

# The Case for Rage in Transitional Justice: Lessons from the Anti-Racist Struggle

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## ABSTRACT

Transitional justice theorizing has the tendency to smuggle in an over-reliance on dualities: one's resentment can give rise to either vengeance or forgiveness, but not both; one can either be fueled by anger or by the hope of progress, but not both; and so on. This dualistic way of thinking replicates the kinds of false dichotomies that hamstring other societal movements, among them the struggle against racism. Drawing on Myisha Cherry's case for so-called 'Lordean rage' within the context of the anti-racist movement, I make the case that transitional justice in general would be well-served by centering the transformative power of emotion (even and especially when that emotion defies oversimplified and strict categorization).

**KEYWORDS:** Anger, duality, listening, resentment

What can we do when someone has wronged us? What can we do when they have wronged us in the most visceral, life-shattering ways possible – when someone has harmed us, harmed our children, destroyed our homes, destroyed our envisaged future? And how do (or should) our reactions to the wrongdoing change under circumstances of widespread and normalized wrongdoing, when the harm done to us is not deviant from a social and political norm but rather expressive of it? It is this lattermost question that particularly characterizes discussion of transitional justice and of response to human rights violations more generally.

Arguably, there are as many responses to the question as there are individuals who respond. Our reactions are deeply personal and fundamentally variable. At best, we can sketch out a minimum standard: if we don't react at all to such a wrongdoing, as philosopher Jeffrie Murphy has argued, then perhaps something has gone fundamentally wrong with our capacity for self-respect.<sup>1</sup> If, however, the basic machinery of our self-valuation remains intact and we do indeed react to transgressions against us, the reaction is likely to be tinged with some measure of what we typically identify as negative emotional states: resentment, anger or rage. In general, we are taught both implicitly and explicitly to avoid these states. And perhaps nowhere is the admonition to do so greater than in moments of social and political transition, during which the balance

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<sup>1</sup> Murphy presents resentment as something like a defense mechanism designed to protect one's own sense of self-worth or self-valuation. See Jeffrie Murphy, 'Forgiveness and Resentment,' in *Forgiveness and Mercy*, ed. Jeffrie Murphy and Jean Hampton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 14–34.

of powers is especially delicate, the need for cooler heads especially emphasized and the capacity for reconciliation especially lauded.

Myisha Cherry has recently argued that this pressure to reject anger has figured prominently in societal conversations around racism in both the United States and globally.<sup>2</sup> Her research indicates that the suppression of anger in response to grievous social and political wrongdoing is not only misguided, but actively undermines the struggle against racist systems, institutions and policies. In this article, I draw upon Cherry's 'case for rage' under circumstances of racism to develop a parallel case for rage under circumstances of transition from normalized societal wrongdoing – race-based or otherwise.<sup>3</sup>

My central claim is that anger – specifically, a certain type of productive, constructive anger related to what Cherry describes as 'Lordean rage' – has a place in transitional justice projects to an extent that is often unappreciated. While the manifestation of anxiety surrounding this anger looks different, to some extent, in each the interpersonal struggle against racism and the international struggle against rights violations, both often place the burden of reconciliation upon the victims of abuse and marginalization. In this way, approaches to transitional justice that center the courtroom, the truth commission and the ceremony of legalism occlude the real and important anger and resentment that characterize the proceedings. It makes them palatable; it shrouds them in an aura of civility and respectability. In so doing, it runs the risk of further alienating – and further harming – the most vulnerable participants in the civic project.

After a cursory introduction to the phenomenon of self-respecting resentment, I begin by offering a general account of how anger and adjacent emotions are depicted in the transitional justice literature. I then proceed to explore Cherry's account of political anger, and her argument that we can distinguish between a number of different types of anger, some of which are damaging to the social and political project and one of which, Lordean rage, is enhancing. I conclude by demonstrating that transitional justice measures run the risk of importing racist and race-based rejections of anger in both the theoretical and practical space, and examine what I take to be the implications of this imitation. Coming to terms with the role that anger might – and perhaps should – play in times of transition sheds light not only upon the discussion of how grappling with racist institutions can be seen as part of the transitional justice project, but also upon how we engage with vulnerable members of a fractured population at the level of both theory and praxis.

## RESENTMENT AND ITS TARGETS<sup>4</sup>

Several questions are worth posing from the outset. How should we define resentment? Who are its participants, both experiencer and target? And what does it, or should it, aim to achieve?

Let us begin with a definitional note. When we, like Murphy, describe resentment as an indicator of self-respect (at least under the right circumstances), we do not mean that resentment is synonymous with anger *simpliciter*. Instead, it is a type of anger, one of several – namely, the one 'which protests ... demeaning treatment to one who could and should have known better.'<sup>5</sup> In this way, resentment is a communicative to an extent that is not necessarily shared by all types of

<sup>2</sup> See Myisha Cherry, *The Case for Rage: Why Anger Is Essential to the Anti-Racist Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021) and Myisha Cherry, 'Political Anger', *Philosophy Compass* 17(2) (2021): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12811>.

