

The Transmission Belt of Domination

Theorizing the Implicated Subject

In a critical reckoning with the rise of the international human rights movement, Samuel Moyn charts how a concern for the lives of distant others became detached from a concern for social and economic justice. Despite the terms of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was “chock-full of economic and social rights”—albeit “only for those with citizenship”—the triumph of “globally minded organizations like Amnesty International” thirty years later “focused not on a broad set of economic and social rights but on human survival.”¹ In this paradoxical situation, increasing cosmopolitan sentiment came to coexist with growing inequality: “As the notion of human rights spread, people found it easier to identify with strangers across borders. Yet at the same time, the liberalization of markets, the reliance on free trade, and the mission of governance to institutionalize both created vast gulfs of inequality. Human rights became our highest moral language even as the rich seized ever more power and wealth” (“Human Rights” n.p.). Moyn’s historicizing account points to the possibilities and limits of cosmopolitan solidarity within the framework of human rights: “the ideal of human rights . . . has left the globe more humane but enduringly unequal” (*Not Enough* 11).

Moyn confirms the skepticism of Robert Meister and Bruce Robbins, who focus attention on beneficiaries in order to counter the inability of contemporary human rights and humanitarian movements to address economic inequality.² Although I agree with Moyn, Meister, and Robbins on the need to relink questions of social and economic justice with humanitarian and human rights concerns, the question of how to make such a link remains

fraught. While Meister seeks to collapse the beneficiary with the perpetrator in order to bring inequality back into view, Robbins seeks to foreground the specificity of the beneficiary as a key category of analysis and potential political mobilization. Through the beneficiary, Robbins wants to extend and expand what he sees as a “concern for global justice [that] is in fact anchored in ordinary moral intuitions” regarding “causal linkages between the lucky and the unlucky” (25). My perspective rejects the conceptual collapse Meister proposes while building on the kinds of intuitions toward which Robbins directs our attention.

Yet, if the category of the beneficiary helps considerably in clarifying questions of economic inequality, it alone cannot bridge the divide that Moyn describes, because of the multiplicity of factors at stake in the striving for global justice. Robbins seeks to narrow his concerns to economic inequality between “the lucky and the unlucky” in the present; he thus largely eliminates the diachronic axis of beneficiary status, polarizes and homogenizes North/South relations, and excludes other markers of difference and inequality beyond the economic. Moyn, in contrast, calls for activists and thinkers to “*supplement* human rights with other ideals and projects” (“Human Rights” n.p.; my emphasis)—a formulation that leaves more room for a nuanced approach to intersecting forms of injustice and for alternative political visions, even as his focus remains, like Robbins’s, on re-centering economic (in)equality.

Because it does not submit to the either/or logic of the zero-sum game, an approach based on implication and the implicated subject keeps questions of economic inequality in view without sidelining other struggles and dilemmas. Such an approach reveals that the divergence Moyn maps between human rights and social justice derives, at least in part, from the implicit investment of human rights and humanitarian discourses in an “un-implicated” subject of concern who confronts a binary field of victims and perpetrators. That is, there is a difference between those proponents of human rights and humanitarianism in the Global North who see themselves as “disinterested spectators” of acts of victimization and those who recognize that they may be implicated in events that are happening to others (a point made powerfully in the work of William Kentridge, which I discuss in Chapter 3 and contrast to narratives of transitional justice). Implicated subjects possess multiple political, economic, and moral linkages to allegedly faraway injustices (as well as those closer to home). Positing an implicated subject thus opens up the possibility of understanding injustice and claims to justice from a

multidimensional perspective. This chapter theorizes such a perspective by working through a genealogy of thinking on intersectionality, complicity, and responsibility. In offering that genealogy, I focus especially on work that brings questions of subjectivity, structural inequality, and histories of violence into conversation. While my approach is primarily analytical and conceptual, the purpose of positing the category of the implicated subject is to open up possibilities for solidarity across social locations. A clear understanding of one's own implication in multileveled conditions of violence and injustice is not a sufficient condition for social change, but it may be a necessary step for the creation of alliances among differently situated subjects, an issue I return to especially in the last section of the book.

Although many of the cases I consider throughout can certainly be classified as responses to human rights violations—including genocide, slavery, colonial occupation, and the persecution of minority populations by nation-states—my focus is not primarily on human rights as such. I do, however, return to that topic explicitly in the final two chapters of the book. In Chapters 5 and 6, on Marceline Loridan-Ivens and Hito Steyerl, respectively, I suggest that human rights discourse constitutes an important form of internationalism, but also clarify its limits by contrasting it with socialist and anticolonial internationalisms and by putting forward an alternative framework based on implication. By shifting from human rights to implication, I move beyond approaches based on mere “human survival.” Those latter approaches tend to posit innocent victims, demonic perpetrators, and “caring” but detached bystanders. My intervention does not discount those subject positions (or the real gains that a human rights perspective offers), but rather involves placing a predominant focus on implicated subjects—a focus that does not rely on positing innocence, demonic evil, or detachment. In contrast to the ideal victims, perpetrators, and bystanders of humanitarian and human rights dramas, implicated subjects are morally compromised and most definitely attached—often without their conscious knowledge and in the absence of evil intent—to consequential political and economic dynamics. Because the position of the implicated subject has largely remained unnamed and unexplored, our accounts of trauma, violence, and power also remain incomplete; theorizing implication helps us explain how historical and contemporary forms of violence can be simultaneously pervasive and persistent, and yet so difficult to pin down and eradicate. Opening up the more ambiguous space of the implicated subject between and beyond the victim/perpetrator binary paradoxically provides a more precise picture of

the production of damage and a better starting place for thinking about responsibility for historical and contemporary injustices than can clear-cut categories of guilt and innocence, not to mention detachment and disinterest.

My thinking on this ambiguous space has been shaped by a variety of thinkers who chart the zones of implication, even if they do not name them as such and generally have very different projects in mind. The heterogeneous genealogy that follows suggests that although the theory of implication illuminates the role of subjects who experience relative privilege in different contexts, the theoretical resources that help us formulate that account often derive from the experiences of relatively *un*privileged subjects and from those who seek to think from their standpoints. Indeed, far from being epistemologically privileged, implicated subjects suffer from what the philosopher Charles Mills calls “structural group-based misrecognition,” that is, from forms of ignorance shaped by occupying privileged subject positions (according to race, gender, class, etc.) in unequal social systems.³ For Mills, whose primary focus is “white ignorance,” such forms of misrecognition are not “contingent,” but that does not mean they are inevitable: “there are typical ways of going wrong that need to be adverted to in the light of social structure and specific group characteristics, and one has a better chance of getting things right through a self-conscious recognition of their existence and corresponding self-distancing from them” (59). In other words, interrogating the position of the implicated subject offers epistemological and, eventually, political advantages precisely because it helps us access realms of social ignorance that are built into systems of power and privilege. I do not assume that most implicated subjects will “get things right,” in Mills’s terms, but rather proceed from the assumption that liberatory political projects emerging from any social location will benefit from taking the logic of implication into account.

