupied zone: the occupant was omnipotent. Servility was normal, and the occupation was initially seen, by many, to be less terrible than expected. Terror only affected few, mostly communists and Jews. The occupiers became the biggest consumers of French goods (Sebba 2016). While men were deported, POWs or working in Germany, women did not experience the occupation homogeneously. Poor urban women bore the brunt of food shortages.^{xxxii} Economic interest kept them employed in German-run factories: giving up such a job was no easy decision under the circumstances (Diamond 1999, p. 77). Bonds of solidarity formed in response to shared hardship: women's organisations emerged, scaffolding each other's hopes, but the objective was mere survival. The much talked-about 'sexual collaboration' – less widespread than assumed (Simonin 2010) – was also often motivated by imperious economic needs. Lastly, the term 'larval collaboration' refers to the flourishing cultural life: cinemas, theatres, libraries were always full (Rouso 1992). No single explanation suffices: cultural life could have simultaneously been a coping, escapist mechanism, a sign of political blindness, or a means to support French intellectual traditions. Many, therefore, adjusted to the situation, for psychological and economic rather than ideological reasons, and mostly for want of a better alternative: the Germans appeared to be there to stay, making the horizon of hope and the scope of the imagination contract.

1942 is a breaking point for French perceptions of political time and hopes: it marked an important shift in public perceptions of the Occupation and Vichy. Germans' exploitation of the French economy led to massive shortages, which mobilised the population against Vichy, the Occupier and black-market profiteers. (Diamond 1999, p. 75) Supported by communists, women organised protests against the rationing policy in 1942 (Schwartz 1999). The establishment of the *Service du Travail Obligatoire* – the regimented recruitment of French citizens to work in Germany – fuelled a dramatic change in public opinion that made it difficult for the institutions of repression to recruit French personnel (Simonin 2010, July 2013, 2016). November marked the beginning of the Allied 'Operation Torch' in North Africa, which emboldened the population's imagination about the possibility of freedom, simultaneously worrying collaborationists who proceeded to calibrate their hopes and rethink their political alliances.^{xxxiii} Parisians reportedly exhausted the stocks of USSR maps, feverishly following the successes of the Red Army. This coincided with Germans occupying the whole French territory, revealing Vichy's shambolic pretence of sovereignty, further driving public Germanophobia and hope in an Allied victory (Drake 2015, pp. 291–294). From then onward, the structural and temporal coordinates change and, while collaboration practices continued, motivations and strategies adjusted to the plausibility of liberation.

Conclusion

This paper sought to illuminate complicity as embedded in its temporally and structurally complex constellations. It departed from moral-legal accounts, highlighting the limited notions of causality, temporality and agency they presupposed. It proposed to expand our perspective and conceptualise complicity in terms of the agent's relational positionality, which affects the resources her memory can summon, the scope of her imagination, the courage of her hopes and the direction of her engagement with the world. The contextual analysis of three types of complicity in occupied France has shown the salience of the change in conceptual and methodological perspective this paper advocates. Accounting for temporal and structural vectors has thus opened the path for a more nuanced account of complicity in systemic wrongdoing. Based on this diagnosis, more capacious visions of political responsibility and solidarity become thinkable.

Notes

ⁱ See Kutz (2000, 2007), Gardner (2007), May (2010), Ciuirria (2011), Lepora and Goodin (2013).

ⁱⁱ For example, recent contributors to the debate, Kutz, Goodin and Lepora disagree about the criteria for being complicit. Kutz emphasises participatory intent, whereas Goodin and Lepora argue that knowledge of the wrongdoing and knowledge of the fact that one's actions contribute to wrongdoing are sufficient (Kutz 2000, Lepora and Goodin 2013). For disagreements over causation see Gardner (2007), Kutz (2007).

ⁱⁱⁱ Discussed extensively in Lepora and Goodin (2013).

^{iv} For fresh critiques of methodological individualism see Afxentiou *et al.* (2017).