<sup>3</sup> Cherry makes her case by first distinguishing between types of rage and assessing their qualities, by showing how rage can be a powerful fuel and medium for anti-racist action and ultimately by offering some practical advice for both the racially othered and anti-racist allies for channeling their rage in ways that are both helpful (for the cause) and healthy (for the individual). While a congruently full account of rage in the transitional moment is beyond the scope of this article, I hope to show that Cherry's insightful project can help us, as theorists and scholars, to develop that groundwork going forward.

<sup>4</sup> Some content in the first section has been adapted from earlier work in R.S. Leiby, 'Towards a Contractualist Theory of Transitional Justice' (PhD diss., Boston University, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Jean Hampton, 'Forgiveness, Resentment, and Hatred,' in *Forgiveness and Mercy*, ed. Jeffrie Murphy and Jean Hampton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 35–87, 55.

anger offered in Cherry's taxonomy. I return to the definitional exploration of resentment in the second section. For now, this cursory discussion sets the stage for the answers to our additional questions: the participants are both the 'one who could and should have known better' and the target of their 'demeaning treatment'; and what resentment hopes to achieve is, at least in part, the communication (if only to oneself) of protest.<sup>6</sup> It is worth taking a moment at the outset to clarify how these participants and aim might evolve across circumstances.

The target of resentment might be small, consisting of the individual(s) whose commission of the transgression was most directly experienced or seems most significant. When we resent this individual or set of individuals, we may wish some degree of harm upon them – thinking, perhaps, that their suffering will help to reestablish the moral balance of the universe. This would appear to be the central insight of the retributive instinct.<sup>7</sup>

Martha Nussbaum has argued that there is no universal or correct experience for this sort of vengeful-resentful anger. It can take the form of a wish for violent, personal revenge, but it does not need to: the suffering we might wish upon our wrongdoer could just as easily come from institutional or contingent sources.<sup>8</sup> But the fact that this anger need not take the form of a desire to personally contribute to the transgressor's suffering is not to say that there exists no desire to have the transgressor recognized for what they are. Picking up the newspaper to find that one's torturer has died of old age in a warm bed, surrounded by loving family members, does not seem adequate to scratch the itch of retributive animosity. Nor does discovering that they have been killed instantly while crossing the street, struck by a careless driver.

What is missing in such cases is the presumption (if not the reality) of a reaffirmation or even restoral of a state of equitable moral standing between transgressor and victim by way of punishment, not merely blind bad luck.<sup>9</sup> 'Of course,' Hampton notes, '[punishment] can't annul the [original transgressive] act itself, but it can annul the false evidence seemingly provided by the wrongdoing of the relative worth of the victim.'<sup>10</sup> By punishing the offender (either personally or through the proxy of the state), implicit misconceptions about the victim's relative value (i.e., that it is low enough to justify bad treatment) are corrected. In such situations, the ability of the retributive measure to 'land' (as to 'land a punch') depends, in part, on whether it actually (1) succeeds in reestablishing or at least approximating moral equity between the victim and perpetrator and (2) is recognized as having done so, either by the relevant parties themselves or by the broader community.<sup>11</sup> In the absence of this recognition, we might still be glad to see a perpetrator's lot turn bad, but the key component of recognition, when absent, minimizes the force of the retribution.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>7</sup> Murphy describes the experience of wishing harm upon our wrongdoer as 'retributive hatred,' containing both a *retributive* element and a *righteous* element, insofar as the hatred is considered justified, appropriate and not indicative of any moral failing on the part of the hater. See Jeffrie Murphy, 'Hatred: A Qualified Defense,' in *Forgiveness and Mercy*, ed. Jeffrie Murphy and Jean Hampton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 88–110.

<sup>8</sup> See Martha Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 22–23.

<sup>9</sup> Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), shares a fictional anecdote in which a Holocaust survivor describes having killed a murderous camp doctor to consoling effect: "With these hands I strangled him." Only then, he explained, was he able to begin a new family and a new life. "It didn't bring them back from the dead," replied his interlocutor. The survivor answered, "It brought me back from the dead" (11).

<sup>10</sup> Jean Hampton, 'The Retributive Idea,' in *Forgiveness and Mercy*, ed. Jeffrie Murphy and Jean Hampton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 111–161, 131.

<sup>11</sup> Thanks to Daniel Dahlstrom for this particular note about third-party recognition as essential. The value of this sort of retributive motion makes clear why, for example, trials and convictions in absentia remain potentially powerful tools for rebalancing the social scales. The once-perpetrator may not need to be the one who recognizes the realignment, but recognition by some relevant party is nevertheless indispensable when considering the demands of retributive justice.