In theorizing implication, I draw extensively on a tradition of reflection on victimhood, perpetration, responsibility, and memory that has emerged in my primary area of research, Holocaust and genocide studies, and supplement it with recent philosophical approaches to structural injustice. An important first step comes, however, with the black feminist theory of multiple oppressions, now commonly known as intersectionality. Intersectional thinking does not itself focus on the implicated subject—in fact it tends to foreground a standpoint far from that position—but its account of the social reveals the political necessity of working through questions of implication. In the following section we will see how the fact of implication arises

from what the Combahee River Collective calls the “interlocking” nature of “systems of oppression.” Primo Levi makes that insight explicit by revealing how, even under the most extreme conditions of subjection imaginable, structures of power produce implicated subjects as a necessary effect. Reflecting on societies that give birth to such conditions reveals the need to think about responsibility beyond legalistic and individualist models, a task in which we are assisted by the German philosopher Karl Jaspers’s typologies of guilt. Hannah Arendt’s rethinking of guilt as collective responsibility then allows us to shift the temporal axis of analysis and grasp how unresolved historical injustices also reproduce implication and implicated subjects. Iris Marion Young illuminates the different forms of responsibility that attend structural and historical injustices, and Simona Forti reveals why the subject remains an essential category for thinking power even at the systemic scale and thus helps clarify why this book makes the category of the subject so central. What unites these very distinct thinkers is their commitment to thinking political and social dilemmas complexly—that is, beyond a monocausal frame—and to situating violence and injustice, even when it takes extreme forms, in shared institutions and everyday relations.

Drawing on these diverse sources allows me to formulate a theory of implication and the implicated subject that offers an alternative to the usual accounts of human rights violations and their aftermaths. Foregrounding implication instead of victimhood or perpetration allows us to emphasize the dynamic interplay between subjectivity, structural inequality, and historical violence; supplement absolutist moral ascriptions with more nuanced accounts of power; and above all, leave behind the detached and disinterested spectators who dominate discussions of distant suffering in favor of entangled, impure subjects of historical and political responsibility. The implicated subject, we will see, is a transmission belt of domination.

Intersectionality and the Problem of Coalition

Intersectional theory proves essential for theorizing implication because its account of the social helps us avoid the split between human rights and social equality that Moyn describes. Although the legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the concept of intersectionality in the late 1980s, its genealogy goes back much further.⁴ It has historical sources that date at least to the late nineteenth-century intellectual Anna Julia Cooper, but something close to what would later be called intersectionality received its first full articulation in “The Combahee River Collective Statement,” drafted

by Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith, and Demita Frazier in 1977.⁵ Central to the statement is the insight—now widely shared, but revolutionary at the time—that “the major systems of oppression are interlocking” and require “the development of integrated analysis and practice” (15). The need for such an analytical perspective stemmed, according to the authors, from a dramatic gap in knowledge: “No one before has ever examined the multi-layered texture of Black women’s lives” (20). Out of this analysis of the interlocking nature of oppression and the as yet unexplored texture of black women’s lives, the authors derive a radical politics: “We might use our position at the bottom . . . to make a clear leap into revolutionary action. If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression” (22–23). Here we arrive at the collective’s most powerful insight, as well as a problem for political analysis and organization. The “position at the bottom” has proven essential to thinking the complexity of power and can be a springboard for politics from below, but it also necessitates an expansion of alliances beyond that particular position: “The fact that individual Black feminists are living in isolation all over the country, that our own numbers are small, and that we have some skills in writing, printing, and publishing makes us want to carry out these kinds of projects as a means of organizing Black feminists as we continue to do political work in coalition with other groups” (25–26). In other words, a position at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression represents both an epistemologically powerful standpoint and a location from which to conceive politics, but the practice of politics nevertheless requires translocal organizing and coalitions with differently situated subjects. As collective member Demita Frazier later wrote, “We understood that coalition building was crucial to our own survival.”⁶

Such coalition building comes with intrinsic difficulties, however. As the statement details, solidarity with black men is essential to fighting racism, yet “we also struggle with Black men about sexism.” Conversely, if feminist solidarity is essential for tackling sexism, white women are often bonded with white men in a “negative solidarity as racial oppressors” (19). Although the collective’s statement originates the concept of identity politics—the idea that “the most profound and potentially most radical politics comes directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else’s oppression” (19)—it also implies the need for a political vision that joins with others in the creation of politically effective alliances to confront one’s own

oppression. To translate back into my own terms: the forging of solidarity necessarily entails alliances between subjects who are differentially implicated in the interlocking systems of oppression that the Combahee River Collective identifies.

Precisely because systems of oppression are interlocking, most people do not occupy the isolated “position at the bottom” that the collective illuminates, but, rather, more ambiguous, mixed positions in proximity to different vectors of power. Thus, while holding on to the fundamentally intersectional vision that the statement articulates—which is then developed by Crenshaw and many others in the following decades—I find it necessary to supplement this theory with an approach that starts from a different position, that of the implicated subject. The impure position of implicated subjects does not provide grounds for a “clear leap” into revolutionary politics, but it can be analytically and politically productive: it offers a position through which to understand the kinds of “negative solidarity” that the Combahee River Collective finds in subjects who acquiesce to power, and it helps to clarify the unevenness that must be confronted in the creation of political coalitions of differently situated subjects. The negative solidarity of implicated subjects is the building block of white supremacy and patriarchy; confronting white supremacy and patriarchy thus also involves the coming to consciousness of at least some of those implicated subjects. As the Combahee River Collective writes, “Eliminating racism in the white women’s movement is by definition work for white women to do, but we will continue to speak to and demand accountability on this issue” (27). In other words, confronting implication is the job of implicated subjects who need to be held accountable for their relations to histories of violence and current hierarchies of power.

In the Gray Zone

As the Combahee River Collective’s brief references to the ambiguous positions of black men and white women imply, subjects who can in certain positions be termed victims can also in other contexts become enmeshed in hierarchies of power. A few years after the collective’s statement first appeared, this insight received a significant elucidation in a very different context. In his final collection of essays, *The Drowned and the Saved* (orig. pub. 1986), Holocaust survivor and writer Primo Levi describes a space of complexity and ambiguity that bears an affinity to the space of implication and that he names “the gray zone.” Like the authors of the

Combahee River Collective Statement, Levi was interested in the way degrees of privilege operate within starkly hierarchical relations of power. His primary focus was not the everyday, structural forms of oppression diagnosed by the Combahee River Collective, but the exceptional world of the “concentrationary universe.” Yet, Levi’s approach to that universe was one that put it in dialogue with more familiar operations of domination. As he wrote in the preface to *The Drowned and The Saved*, “The Lagers constituted a system that was widespread, complex, and deeply ingrained in the daily life of the country. This system has been described, correctly, as the ‘*univers concentrationnaire*,’ but it was not a closed universe. Large and small industrial firms, farms, and weapons factories took advantage of the almost costless workforce provided by the camps.”⁷ In addition to describing how human rights violations are inscribed in larger economic relations, Levi’s attention to the “open” nature of carceral spaces proves useful in thinking power in the context of implication.