^v Most moral and legal philosophers still work with what Galtung called the traditional ways of thinking about injustice, characterised by the individualisation of the actors, its visibility, and the concern with intention (Galtung 1969). Kutz departs to a certain extent from this description: he acknowledges the collective nature of wrongdoing. He proposes accountability should be understood relationally, from the perspective of the agents involved, and reflects on the challenge posed by cases where we do not intend to be complicit in wrongs, but are nonetheless, by virtue of participating in a way of life that fosters them. His understanding of participation in a culture is, however, problematic: he does not account for the role that culture plays in subjectification. Thus, he unduly assumes a high capacity of individual reflexivity about one's intentional participation in that way of life, a capacity that grounds individual responsibility for unstructured harms. Kutz (2000) argues that, fundamentally, participatory intent – however remote – is the crucial marker of complicity.

^{vi} See, for example, Kissell (1999), Celermajor (2009), Applebaum (2010).

^{vii} See Crawford (2007), Miller (2008), Pankhurst (2008).

^{viii} Lawford-Smith (2015) somewhat accounts for subjectification, but only to justify the possibility of collective agency and action. She proposes socialising more mutually responsive people and more coordinated groups to address complex ills like global poverty and climate change. I value her contribution but resist the idea that the solution lies with character formation.

^{ix} For a good example of this, see Kutz's discussion (2007) of the legal categories for subsuming the authors of the memos on 'torture lite' after 9/11. For an alternative, more convincing position, see Brecher and Neu (2017).

^x Social psychologists propose a 'spectrum of acquiescence' or 'spectrum of involvement' ranging from bystanders to perpetrators (Edgren 2012).

^{xi} Goodin (2013) introduces a sliding scale of degrees of complicity and claims to go beyond the legal paradigm. And yet, it is the individuals' intent and level of contribution to a one-off act of wrongdoing that determines their culpability.

^{xii} Analysing the role intellectuals played in apartheid South Africa, Sanders (2002) distinguishes two senses of complicity. First, the inescapable complicity inherent in sociality, which apartheid destroys by separating people – setting them *apart*. Then, discrete acts of complicity, for which individuals can be held accountable. While the distinction is useful, there are forms of sociability that we can be held responsible for because they cumulatively and insidiously contribute to violence.

^{xiii} While not within this paper's remit, one can plausibly argue that these shortcomings affect the usefulness of our notion of complicity, whether we discuss complicity by western citizens with post-colonial, systemic poverty, racialised wealth distribution and climate change or say, by passive witnesses to genocide or mass murders.

^{xiv} A wealth of research developed regarding the 'standard account of hope', associated with J. P. Day's work (1969). This account, simply put, conceptualises hope as composed of a desire

for an outcome and a less than zero probability that it might obtain. Debates focus on whether hope is an emotion (Drahos 2004), an attitude (Govier 2011), an emotional attitude (Calhoun 2008), a state of mind (Urban Walker 2006), a socially mediated human capacity (Webb 2007), a syndrome (Martin 2014) or an intellectual virtue (Cobb 2015). Other scholars have added more components to the analysis: mental imaging (Bovens 1999, Calhoun 2008), futurity and efficacy (Urban Walker 2006) or a generic ‘third factor’, be it God, another agent, fate, nature, or one’s community (Meirav 2009). Various typologies of hope exist: superficial and substantial (Pettit 2004), general and constitutive (Bovens 1999) specific/general, ground level/latent, high/faint, conscious/unconscious, individual/social and active/passive (McGeer 2004, Miceli and Castelfranchi 2010, Govier 2011) or patient, critical, estimative, resolute and utopian hopes (Webb 2007). Hope can be valued instrumentally (Calhoun 2008), in itself (McGeer 2008) or both (Bovens 1999). Rational and irrational hopes, as well as good and bad hopes motivate yet another set of inquiries (McGeer 2004, Pettit 2004, Webb 2007).

^{xv} Contra Walker, this future can also correspond to a belief in the after-(physical)life.