<sup>12</sup> Consider by way of example the titular character – 'S.' – in Slavenka Drakulić's fictional account of imprisonment, torture and rape during the 1992–1995 ethnic cleansing in the Former Yugoslavia. In her dreams, S. exacts revenge on one of her tormentors: 'She often dreams the same dream: she is walking down a street in a strange town. Suddenly she catches sight of a familiar face. She is sure it is one of them. She always has a knife with her in this dream. She walks up to him and stabs him in the stomach, making sure that he gets a good look at her face first. As the knife plunges into him, she feels relieved, even happy. But she sees only surprise

The essential inclusion of recognition sheds some light on the difference between anger *simpliciter* and resentful anger: the latter is a specific type of the former which is meaningfully self-regarding. If Murphy is correct that what is at stake when responding to transgression resentfully is the self-defensive attempt to reassert one's own value, whether through vengeance or forgiveness, then that activity must be fundamentally one of and by the victim (or at least their proxies).<sup>13</sup> The resentful action, vengeful or forgiving, is equalizing – in aspiration if not always in fact.<sup>14</sup>

## ANGER IN THE TRANSITIONAL MOMENT

We previously defined resentment as a principally communicative form of anger experienced in a self-defensive attempt to reassert one's own moral value. On an interpersonal level, the resentful relationship seems uncomplicated: one treads on my hand out of 'contemptuous disregard of my existence,' to use P.F. Strawson's example, and I respond with a resentful attitude.<sup>15</sup>

But this tripartite model of resentment – someone treats me badly, I feel resentment, our moral equilibrium is restored – is less straightforward under circumstances in which the target of resentment is broader. We might find ourselves resentful of the actions (or inaction) of an entire population, as writer and Holocaust survivor Jean Améry reports himself to be in the aftermath of the Second World War. Améry's inability to content himself with the narrow retribution visited upon individual perpetrators is demonstrated in his reflections upon an SS officer named Wajs, who had regularly beat him during his imprisonment. Wajs did ultimately receive his comeuppance — Améry relays that the 'repeated murderer and especially adroit torturer' was executed by firing squad.<sup>16</sup> Strikingly, however, this act of ultimate vengeance did not set Améry free of his resentment. He writes:

If everything had taken place only between the SS-man Wajs and me, and if the entire inverted pyramid of SS men, SS helpers, officials, Kapos, and medal bedecked generals had not weighed on me, I would have died calmly and appeased along with my fellow man with the Death's Head insignia. At least that is the way it seems to me now. But Wajs from Antwerp was only one of a multitude. The inverted pyramid is still driving me with its point into the ground.<sup>17</sup>

Améry's experience seems similar to the experiences of anyone impacted by mass violence. In the aftermath of such grievous wrongdoing, the individual impulses towards vengeance and forgiveness are quite literally token. The death of Wajs can be healing (or not) – but it cannot

in his eyes. The man does not recognise her and is surprised that an utterly strange woman should deal him a lethal blow. S. cries in fury that he did not recognize her as his victim and that her revenge is pointless' (Slavenka Drakulić, *S.: A Novel About the Balkans*, trans. Marko Ivić (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 6).

<sup>13</sup> See Murphy, *supra* n 1 at 25. Thus far, our focus has been on vengeance rather than forgiveness. But forgiveness, too, insofar as it follows from resentment, can be seen as a similarly self-defensive move (1) made by the victim (or her representatives) and (2) meant to reassert moral equality.

<sup>14</sup> For the classic statement of this fraught appeal to equality in matters of justice, we might consider Aristotle's articulation of rectificatory justice which casts the role of the judge as an equalizer. See Aristotle, 'Nicomachean Ethics,' in *Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 2: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 1132a7–1132a10. Please note that I use standard Bekker numbers in lieu of page numbers when citing Aristotle throughout.

<sup>15</sup> P.F. Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment,' in *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1–28, 6. In this example, Strawson is noting that I regard the person who injures me in this way with far greater resentment than the person who injures me accidentally while trying to assist me, despite the fact that the pain is the same in both cases. In this way, I regard the contemptuous hand-crusher with a 'reactive' as opposed to 'objective' attitude.

<sup>16</sup> Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 70.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

meaningfully respond to or compensate for the enormity of the transgression.<sup>18</sup> In such situations, attention to figures beyond the individual wrongdoer is required, and the ways in which our resentments unfold become all the more complicated. Now what is at stake is not merely our ability to reassert our relative moral worth in comparison to and with the recognition of the one who has wronged us; what matters, instead, in such cases, is our ability to reassert that worth in comparison to and with the recognition of the broader population, a population that may not unilaterally take the wrongdoer's action to be baldly repugnant or morally deviant.