Furthermore, Levi calls for an approach to the Nazi genocide and camp system that breaks with the simplified, moralistic framework that has defined the dominant cultural memory of the Holocaust. To this day, such conventional understandings seek “clarity and sharp distinctions,” tend to “divide the field between ‘us’ and ‘them,’” and “separate evil from good” (2431, 2430). In contrast, Levi points to the “incredibly complicated internal structure” (2435) of the Nazi-created camp world:

The network of human relationships inside the concentration camps was not simple: it could not be reduced to two blocs, victims and persecutors. . . . What made the entry into the camps such a shock was, instead, the surprise that came with it. The world into which you felt you had fallen was indeed harrowing, but it was also indecipherable. It did not resemble any model. The enemy was outside but also inside. There was no clearly defined “us.” There were more than two contenders, and, rather than one border, there were many blurred borders, perhaps countless, one between every person and every other. (2431)

Anatomizing the “indecipherable,” “blurred” spaces of the Nazi camps, Levi’s essay is concerned primarily, though not uniquely, with the impact on camp inmates of being *submerged* in a world of arbitrary but total violence (hence the Italian title of Levi’s work, *I sommersi e i salvati*—which we could translate more literally as “The Submerged and the Saved”). The

impact of that experience of the camps, as Levi repeatedly asserts, was not ennobling; it was instead corrupting. The camps were set up to make victims complicit in their own victimization and thus to blur the distinctions that have buttressed simplified understandings of the Nazi era—hence Levi’s reference to “gray” as opposed to “black and white” as the emblematic color schema of the camp experience. To understand the gray zone is to understand that the process of victimization in the camps does not only produce victims who are clearly set against perpetrators, but, in addition, creates a whole cast of characters marked by shades or degrees of complicity who are not easy to place on either moral or juridical maps. In breaking with stereotypical notions of the “innocent victim,” the gray zone troubles not only conventional morality but also legal judgment and historical understanding.

Dedicated “to explor[ing] the space that separates the victims from the tormentors (and not only in the Nazi Lagers),” Levi uses the gray zone to name a phenomenon grounded in the specificities of the Nazi camp system and to open up a field of inquiry whose relevance exceeds the twelve years of National Socialist terror (2433).⁸ His essay anatomizes power and domination—not genocide as such—as they unfold in situations of “extreme duress.”⁹ In this sense, the concept of the gray zone can transcend the Holocaust and take on a broader reach related to the exploration of implication and implicated subjects. Yet, like all concepts, the gray zone has its limits, which derive in particular from the kinds of spaces and subjects Levi is dedicated to exploring.

Levi’s imagination of space is multidimensional and characterized by heterogeneity. Yet, at the same time—and for obvious reasons having to do with his subject matter—Levi’s primary concerns are with ostensibly exceptional spaces such as camps and ghettos and with the model (or perversion) of power that accompanies such spaces. To what extent does that spatial configuration remain pertinent today? On the one hand, it seems obvious that concentrationary structures continue to abound in our world and perhaps have become even more common: from the extensive prison system in the United States that locks up a breathtaking number of people of color to the refugee facilities around the world that hold millions of people in search of better living conditions. I would not call these situations genocidal (though some would), but they are certainly sites where highly policed spaces combine with “extreme duress” and the possibility

of death; they are thus likely to produce versions of the gray zone despite their considerable differences from the Nazi camps Levi described.¹⁰ On the other hand, despite continuities, systems of power have certainly changed since the construction (and destruction) of the *Lager* (the German word Levi favors for naming the camps). According to the philosopher Gilles Deleuze, we have moved from the dominance of disciplinary societies based on “vast spaces of enclosure”—like the factories, prisons, and schools considered in the path-breaking work of Michel Foucault—to the more fluid dominance of “societies of control.”¹¹ In Deleuze’s words, “Enclosures are *molds*, distinct castings, but controls are a *modulation*, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other” (4). Writing in 1990, Deleuze captures something important about the transformation of power in the late twentieth century, but today it is hard to overlook the fact that prisons have proliferated rather than disappeared. Thus, instead of relegating Levi’s discussion of the *Lager* to an outmoded system of power, it might make more sense to suggest that Levi’s model captures the overlap of discipline and control that we find in our world: he focuses on spaces of enclosure, but he talks about them in terms that suggest the modulations Deleuze associates with contemporary configurations of power.

A similar double-sidedness marks Levi’s discussion of the figures or subjects who inhabit the gray zone. An important outcome of Levi’s focus on enclosures is that the range of subjects he discusses seems to fall on a continuum between victims and perpetrators. On the one hand, this continuum is complex, and people can occupy multiple positions at the same time (as victims, perpetrators, and collaborators, for instance)—a multiplicity fundamental to what I call “complex implication.” On the other hand, however, the focus on camps and ghettos almost inevitably leaves out individuals and groups who played key roles in the Nazi system and genocide, but were not so often found in the spaces of enclosure themselves and cannot necessarily be counted among either the victims or the perpetrators. We might expect those conventionally called bystanders, for instance, to be central to discussion of the kind of ambiguous morality that characterizes the gray zone—especially since Levi references such figures in the preface to his collection—but they remain outside his purview in the essay. Connecting the gray zone to contemporary problems of power and domination brings the issue into even greater relief: certainly today, power and domination function at scales well beyond the closed spaces Levi anatomized and

increasingly without obvious, direct perpetrators. In this context, the category of bystanders is insufficient.

Because of its intensive nature as a highly concentrated space of duress, the gray zone does not map perfectly onto the space of implication. Yet, as with the Combahee River Collective, there is much we can take from Levi's investigations: we can hold on to the sense of moral ambiguity that does not fall into relativism; the recognition that subjects can occupy multiple positions simultaneously or in succession (a recognition also present in the collective's consideration of black men and white women); the insight that power and domination work precisely by co-opting their targets; the non-purist approach to victimization, which does not require victims to remain innocent in order to claim justice; and the sense that different modes of power, such as discipline and control, build on each other. While Levi helps us especially to rethink the position of the victim, he does not explore in any detail the position of the dominant subject aligned with power who remains outside the direct lines of perpetration.¹² A theory of the implicated subject draws inspiration from Levi's nuanced vision of power, but puts those subjects aligned, however indirectly, with power at the center of analysis. Such a theory also supplements Levi's focus on the enclosed spaces of disciplinary society with attention to the modulations that connect dispersed subjects in a world where power does not require enclosures to produce its perverse effects of contamination. Systems of what Deleuze calls control produce implicated subjects in more subtle and far-reaching ways than do disciplinary systems. Finally, the theory of implication twists the temporal axis, so that the kinds of in-between spaces Levi finds in the *Lager* can be claimed for an approach to historical responsibility as well.