^{xvi} I discuss the breaks positionality puts on imagination’s freedom in Mihai (2016).

^{xvii} Urban-Walker poignantly writes ‘[N]ot all lives are so thickly or uniformly threaded with hopes. In some lives at some times the threads fray to breaking, are cut by violence, or are snapped by deprivation.’ (Urban Walker 2006, pp. 40–41)

^{xviii} *Délation* refers to (often anonymous) letters sent by ‘good’ citizens to the authorities, informing on their peers’ belonging to undesirable groups, illegal activities or violations of rules and regulations. France under the German Occupation is a frequently studied example. See, for example (Joly 2012a).

^{xix} The access to ‘benefits’ differ according to the context. There is a large literature on the Holocaust: e.g. Hilberg (1992) and Goldhagen (1996). For accounts forms of collaboration in Paris in the 1940s, see Virgili (2002), Joly (2007a), Sebba (2016). For profiles of French *collabos* see Joly (2011). For a historical approach to complicity in totalitarian Romania, see Vasile *et al.* (2016).

^{xx} For psycho-social accounts of by-standers, see Edgren (2012).

^{xxi} Interviewed by Angelika Klammer, Herta Müller cogently declared that, to remain a decent human being under totalitarianism one had to fail miserably in the public domain (Müller 2016). Not many assumed such cost.

^{xxii} In France after the Liberation, we find an imbrication of structural, rationalising myths of *résistentialisme* – Rousso’s term (1987) for the Gaullist myth of a unified Resistance against Germany – and individual practices of *résistentialisme*, i.e. exaggerated, post-factum narratives of individual resistance, denounced by Desgranges (Desgranges 1948)

^{xxiii} On the communist party’s flexible ideology and hopes in relation to Britain before and after Germany’s invasion of USSR, see Pike (1993).

^{xxiv} ‘Bram’ Fisher, the Rivonia trial defence attorney, pleaded when tried for belonging to the underground communist party: “When a man is on trial for his political beliefs and actions, two courses are open to him. He can either confess to his transgressions and plead for mercy. Or he can justify his beliefs and explain why he acted as he did. Were I to ask for forgiveness today, I would betray my cause. That course is not open to me.’ (Bould 1991, p. 151)

^{xxv} For the atomising effect of fear in France under the occupation see Joly (2012a, pp. 23–24). For totalitarian Romania: Mihăilescu (1993), Pârvulescu (2015), Müller (2016)

^{xxvi} For an account of friendship’s role in sustaining hope when facing the Romanian political police, see Lovinescu (2010), Müller (2016). Manea (2016) reveals the hopeless loneliness of the lucid analyst of duplicity. For a global selection of testimonies about the various sources of hope and the intersubjective scaffolding that sustain resisters see (Bould 1991).

^{xxvii} Rousso argues that, in the first stage of anti-Semitic legislation (1940-41), France took the initiative as the Germans had not yet formulated the Final Solution (1992, pp. 86–92).

According to Rousso, the ‘application’ of anti-Semitic measures was meant to prove Vichy’s capacity to govern.

^{xxviii} In French ‘collaborationist’ – as opposed to ‘collaborator’ – is the term reserved for the ‘ultra’ – ideologically motivated – collaborator (Joly 2011, p. 6).

^{xxix} Building on archival work, Joly speculates that office work was not appealing for the *collabos* (2016)

^{xxx} Unsurprisingly, during the post-war legal purges, *miliciens* received much harder punishments than *miliciennes*, once again affirming gendered notions of responsibility (Simonin 2010).

^{xxxi} Spoliation is an important motivator: denunciations catalyse ‘economic aryansation.’ (Bruttman 2013)

^{xxxii} Sebba (2016) offers an insight into the classed experience of women in Occupied Paris. Rich French women did not feel the effect of penury.

^{xxxiii} For an account of the *collabos*’ political manoeuvring in response to November 1942, their repositioning regarding Pétain and Laval, and the way they adjusted to developments in Eastern Europe and North Africa, see Joly (2011), Drake (2015).

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