The question, then, is as follows: if resentment can have value under circumstances of interpersonal violence, can it likewise have value under circumstances of mass violence? The kneejerk response by many interested in societal recovery from atrocity would appear to be 'no.' As Thomas Brudholm puts it, there is a standing assumption

that forgiveness and compassion are morally superior to anger and resentment [which] are often seen not merely as inferior emotions [but as indicative of] self-preoccupation, weakness, and danger insofar as they are seen as intimately connected to desires for revenge.<sup>19</sup>

Historically influential valuations of forgiveness over anger in the aftermath of mass atrocity – such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of South Africa, which will be revisited in the fourth [section](#) – seem to have cemented this assumption.

Brudholm, however, encourages us to think beyond this paradigm of forgiveness-as-preferable. In his sustained exploration of Améry's writing, he argues that much of our error in responding negatively to the potential value of resentment in recovery from mass violence consists in our misunderstanding the distinction between resentment and *ressentiment*. The latter, associated with Friedrich Nietzsche and revisited in the third [section](#), is indeed a dubiously productive aid in recovery. It is characterized as an envious, pathological, spiteful and self-pitying form of resentment that is ultimately destructive rather than generative. This is not, however, what Améry seems to be expressing even when he holds fast to the resentment he feels for everyone from the SS-man Wajs to the broader German population. Instead, Brudholm argues, Améry is expressing resentment more similar to the theoretical framing introduced in the first [section of this article](#): as a self-respecting piece of communication that telegraphs one's own moral value above and in spite of one's abhorrent treatment. Améry maintains his resentment not because resentment is the type of thing that must feed on itself ad infinitum (as perhaps some advocates of political forgiveness might imagine) but rather because his resentment fails to achieve resolution through recognition. The consolation offered by German – and indeed global – society to survivors like Améry seems hollow, the remorse far too short-lived.<sup>20</sup> In making his self-diagnosis, Améry makes much of the causal force of this inadequacy: the thing that has made his resentment ceaseless is the world's inability to properly acknowledge it.

Brudholm's discussion of Améry sheds some light on transitional justice's impulse away from anger and towards reconciliation. When we reject anger as a viable political emotion, we seem to be communicating the worry that such anger will inevitably lead to recurring strife. But if Brudholm and Améry are to be believed, then resentful anger is not necessarily destabilizing in

<sup>18</sup> The language of 'enormity' here implies, perhaps misleadingly, that such transgressions are quantitatively as opposed to qualitatively remarkable. Perhaps the transgression breaks the scale on both counts. What is vital, in any case, is that the standard of proportionality that grounds our commonplace notions of *lex talionis* seems utterly undiscoverable in such cases.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Brudholm, *Resentment's Virtue: Jean Améry and the Refusal to Forgive* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 2–3.

<sup>20</sup> Améry, *supra* n 16 at 66–67, writes: 'In the following years, there was less and less talk of remorse. First the pariah Germany was accepted into the community of nations, after that it was courted, finally it had to be dispassionately reckoned with in the power game. ... The Germans no longer had any hard feelings towards the resistance fighters and Jews. How could these still demand atonement?'

the aftermath of atrocity. It only becomes so when it remains unacknowledged and its attempt to right the moral universe remains unrecognized.

In short, then, the transitional justice theorist who rejects resentful anger out of hand is responding to worry about the further destabilization that such anger can seem to foment. Brudholm's suggestion, however, is that this tendency towards destabilization is a contingent rather than necessary feature of resentful anger that hinges on a general refusal of recognition. Margaret Urban Walker likewise places a great deal of weight on the role that recognition and affirmation must play to subvert renewing cycles of violence, calling its being withheld a kind of 'normative abandonment' of the victim of violence.<sup>21</sup>

Resentful anger, then, does not *need* to lead to further violence. This negative claim gets us part of the way to responding to the initial intuition that resentment should be crowded out by reconciliation. In working to cover the remaining distance, Solani Chakravarti stipulates an additional positive claim about anger in the transitional moment concerning its value along three dimensions.

Chakravarti's focus when discussing anger is the role that it plays in processes of post-violence testimony. Under these circumstances, in conditions where the wounded party is given an opportunity to express their resentment (and hopefully to receive the kind of acknowledgement and recognition that Brudholm and Walker take to be so vital), several dimensions of anger make it a potentially valuable tool.

The first of these is the cognitive-evaluative cast that anger can take. In contrast to theories of anger that reduce it to a visceral impulse, the cognitive-evaluative understanding of anger argues that 'emotions are intentional, they are directed towards an object (something or someone), and they are a form of judgment about what one values.'<sup>22</sup> When we listen to the truth commission participants or trial witness share their anger, therefore, we are not allowing them a release valve on an uninvestigable emotional response. Instead, argues Chakravarti, we are called to focus on the information conveyed by their emotional state, and to join them in the project of engaging with those states as evaluative. The cognitive-evaluative dimension of anger may not be straightforwardly useful for achieving reconciliation, but it is clearly useful for illuminating what the angry see as important, worth protecting and worth mourning – and, without a clear grasp on these assessments, any project of reconciliation will fall woefully short.