From Guilt to Responsibility: Karl Jaspers and Hannah Arendt

Writing of the *Sonderkommandos*, those teams of mostly Jewish prisoners forced to work in and around the gas chambers and crematoria, Levi concludes: "I ask that the history of the 'crematorium crows' be pondered with compassion and rigor, but that any judgment of them be suspended" (2449). In the face of prisoners suffering the extreme circumstances that define the gray zone, it makes sense to suspend judgment and to bracket considerations of responsibility. Here lies yet another difference from the cases of implication explored in this book. Implicated subjects may of course experience degrees of coercion, but the realm of implication is above all a

realm of conscious and unconscious consent, a place where privileges are enjoyed and historical legacies shunted aside, whether through deliberate denial or through what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls “the privilege of unknowing.”¹³ The realm of implication is also a site from which to launch a new consideration of collective responsibility.

Although the concentration and extermination camps do not lend themselves to facile translation in matters of judgment, Nazi Germany, the society that created them, has served as a focal point for some of the past century’s most important reflections on legal, moral, and political responsibility. Reflections on Nazi society travel more easily to other contexts than those focused uniquely on the camps because the former are forced to address the widespread everyday complicity and indifference that accompanied the Nazis’ construction of a racial state along with the genocidal projects that followed from it. Such complicity and indifference do not constitute “unique” characteristics of German society. Indeed, histories of the Holocaust have now begun to use a wider lens to track the European dimensions of the moral and political collapse that enabled genocide. My concerns are even broader, however, for similar social dynamics accompany the production of suffering and death when the latter take less extreme—or simply different—forms than what the Nazis perpetrated. Some of these post-Holocaust reflections provide rich conceptual materials that can help orient explorations of implication farther afield, but they need to be supplemented as well by approaches that start from other historical and political scenes.

An important opening occurs in the series of lectures the German philosopher Karl Jaspers gave just a few months after the defeat of the National Socialist regime. In these lectures, which became the basis for his 1946 book *Die Schuldfrage* (*The Question of German Guilt*), Jaspers directly confronts his fellow countrymen’s resistance to the Nuremberg trials being staged by the victorious Allies.¹⁴ He partially acknowledges the grounds of that resistance when he argues against the notion that Germans share an undifferentiated “collective guilt” in the wake of the criminality of the Nazi period.¹⁵ This notion was not the presupposition of the trials, although it was in the air and may have been fostered by other Allied policies. At the same time, however, Jaspers seeks to conceptualize the distinctive forms of guilt that attend the perpetration of collective violence in order to convince his compatriots that they do possess a share of responsibility for the catastrophic events that had just taken place. In order to “clarif[y] the meaning of the

charges” being brought against Germany and Germans, Jaspers famously distinguishes between criminal guilt, political guilt, moral guilt, and metaphysical guilt. Criminal guilt refers to individually committed crimes that “violate unequivocal laws” and are “capable of objective proof.” Because criminal guilt is tied to the identifiable actions of concrete individuals, it cannot be abstracted into a notion of all-encompassing collective guilt. Political guilt, in contrast, supposes that “everybody is co-responsible for the way he is governed,” a form of responsibility that “results in my having to bear the consequences of the deeds of the state whose power governs me and under whose order I live.” The concept of moral guilt returns us to the individual because it involves taking responsibility for “all my deeds, including the execution of political and military orders.” Finally, metaphysical guilt derives from “a solidarity among men as human beings that makes each co-responsible for every wrong and every injustice in the world, especially for crimes committed in his presence or with his knowledge” (25–26). Such a metaphysical notion of guilt can be seen at play in the versions of human rights and humanitarianism explored critically by Moyn and Robbins; it opens up a cosmopolitan realm of concern without specifying the forms of social, political, and economic causality that materially link the “guilty” to those who are suffering.

These four forms of “guilt” can be grouped together in different ways.¹⁶ We might say for the sake of clarity that in contrast to criminal *guilt*, the other three categories are best understood as forms of *responsibility* that extend beyond the jurisdiction of the law. Yet, moral and metaphysical responsibility resemble criminal guilt insofar as they concern individuals qua individuals; political guilt, in contrast, is Jaspers’s only category that treats individuals as members of collectives, an important prerequisite for thinking about implication. If we distinguish how the four categories correspond to either public or private concerns, a different pattern emerges. Jaspers argues that criminal and political guilt involve charges brought “*from without*”—by courts or by the victorious powers—while moral and metaphysical guilt involve charges brought “*from within*, by [the guilty party’s] own soul” (33). This public/private distinction has consequences for what follows from these charges. Accused individual criminals, such as those in the docks at Nuremberg, can be punished by imprisonment or even death. Those collectives marked by political guilt, such as German citizens at the time of the Nazi regime, are subject to “liability” (*Haftung*; also, accountability and responsibility); they

may be obligated to make reparation (*Wiedergutmachung*) or find their “political power and political rights limited” in a version of what scholars of transitional justice call lustration (30). Instead of leading to punishment, reparation, or lustration, moral and metaphysical charges that come “from within” demand penance and self-transformation (30). Jaspers was most interested in these latter, internal forms of guilt, while my interest lies primarily with public and collective forms of responsibility, that is, with versions of “political guilt.”

Jaspers’s typology was an important counterpoint to apologetic German discourses of the early postwar period. As Anson Rabinbach comments, “Among German intellectuals [of the time] he was practically alone in publicly acknowledging” the extent and seriousness of National Socialist crimes (130). Although situated in the very particular climate of immediate postdefeat Germany, Jaspers’s approach also remains a useful, if limited, resource for thinking about responsibility and implication in broader contexts. Negotiation of the forms of guilt enumerated by Jaspers characterizes the processes of transitional justice and postconflict reconciliation that have proliferated in recent decades but that received important impetus from the Nuremberg moment upon which the German philosopher was also reflecting. Simultaneously, by moving discussion of responsibility beyond the sole category of criminal guilt, Jaspers helps us understand the limits of the Nuremberg model, which, as Mahmood Mamdani argues, does not translate well to other situations of transition.¹⁷ With its distinct but interacting categories, *The Question of German Guilt* draws attention to the problem of how to think about people who are implicated in events in which they may not be directly involved as active, criminally culpable participants.