The second aspect of anger that Chakravarti explores is its confrontational dimension. Where cognitive-evaluative anger is communicative, and in this way useful for seeking out solutions, confrontational anger is first and foremost expressive. It does not ask for anything beyond the right to be heard. It may seem disjointed, disconnected from the larger narrative and disguised as a mysterious preoccupation with seemingly unimportant aspects of the narrativized experience. One of the examples of confrontational anger that Chakravarti dwells on is the TRC testimony of Notrose Nobomvu Konile, whose son was murdered by police. Konile's testimony was maddening to an extent that confounded listeners, and not solely because the translation from her native Xhosa was error prone. Rather, the difficulty lay in her inability or unwillingness to remain fixed in chronological time, moving instead from the recounting of a dream to various conversations to learning of the fatal event and back again. Understood through the lens confrontational anger, Konile's testimony indicated that she

<sup>21</sup> See Margaret Urban Walker, 'The Cycle of Violence,' *Journal of Human Rights* 5(1) (2006): 81–105.

<sup>22</sup> Sonali Chakravarti, *Sing the Rage: Listening to Anger After Mass Violence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 128.

[was] grappling with intense sentiments that [were] connected to her own faults, her need for acceptance by an audience that may not understand, and the paradoxes of participating as a citizen when you cannot stop thinking about the past.<sup>23</sup>

In this respect, the value of confrontational anger comes from our making space for it and its holder without demanding coherence or convenience. As such, it conveys a commitment to attend even when the attention is not rewarded with immediate uptake.

The third and final dimension of anger that Chakravarti discusses is what she terms kinetic anger. Like kinetic energy, kinetic anger expresses not only potentiality but active motion. In this way, it is best understood as a 'source of energy for political life.'<sup>24</sup> As we shall see shortly, it is this dimension of anger that most closely approximates the Lordean rage discussed in the following section. We will revisit this comparison shortly. For the moment, it is worth emphasizing that kinetic anger as Chakravarti theorizes it is energizing and impactful for the listener (that is, the other member of the political community); it builds a bridge between the speaker and the listener that cannot reliably be replicated in mere speech. For this reason, Chakravarti emphasizes paradigmatic moments of kinetic anger as extralinguistic, from the wail of TRC participant Nomonde Calata to the cries of Sophocles' *Antigone*.<sup>25</sup>

Taken together, the cognitive-evaluative, confrontational and kinetic dimensions of anger demonstrate that anger is not reducible to a pitfall to be avoided. Instead, in the transitional moment, anger can be a powerful and necessary conduit for facilitating the equalizing recognition aimed at by resentment.

Mihaela Mihai's discussion of anger in the transitional moment rounds the personal out with the institutional. What is at stake in figuring out how to appropriately channel, engage with and respond to anger is not merely meeting standards of ethicality or justice with regard to the victim of mass violence. Importantly, also at stake is the more pragmatic aim of stability. 'Should institutions ignore or aim to suppress public anger,' Mihai warns, 'victimization and the insult it implies would be reproduced in time.'<sup>26</sup> Folded into Mihai's discussion of the practical dangers of anger is the misconstrual mentioned early in this section: one mistakes anger as the problem in the transitional moment, when the genuine problem is undealt-with or unprocessed anger.

I see Mihai's notion of productive anger as an instantiation of Aristotle's golden mean.<sup>27</sup> For Aristotle, reason reveals that virtue must be located on the sliding scale between excess and deficiency. For instance, what is the right amount of courageous to be? Not so courageous that we are rash with our lives (that would be excessive), nor so uncourageous as to be cowardly (that would be deficient). What is the right amount of modest to be? Not so modest that we are incapacitated by shyness (that would be excessive), nor so immodest as to be shameless (that would be deficient). Most saliently, for our purposes: what is the right sort of angry to be in the aftermath of mass violence? Not angry in a way that generates violent outburst (that would be excessive), nor in a way that collapses into hopeless apathy (that would be deficient). For Mihai, much of the rehabilitation of anger in transitional justice theorizing relies on this balancing act.

In summary, theorists of transitional justice acknowledge that anger – particularly of the resentful type described in the first section – has a role to play in recovery from mass violence. That role is best understood when we conceive of anger not as an impulse towards revenge but

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 143. Chakravarti's more extended discussion of Konile's testimony occurs at 146–148. See also Antije Krog, Nosisi Mpolweni and Kopano Ratele, *There Was This Goat: Investigating the Truth Commission Testimony of Notrose Nobomvu Konile* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009) and Jill Stauffer, *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 158–165.