Yet, numerous shortcomings characterize Jaspers’s discussion, including his splitting of public and private responsibilities and his appeal to metaphysical, religious conceptions; together, these characteristics of his thought risk resulting in a depoliticized notion of guilt, as Hannah Arendt wrote to Jaspers in a well-known letter from 1946.¹⁸ In that letter, Arendt points to other limits in the applicability of “criminal guilt” to the Nazi genocide, asserting that these “crimes . . . explode the limits of law”: “this guilt, in contrast to all criminal guilt, oversteps and shatters any and all legal systems” (*Correspondence* 54). Whether or not a notion of criminal guilt is at all adequate to genocide, further questions of responsibility remain that apply equally to situations less obviously monstrous. A key limit of Jaspers’s

approach for understanding implicated subjects is the foreshortened nature of his conceptualization of guilt. That is, since he was writing in the immediate and overwhelming aftermath of the war, his analysis does not extend to the question of responsibility for events that are distant in time, although, as Rabinbach notes, he did believe that “any future German state would become responsible for the crimes of the former, and that political responsibility . . . would be an integral part of postwar Germany” (164).

Arendt, who was also interested in illuminating the problems of judgment and responsibility in the face of extremity, returned to these questions in the wake of the Eichmann trial.¹⁹ At that point, she both shifted her perspective toward a greater emphasis on accountability and broadened her concerns by opening them onto more everyday matters. In the lectures “Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship” (1964) and “Collective Responsibility” (1968), she is at pains to distinguish something like what Jaspers called criminal guilt—which she now sees as essential to holding perpetrators responsible for their actions—from forms of collective, political responsibility (which are related to what Jaspers called “political guilt”). She writes, “There is such a thing as responsibility for things one has not done; one can be held liable for them. But there is no such thing as being or feeling guilty for things that happened without oneself actively participating in them.”²⁰ Arendt is wrong from a psychological perspective: it is possible to feel guilty for things in which one has not actively participated. Indeed, the semantic ambiguity of “guilt,” situated as it is between emotion and law, has consequences for coming to terms with implication, and analysts need to keep in mind the power of such “mistaken” emotions. Nevertheless, Arendt’s responsibility/guilt distinction is useful in clarifying both synchronic and diachronic forms of implication.

On the synchronic side, Arendt’s distinction illuminates people’s relationship to events that are unfolding around them but in which they do not necessarily participate directly. Thus, in describing the “moral problems” posed by the National Socialist regime, Arendt writes of a situation that echoes the Combahee River Collective’s notion of negative solidarity among black men and white women: “What disturbed us was the behavior not of our enemies but of our friends, who had done nothing to bring this situation about. They were not responsible for the Nazis, they were only impressed by the Nazi success and unable to pit their own judgment against the verdict of History, as they read it.”²¹ In other words, the “complex political problem” posed by

Nazism engendered a moral collapse that tore apart the preexisting solidarities and friendships of everyday life. In such a situation—the “intrusion of criminality into the public realm”—a broad form of implication arises: “whoever participates in public life at all, regardless of party membership or membership in the elite formations of the regime, is implicated in one way or another in the deeds of the regime as a whole” (“Personal Responsibility” 33). Arendt’s opening up of this realm of implication complements the notion of “the gray zone” that Levi would later describe. While Levi’s primary concern was the way that victims were incorporated into and contaminated by the construction of a concentrationary universe that sought to blur the distinctions between victims and perpetrators, Arendt inverts the angle of vision: she allows us to see how a dictatorship draws privileged subjects into forms of implication that differ from perpetration and criminal guilt but are nevertheless essential to the catastrophe of absolute power.

Although Arendt conceptualized these distinctions between different forms of guilt and responsibility by reflecting on life under dictatorship—and under National Socialism in particular—she also opened up a more general issue that has a diachronic, or historical, dimension as well. As her comment about “feeling guilty for *things that happened* without oneself actively participating in them” (my emphasis) already suggests, Arendt was not only thinking about everyday life *in* Nazi Germany, but was simultaneously confronting questions of responsibility in the *aftermath* of political violence. In her essay “Collective Responsibility,” this line of thought starts from reflection on the confluence of a contemporary problem—the fact that “so many good white liberals confess to guilt feelings with respect to the Negro question”—and the historical problem of the legacies of extremity in a re-normalized political culture: “the cry ‘We are all guilty’” by post-Holocaust Germans (“Collective Responsibility” 147). Arendt’s discussion bears on all societies. Her worry is that by confusing guilt (something that can only pertain to one’s own deeds) with responsibility (which can pertain to things one has not done), the claim that “we are all guilty” “only serve[s] to exculpate to a considerable degree those who actually were guilty. Where all are guilty, nobody is” (147). Guilt, then, is always contemporaneous with the life of the perpetrator of a deed. In contrast, responsibility not only encompasses those implicated at the time of the events without directly participating in them (the disappointing “friends” referenced above), but also political communities that are transgenerational in nature. Arendt’s example

is Napoleon Bonaparte, who on becoming ruler of France declared (in her words), “I assume responsibility for everything France has done from the time of Charlemagne to the terror of Robespierre” (150). In this political realm, we might indeed be called upon to say that “we are all responsible,” but the “we” in this formulation differs from the “we” in “we are all guilty”: in Jaspers’s terms, we have shifted from (a misconstrued) criminal guilt to (a justly embraced) political guilt. With her example of Napoleon assuming France’s history, Arendt specifies that responsibility is a diachronic as well as synchronic phenomenon: “We are always held responsible for the sins of our fathers as we reap the rewards of their merits; but we are of course not guilty of their misdeeds, either morally or legally, nor can we ascribe their deeds to our own merits” (150). Although not guilty of what precedes us, we remain captive to a communal responsibility by virtue of our participation in a collective way of life.

Arendt uses an ironic metaphor to describe misapplied political guilt: we inherit “the sins of our fathers.” In doing so, she reveals the familial and ultimately ethnicizing tendencies of the model of collective guilt. The reason white liberals’ claim that “we are all guilty” or “we are all George Zimmerman” fails as a response to structural racism is that it ends up reproducing the very racialized structure of society that lies behind the problem. In contrast, political responsibility understood as implication has the potential to break with such homogeneously imagined collectives. Indeed, Arendt’s implicit example of how responsibility and guilt do not line up—and cannot be imagined along the lines of families or ethnicities—is the outsider or immigrant who joins a new national collective: “We can escape [our] political and strictly collective responsibility only by leaving the community, and since no man can live without belonging to some community, this would simply mean to exchange one community for another and hence one kind of responsibility for another” (“Collective Responsibility” 150).²² Unlike guilt, which for Arendt is strictly individual, responsibility does not derive primarily from personal characteristics, but rather from our nature as social beings. Arendt makes this clear in the passage I have used as an epigraph to this book: “This vicarious responsibility for things we have not done, this taking upon ourselves the consequences for things we are entirely innocent of, is the price we pay for the fact that we live our lives not by ourselves but among our fellow men, and that the faculty of action, which, after all, is the political faculty par excellence, can be actualized only in one of the many

and manifold forms of human community” (157–58). Since we live among others, our models of responsibility must leave behind the individualist assumptions of liberal legal culture and its emphasis on individualized guilt and consider instead what it means to act collectively—which also means indirectly and at a distance—both for good and for bad.