<sup>24</sup> Chakravarti, supra n 22 at 160.

<sup>25</sup> See Ibid., 151–152 for a full discussion of this comparison.

<sup>26</sup> Mihaela Mihai, *Negative Emotions and Transitional Justice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 4.

<sup>27</sup> Though Aristotle himself does not use the language of the 'golden mean,' he discusses this principle most famously in Aristotle, supra n 14 at 1104a.

rather as a communicative expression that cries out for recognition and acknowledgment. In the literature at the intersection of transitional justice and anger, the moral can increasingly be interpreted as: *be open to recognizing and acknowledging the anger of victims of mass violence*. I think that this advice, while generally sound, runs the risk of making a misstep. By directing the justificatory argument for anger at those who are outside of it (e.g., scholars, policy-makers, members of the international community, etc.), theorists may inadvertently substantiate the message that the reader's role is simply to bear witness, to support or to manage. It may be the case, however, that the reader can and should take on a more participatory role in the anger directed at atrocity crimes. To see how this interaction with anger can be less detached and more immediate – and why that might be important – we can take our lead from the struggle to combat systemic racial discrimination.

### THE PROMISE OF LORDEAN RAGE

In her work on the moral psychology of anger, philosopher Myisha Cherry distinguishes between several different types of what we have been describing as resentment (that is, a kind of self-valuing anger). Cherry characterizes these emotional states as instances of rage<sup>28</sup> and stipulates a taxonomy of rage that includes at least five varieties: rogue rage, wipe rage, resentment rage, narcissistic rage and Lordean rage. For Cherry, only Lordean rage is productive – but getting clarity on what it entails will involve getting clarity on what it excludes.

Rogue rage, as Cherry defines it, applies to entities who are 'rogues' in the sense that they feel themselves at once drawn to destructive behaviors and also excluded from the social order on that basis. Individuals experiencing rogue rage feel themselves to be the victims of injustice that has no clear, individual propagator – and hence, no clear target. The target of rogue rage becomes, as a result, everyone and anyone. Insofar as it is fueled by a nihilistic outlook on the world and on oneself, rogue rage cannot be a productive force for change. The gestures of resentment that it produces are insufficient to balance the scales of moral worth precisely because the forces leading to their (supposed) imbalance are far too omnipresent. We might think of rogue rage as a kind of resentment that has neither a narrow nor broad target, but instead a universal target: 'me versus everyone else.'<sup>29</sup>

Wipe rage walks the scale of the target back ever so slightly. When an individual experiences wipe rage, the target of their resentment is not everyone, but rather some segment of the population that has been racially othered. Wipe rage seeks to eliminate such 'others,' whether by lethal violence or through civic exclusion. It does this, according to Cherry, because it views justice as a zero-sum game: 'To ensure that any racial group wins (e.g., gains economic advances), another racial group must lose (e.g., face economic setbacks).'<sup>30</sup> In other words, for one's own group to be secure and empowered, another group – the scapegoat group – must be made insecure and disempowered.

Ressentiment rage is perhaps most familiarly expressed in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche.<sup>31</sup> It is anger tinged with envy. If resentment occurs when another treats us as if we were moral unequals, then perhaps resentment occurs when another treats us as if we were moral unequals – and we suspect that they are correct. In this way, the person who experiences resentment rage centers the oppressive group's values and actions, defining themselves through their

<sup>28</sup> A note on terminology: while Cherry claims to use the term 'rage' as 'a synonym for anger,' she states that 'this rage is not by definition an unbridled anger, rather it is an intense anger in response to incessant injustice' (Cherry, *supra* n 2 at 16). In this, she seems to be using 'rage' to describe a specific type of anger closer to what we have been describing as 'resentment.'

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>31</sup> See particularly Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals,' in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Random House, 1967), 1.10–11. As a reminder, it is precisely this sort of anger that Améry seems to lay claim to in his self-reflections, but which Brudholm finds a poor fit with what he is actually communicating: namely, a desire for recognition.

response to those values and actions as opposed to the creation of values and actions of their own. Cherry, in virtue of the bent of her project, conceptualized resentment rage in terms of racial oppression (e.g., as a result of the ongoing legacy of colonization), but resentment rage need not only apply with this cast.