This distinction between guilt and responsibility allows us to see again, but in slightly different terms, the productivity of the enunciation “We are not Trayvon Martin,” which we discussed at length in the Introduction. Defined negatively, the slogan acknowledges the force of racial categorization but does not reproduce its categories—hence, not only white Americans embraced the slogan, but also immigrants, women of color, and others. Arendt’s discussion of the distinction between guilt and collective responsibility helps us see that in order for the category of implicated subjects to map injustices in a meaningful way it has to acknowledge the efficacy of dominant imaginations of group belonging (e.g., race) without simply repeating them. Implicated subjects neither possess an identity nor arise from a process of identification (“we are all X”). Rather, to be an implicated subject is to occupy a particular type of *subject position* in a history of injustice or structure of inequality—a history or structure one may enter, like an immigrant, long after the injustice at issue has been initiated or, like a beneficiary of global capitalism, far from its epicenter of exploitation. Just as the subject positions any given person occupies are necessarily multiple, the forms of implication in which people find themselves are frequently crosscutting. Although some people are consistently and systematically privileged (or deprivileged) by the intersectional nature of social categories (the focus of the Combahee River Collective), most people find themselves caught between legacies and actualities that project more complex and ambiguous patterns of power. To paraphrase Primo Levi, the zone of implication possesses an “incredibly complicated internal structure” (2435).

Attending to this complex structure requires tools such as those developed by feminists of color for the purposes of intersectional analysis; such analyses track the ways multiple categories, such as race and gender, inevitably interact and condition each other and thus cannot be thought in isolation. But the wide compass of Arendt’s notion of collective responsibility and the particular internal structure of the *Lager* described by Levi—the hybrid positioning of some prisoners as implicated in the terrors of the camps—also highlight a potential pitfall of intersectional approaches. As Jasbir Puar has

warned with respect to queer intersectional analyses, attending primarily to the concatenation of multiple forms of oppression may lead to the positing of “an impossible transcendent subject who is always already conscious of the normativizing forces of power and always able to subvert, resist, or transgress them.” Such analyses “may fail to subject their own frames to the very critique they deploy.” They may end up, in other words, denying their own implication in power: “It is precisely by denying culpability or assuming that one is not implicated in violent relations toward others, that one is outside them, that violence can be perpetuated. Violence, especially of the liberal varieties, is often most easily perpetrated in the spaces and places where its possibility is unequivocally denounced.”²³ A theory of implication takes on board the complexity of social categories first articulated by intersectional feminism, but it follows Levi, Arendt, and Puar in drawing attention to the uneven intersection of those categories: the fact that—except for some fantasized ultimate victim or resistance fighter—most subjects find themselves enmeshed in histories and structures of violence they may not realize they inhabit and help prop up. In Arendt’s terms, they may not be guilty of inaugurating those histories and structures, but by virtue of inhabiting them they are politically responsible. Analysis of implication refuses a moralization of politics by remaining skeptical of assertions of purity.

From Subject to Structure and Back

Arendt’s notion of political responsibility helps open up a broad, worldly terrain for thinking a politics of implication in the shades of gray that Primo Levi identified in the more restricted space of the *Lager*. Arendt, however, leaves underdetermined the prerequisites for ascriptions of responsibility, because she focuses primarily, as did Jaspers in his discussion of political guilt, on the mere fact of membership in a nation-state. In Iris Marion Young’s last, posthumously published book, *Responsibility for Justice*, the political theorist engages with the strengths and limits of Arendt’s thought in order to make an argument for structure as the subject of justice and for a “social connection” model of responsibility.²⁴ By focusing on structural injustice, Young seeks to develop a way of thinking about the politics of justice that provides an alternative to a strict focus on individual responsibility—a framework in which Arendt largely remains, despite her emphasis on the importance of living in community. The theory of implication and the implicated subject foregrounds entanglements between

subjects and social structures; Young provides essential resources for the movement from subject to structure.

Young draws fundamentally, but critically, on Arendt's distinction between guilt and responsibility (see esp. 75–93). For Arendt, as we have seen, guilt is always individual and imagined as direct criminal responsibility (or negligence) leading to a harm. In cases of guilt—as in Jaspers's “criminal guilt”—a linear mode of causality links a guilty agent to a crime or injustice. In cases of responsibility, Arendt posits, mere membership in a group already suffices to connect one to an injustice; one need not have taken any linear, causal action. (Note the phrase “things we have not done” in my epigraph passage.) Young builds on this distinction but argues against Arendt (and, I would add, Jaspers) that mere membership in a group, such as a nation-state, does not entail responsibility. Rather, responsibility (as opposed to guilt) arises in situations where one's actions contribute to structural injustices—a somewhat narrower range of situations than those that Arendt imagines with her more encompassing notion of membership as leading to responsibility. In the situations Young envisions, injustice derives not from distinct individual actions, however, but rather from the sum total of complexly interacting behaviors that indirectly and inadvertently produce some sort of harm.²⁵ One is responsible insofar as one contributes to that sum, not simply because one is a member of the polity in which the injustice takes place: “responsibility in relation to injustice thus derives not from living under a common constitution, but rather from participating in the diverse institutional processes that produce structural injustice” (105). An important corollary of Young's revision of Arendt is that it allows us to think beyond the nation-state when we think about participation in injustice, since “institutional processes” are not limited to such a narrowly defined terrain; this represents a necessary advance for dealing with the kinds of implication that characterize a globalized world without resorting to a metaphysical notion of guilt such as that offered by Jaspers or to the disinterested spectators of humanitarianism and human rights.

Young further distinguishes guilt from responsibility by virtue of their respective temporalities: guilt always points backwards toward a crime to which an agent is linked and for which that agent must be held accountable; responsibility involves commitment to transforming structural injustices in future-oriented actions: “one has the responsibility always now, in relation to current events and in relation to their future consequences” (92;

see 108–9). The types of remediating action necessary also distinguish guilt from responsibility; while retributive or restorative forms of justice in which individuals are held to account for their deeds characterize situations of guilt, responsibility always involves collective action, because the injustices it seeks to address are structural and not “event-like” deeds (109–13). In the final chapters of this book, on Loridan-Ivens and Hito Steyerl, I explore the possibilities and limits of internationalism as one future-oriented model for addressing injustice in collective forms.

The diffusion of agency in structural injustices calls for a shift in thinking about politics and morality away from the assignation of guilt and toward a broader conception of what it means to participate in and be responsible for injustices. Instead of isolating perpetrators via judgments about liability (which continues to be relevant in more straightforward cases), the social connection model of responsibility illuminates shared responsibility, brings “background conditions” into the conversation (instead of assuming that crimes are “deviations” from otherwise just conditions), and looks forward toward new kinds of collective action in the name of justice (see esp. 105–13). Young does not suggest that isolating guilty perpetrators as causal agents of injustice is never valid; rather, she argues that many pressing injustices involve structural conditions that we cannot adequately explain through reference to what I call the victim/perpetrator imaginary. Her approach thus opens up space for thinking the implicated subject. The social connection model helps move the discussion of justice beyond criminal guilt toward questions of structural injustice and the more complicated notions of causality that come with it. It also helps clarify the basis for the notion of implication and, as we have seen in the Introduction, allows us to distinguish implication from complicity, which, Young argues, is generally modeled on liability.²⁶

Young focuses primarily on present-day injustices through examples such as vulnerability to homelessness and sweatshop labor. The former serves as an example of a nation-based injustice that may involve particular criminal acts (such as discriminatory landlords), but primarily results from an amalgam of structural features that would be present even if all relevant agents acted ethically. The example of sweatshops allows Young to parry claims that relations of justice must be restricted to the territory of the nation-state. Rather, the global apparel industry connects people and corporations across borders and—although certainly marked by unscrupulous actors at various

levels—produces injustices for workers that cannot be explained simply by the liability model or individualized modes of guilt.

In addition to this focus on present-day injustices, *Responsibility for Justice* also includes a brief—and incomplete—discussion of historical injustices, which Young sees as equally illuminated by the social connection model. Here her primary example is the legacy of slavery in the United States, but she apparently intended to include further discussion of the legacies of colonialism in Africa and the dispossession of indigenous peoples in North America. Young argues convincingly that the liability model does not adequately describe historical injustices of these kinds because often the original victims and perpetrators are no longer alive, and thus no one exists who could be declared guilty. Yet, unlike those who draw the conclusion from this inaccessibility of the original agents that the past is therefore irrelevant to contemporary injustices, Young proposes that historical injustices contribute to the structural conditions of the present and seeks to apply the social connection model to these historical cases: “An account of the continuities of present with past injustices is important . . . for understanding how the present conditions are structural, how those structures have evolved, and where intervention to change them may be most effective” (181–82).

Thinking about historical injustices in terms of the social connection model instead of the liability model has consequential implications for the elimination of injustice. Young opposes reparations as a remedy for structural injustices such as slavery in which neither perpetrators nor victims remain alive because such a remedy relies on the liability model to attempt to correct what are today structural legacies of past policies and actions.²⁷ Shifting from liability to social connection in confronting historical injustices allows her to argue both that history matters—any “society aiming to transform present structures of injustice requires a reconstitution of its historical imaginary” (182)—and that politics involves a broadly shared societal responsibility to take collective action in the present to transform institutions and conditions that propagate the aftereffects of unjust histories. Historical injustice itself cannot be undone; but this “irrevocability of unrepaired past injustices makes those of us in the present responsible for facing up to its facticity.” We must “deal with [that past] as memory” (182). Although predominantly focused on the present and the future, Young also echoes Bevernage’s theorization of the “irrevocable” and makes the case for the entanglement of diachronic and synchronic axes. Yet, if Young offers one of the most powerful accounts

of structural injustice and thus of both synchronic and diachronic implication, she does not have as much to say about the forms of subjectivity that accompany and enable implication.

Against the Dostoevsky Paradigm:
Mediocre Demons and the Question of the Subject

In asking us to think about political responsibility in structural terms, Young helps fill in the political space between perpetrators and victims: she shows how the production of injustice and processes of victimization do not necessarily result from deliberate acts of evil or a particular will to violence, but rather from an accumulation of distinct, dispersed actions. In focusing our attention on the structural production of harm, she implicitly continues the work of the Combahee River Collective, which focused similarly on interlocking systems of power. She also moves us beyond what the philosopher Simona Forti calls the “Dostoevsky paradigm”: a belief that evil happens in scenarios featuring absolutely diabolical perpetrators and absolutely innocent victims in which the “abyssal freedom of a subject who had taken the place of God” plays itself out in “the perverse jouissance of the death impulse.”²⁸ Yet, if Young implicitly shares Forti’s critique of radical evil, she does not go on to describe what kinds of subjects are necessary to the production of structural injustices. Although she is critical of Arendt for privileging “mere” membership in a nation-state as the basis of collective responsibility, Young leaves vague both the nature of those structures as well as the subjects who inhabit them. Forti helps to fill in the latter gap in Young’s uncompleted argument. Urging readers to put aside the “demonic” account associated with the Russian novelist Dostoevsky, Forti focuses instead on “mediocre demons”—those normative subjects who contribute to the production of violence and the propagation of power through less dramatic, everyday behaviors. Although her examples come primarily from extreme historical experiences such as the Holocaust, Forti grounds these experiences in processes that echo Young’s account of structural injustice and that take inspiration from Levi’s account of the gray zone. Indeed, Forti describes the degradation in the Nazi camps as the result of “a dense but ordinary weave of intentions, actions, and objectives whose weft proved fatal” (308).

In addition to Levi, Forti draws significantly on Nietzsche’s genealogy of morality and Foucault’s exploration of biopower to put forward a theory of

power and violence that focuses on obedience instead of transgression. Forti points to continuities between Christianity's pastoral power and modern systems of democratic government: "pastoral power establishes the value of passivity as a general rule of conduct, a value that becomes a universal virtue in a democracy" (227). Passivity, consent to authority, and the "normativity of nonjudgment"—all aspects of obedience—serve as the "carrier[s] of political evil, as its effective transmission belt" (179). Supplementing this focus on obedience with Foucault's work on biopower allows Forti to assert that the potential for evil resides not in a nihilistic death impulse but rather in the "maxim[ization] of the value of *life*—its preservation, the increase of its intensity, its duration, the optimization of its production capacity" (176; my emphasis). If obedience derives from a commitment to life, then power works through this commitment to enhance forms of domination. This provocative argument finds fulfillment in Forti's original analysis of the gray zone as the paradoxical site of such a commitment: Levi's essay investigates, she argues, "how, in certain circumstances, the thousand threads of the desire for life and the many faces of consent to authority provoked by the desire for life bind themselves together to the point of fusing into total domination of man over man" (308). In other words, because Levi's hybrid "prisoner-functionaries" are bound to life, they end up enlisted in the production of death.