The final type of rage that Cherry finds destructive is what she terms narcissistic rage. Someone who experiences narcissistic rage is not reacting to a universal target (as in rogue rage), or even to an especially broad target (as in wipe and resentment rage). Rather, the person who experiences narcissistic rage is interpersonal:

‘those who target me.’ In other words, those who are narcissistically outraged are not angry at racial injustice and forces that enact, enforce, and are complicit in it. Instead, they are mad at only those forces that target them as individuals.<sup>32</sup>

Notably, what makes rogue rage, wipe rage, resentment rage and narcissistic rage forces for destruction instead of for positive change is not that they each express resentment. Rather, it is that they do so in a way which prioritizes transition – from an inclusive society to an exclusive society (in the case of wipe rage), from oppressed to oppressor (in the case of resentment rage), and so on – as opposed to transformation. Here a brief clarificatory note may be helpful. Transitional anger, understood in this way, accepts the basic structure of the world as it is, and seeks to chart a course from one position in the hierarchy of that structure to another.<sup>33</sup> Transformative anger, on the other hand, challenges the structure of the world and seeks to change it. While emphasizing anger’s transitional dimension gets us destructive forms of rage – according to Cherry – emphasizing anger’s transformative dimension gets us a generative form of rage. Cherry terms this ‘Lordean rage’, so-called in reference to Black activist and scholar Audre Lorde.<sup>34</sup>

Lordean rage, as Cherry develops it, aims at change of a certain type: ‘not destruction of the good or elimination of the other, but change in racist beliefs, expectations, policies and behaviors that shape and support white supremacy.’ In this mission, the person who experiences Lordean rage uses her anger and resentment as fuel. Vitality, the anger she experiences is not unbridled or directionless but ‘metabolized,’ converted to energy in pursuit of anti-racist goals. Unlike the person who experiences narcissistic rage, the person who experiences Lordean rage is not concerned only with their own freedom, but with the freedom of all affected by systemic marginalization.<sup>35</sup>

Lordean rage, then, contains at least the following characteristics: it is transformative in nature, not transitional; it is inclusive in scope, not exclusive; and it takes as its target not discrete racist individuals, but rather ‘racist actions, racist attitudes, and presumptions (or people) that arise out of those attitudes.’<sup>36</sup> For Cherry, the experience and expression of Lordean rage is not always virtuous, but it leaves open a *path* towards virtue in a way that the other forms of rage do not.

Cherry’s central claim is not, of course, that we have a moral obligation to feel Lordean rage in the race of widespread racism. It makes very little sense, after all, to talk of emotional states in terms of *should* or *should not*. But this is not to say that we have no obligations whatsoever when

<sup>32</sup> Cherry, *supra* n 2 at 21.

<sup>33</sup> Note that this understanding of ‘transitional anger’ is not meant to convey any theoretical connection with projects of transitional justice, nor with what Martha Nussbaum has described in ‘Transitional Anger,’ *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1(1) (2015): 41–56, 52, as ‘a healthy segue into forward-looking thoughts of welfare and, accordingly, from anger into compassionate hope.’ Nussbaum’s notion of ‘transitional anger’ is definitionally distinct from Cherry’s notion of anger that prioritizes transition.

<sup>34</sup> See Audre Lorde, ‘The Uses of Anger,’ *Women Studies Quarterly* 9(3) (1981): 7–10 and Audre Lorde, ‘Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger,’ in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (New York: Ten Speed Press, 2007), 145–175.

<sup>35</sup> Cherry, *supra* n 2 at 24.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

it comes to this sort of rage. We should be willing to sit with such anger when it is expressed without taking refuge in defensiveness. We should, as Sara Ahmed says, '[learn] to hear the anger of others.'<sup>37</sup>

In taking some of the intuitive sting out of angry interactions, particularly in the political realm, Cherry shows that anger can sometimes be a fitting, appropriate and correct response to wrongdoing.<sup>38</sup> In other words, anger (or, in Murphy and Hampton's terms, resentment) is a constructive force to be distinguished from the destructive force of hatred. As Lorde herself writes:

Hatred is the fury of those who do not share our goals, and its object is death and destruction. Anger is the grief of distortion between peers, and its object is change.<sup>39</sup>

I would like to linger for a moment over that turn of phrase: *anger is the grief of distortion between peers*. Anger, in the Lordean sense, is a response to a system which violates, through signs both express and implicit, the presumed equality of human persons. Righting that violation is not just a matter of enacting positive social change. It also plays an important role in verifying one's own sense of self-respect – and in this, as we have seen, resentment plays a key role.<sup>40</sup>

## IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

I take Cherry's project to be an invitation. Her work encourages us to resist painting anger as a monolithic experience, devoid of nuance and complexity. It asks us to do the hard reflective work of exploring the promise and pitfalls of anger in the political space.<sup>41</sup> Most importantly, perhaps, it challenges us to embrace and even celebrate the discomfort of a 'negative emotion' like anger as a source for progress and a driver of change. This advice is tailored, in Cherry's work, to the particular challenges presented by the ongoing struggle against anti-BIPOC racism in the United States and around the world. The insights that her defence of Lordean rage give rise to are useful in other spheres and contexts as well – namely, those in which rights abuses more generally are an important part of the societal and political legacy. In this section, I draw out why we might look to Lordean rage as particularly instructive within transitional justice theorizing.