Most important for the project at hand, Forti combines (in a way that Young does not) focus on the subjective dimension of desire and consent with attention to the structural level, the "dense but ordinary weave of intentions, actions, and objectives" (although her attention to structure is less sociologically grounded than Young's). The forms of domination that derive from the structural and subjective problem of obedience, as Levi already noted, cannot be submitted to "dualistic theories" of victims and perpetrators, even if that insight comes "at the painful, disturbing price of discovering that the status of victim does not in itself confer a certificate of innocence" (Forti 309). Crucial to the project of theorizing the implicated subject, however, Forti clarifies that the rejection of a binary schema of opposed figures does not lessen the importance of the subject, but rather heightens the need to take subjectivity into account. In Forti's words, "when dualism—both political and moral—is abandoned, it is subjectivity that calls out to be investigated: not only and not so much because it is the bearer of wicked dispositions, but because it very often serves as the involuntary support of domination" (310; my emphasis). We thus arrive at the position of

what I call the implicated subject. Emerging from a densely woven zone of interaction, the implicated subject is a “support of domination” that cannot simply be identified as a bearer of wickedness or an agent of violence. In this scenario, as in Levi’s account of the gray zone proper, ambiguity is productive: it is precisely the difficult-to-locate position between victims and perpetrators that makes implicated subjects useful to power, that makes them, in Forti’s words, “transmission belts” of domination.

Conclusion: Implication, Memory, Human Rights

Forti’s understanding of the subject as a support and transmission belt of domination is especially clarifying for forms of implication that are still unfolding in the present. Is it equally helpful in illuminating diachronic implication? Although each form of implication has its specificities, synchronic and diachronic forms are almost always entangled. On the one hand, diachronic implication involves what Robbins calls the “ongoing” relevance of the past in the present (148–49); a past that is cut off entirely from the present does not implicate contemporary subjects. On the other hand, contemporary structures are themselves always outcomes of diachronic processes; economic inequality is not simply a synchronic phenomenon, but the result of history. As we have already seen, Young proposes that “an account of the continuities of present with past injustices is important . . . for understanding how the present conditions are structural, how those structures have evolved, and where intervention to change them may be most effective” (181–82). Although I am not sure that recourse to “continuities” is the best way to describe this past-present relation—Bevernage’s notion of the irrevocable suggests instead a more uneven form of “nonspatial proximity” (4)—I agree with Young that present conditions always possess (and are possessed by) a historical dimension. But does that mean, as Young implies, that reckoning with history is necessary to their solution? In his account of the beneficiary, Robbins is skeptical; he believes that too much of a focus on past atrocities can “sidetrack” the quest for justice in the present (146). Robbins is right that a risk exists of “inward-turning paralysis [following] all too naturally from seeing oneself as the beneficiary of atrocities in the past, atrocities that can never be erased” (147). But the opposite risk is equally pressing: that ignoring those past atrocities will only help contemporary structures stabilize themselves and accommodate superficial changes.

Here we return full circle to the intersectional approach forged by the Combahee River Collective. The interlocking nature of systems of oppression clearly involves very contemporary forms of domination, but those forms are built on historical legacies that extend back centuries in some cases. While addressing the kind of economic inequality that concerns Robbins in *The Beneficiary*, the Combahee River Collective also describes the need for a more encompassing approach to change: “We are socialists because we believe that work must be organized for the collective benefit of those who do the work and create the products, and not for the profit of the bosses. . . . We are not convinced, however, that a socialist revolution that is not also a feminist and antiracist revolution will guarantee our liberation” (19–20). Although the collective does not put it precisely in these terms, part of the reason that a socialist revolution would not guarantee the abolition of gendered and racialized oppression is that those forms of oppression would likely persist, and that persistence signals the historical nature of those wrongs. While certainly material and structural in their expression, gendered and racialized forms of domination also involve processes of meaning making and subject formation that sediment historical legacies—both for those who are disadvantaged by such legacies and for those who are advantaged by them (i.e., implicated subjects).

The persistent and historical nature of these processes does not entail that the structures and subjects they have produced are unchangeable (or that they are, in this sense, radically different from class relations). It does suggest, however, that part of what it will take to overcome structures and subjects that express relations of domination will be working through historical wrongs, even those that seem faraway or distant and especially those related to genocide, colonialism, and slavery. Genocide, colonialism, and slavery involve the destruction or disruption of collectives, societies, communities—groups of various types and scales—and they produce radical discontinuities that cannot simply or immediately be undone by the cessation of killing, formal independence, or emancipation from bondage (as much as those represent obvious and necessary steps). They also demand working with and through the past—a transformative version of remembrance, broadly understood, that would include aspects of reparation, restitution, commemoration, and historical education. The intimate link between race and collective forms of discontinuity helps explain why there seems to be an elective affinity—albeit not an exclusive one—between questions of race and questions of implication.

The field of memory and historical justice is a large one that has, in fact, occupied a great deal of the political and social space in recent decades—consider, for instance, the global commemoration of the Holocaust, the many truth and reconciliation commissions around the world, ongoing controversies in the US and elsewhere about the commemoration of difficult pasts, waves of state apologies, and claims for reparations in many different spheres. Yet, discussions of memory and historical justice have almost always revolved either around victims—mourning their deaths, working toward material and symbolic restitution—or around perpetrators whom one hopes to bring to justice in one way or another. However one evaluates this global movement for historical justice—and I would argue it has had both successes and shortcomings—one obvious lacuna stands out: it has not yet, in most cases, even attempted to address implication and implicated subjects. Here I side with Mamdani against Robbins: the beneficiary is (also) an important *diachronic* figure of implication whose illumination can open up new forms of memory work that are necessary to confronting the material and symbolic dimensions of inequality.

This hypothesis also takes us back to the paradox identified by Moyn with which we began this chapter: the growing inequality that has accompanied the takeoff of a human rights framework in the last several decades. The memory boom is surely an expression—or at least a parallel tributary—of the same forces that brought about the human rights boom.²⁹ Despite their global prominence and the many advances that accompany their rise, memory and human rights frameworks also share similar conceptual and political limits: each has largely remained within the victim/perpetrator imaginary and failed to put pressure on the position of implicated subjects. Nevertheless, even if dominant versions of the cultures of remembrance and human rights have avoided the problem of implication, this does not mean that the problem has simply remained in the dark, surrounded by a wall of silence. To the contrary, as this book illustrates: numerous significant artists, writers, and intellectuals have been investigating the problems of implication in recent decades in a variety of media and idioms. Grouping them together here—and reading them through the lens of implication—refocuses discussion of injustice and offers possibilities for a new politics beyond the victim/perpetrator binary that has shaped dominant discourses of memory and human rights.

In the next chapter, I turn to the complex problem of historical implication by considering one of its most controversial and consequential exemplars: the long-distance legacies of transatlantic slavery. Reflecting on redress for slavery will help us refine our understanding of the entanglement of the past and the present: for those of us who are not the descendants of slaves, the afterlife of slavery manifests itself in what I will call genealogical and structural implication.