Let us begin by considering the fittingness of Lordean rage as a tool for transitional justice theorists. I think that two claims are worth making explicit here. First, the anti-racist struggle is not fundamentally separate from the struggle against legacies of mass violence. The former is clearly engaged in a transformative project, as discussed in the third section. Increasingly, the latter is as well. In the last several decades, transitional justice as a field of study has become associated less with regime change to liberal democracy and more with responses to human rights abuses.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 178. Ahmed sees this education as particularly important for feminists, underscoring that even projects which seem liberatory can smuggle in a preference for comfort over critique.

<sup>38</sup> See particularly Cherry, supra n 2 at 35–38, for an in-depth discussion of these criteria.

<sup>39</sup> Lorde, 'The Uses of Anger,' supra n 34 at 8.

<sup>40</sup> See Bernard R. Boxill, 'Self-Respect and Protest,' *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 6(1) (1976): 58–69 for a full discussion of the ways in which protest (particularly against racist treatment) can be vital for one's self-valuation even when it does not result in robust societal change. Boxill takes as his jumping-off point the historic debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Dubois, in which Washington saw futile protest as largely servile and pointless and Dubois saw futile protest as essential to the recognition of oneself as a dignity- and rights-bearing person. Unsurprisingly, Dubois features prominently in Cherry's *Case for Rage* while Washington does not.

<sup>41</sup> In this way, Cherry's project builds on conceptual work by Peter Lyman, 'The Domestication of Anger: The Use and Abuse of Anger in Politics,' *European Journal of Social Theory* 7(2) (2004): 133–147 and David Ost, 'Politics as the Mobilization of Anger: Emotions in Movements and in Power,' *European Journal of Social Theory* 7(2) (2004): 229–244, among others.

<sup>42</sup> Ruti Teitel discusses this expansion in the domain of transitional justice as a movement between 'phases': the post-WWII phase (characterized by international accountability and law), the rejection of authoritarianism phase (characterized by regime change around the world in the mid- to late-20th century), and the contemporary phase (characterized by a ballooning in scope to general situations of human rights abuses). See Ruti Teitel, 'Transitional Justice Genealogy,' *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 16 (2003): 69–94.

Paul Gready and Simon Robins argue that this evolution has, in many ways, revealed the limitations of the traditional transitional justice paradigm. The institutional, top-down reform that works well under conditions of regime change works less well under conditions of general rights upheaval and ‘should be jettisoned in favour of [approaches] that are context specific, participatory and bottom-up.’<sup>43</sup> Both the anti-racist struggle and the struggle against legacies of mass violence (transformatively understood) are therefore oriented less around institutions and more around civil participants, less focused on producing preconceived political outcomes and more on the reification of agency. In this, ‘contemporary phase’ transitional justice, like the contemporary pursuit of racial justice, leaves room for emotion in a way that more policy- and institution-based interventions do not.<sup>44</sup>

A second claim worth making explicit about the fittingness relationship between Lordean rage and transitional justice theorizing is that racial violence is often embedded in the situations with which transitional justice concerns itself. As the abandonment of the regime-change paradigm has gained momentum, calls for transitional justice projects to be undertaken in response to systemic racial discrimination in otherwise stable Western liberal democracies have proliferated.<sup>45</sup> For instance, Canada has made progress towards grappling with its historic (and ongoing) atrocities towards indigenous Americans, and the United States has taken some local steps towards addressing the legacy of chattel slavery and racist brutality (e.g., with the Greensboro TRC). As such, transitional justice mechanisms have begun to be seen as part of the toolbox for dealing with and addressing systemic racial and ethnic harms.

Even outside of this narrow context – that is, the context of North American countries attempting to come to terms with a legacy of violence against BIPOC – race and racism arguably play roles in the landscape of international transitional justice. It is true, of course, that not all transitional justice is about race. But all transitional justice happens in a world that is shot through with racial distinctions, distinctions that have been fostered in Euroamerican cultures and exported, through colonialism, into the global society. An oft-cited example of this phenomenon is the politicization of ethnic groups in Belgian-occupied Rwanda, and the subsequent enmity that played a significant role in the 1994 genocide. I make this point in order to emphasize that the issues of race and racism within transitional justice theorizing leave traces throughout the global transitional justice project in three ways: through a *legacy of colonial values*, through a *lack of parity in accountability*, and through a *theoretical commitment to duality*.

The *legacy of colonial values* has already been mentioned. As Euroamerican cultures have imposed themselves and their racialized hierarchies onto the rest of the world, concepts of politically relevant racial distinctions have flourished.

Traces of racism can also perhaps be found in the *lack of parity in accountability* for human rights abuses within international law. Formal transitional justice projects, especially those that rely upon international guidance and institutions like the International Criminal Court (ICC),

<sup>43</sup> Paul Gready and Simon Robins, ‘From Transitional to Transformative Justice: A New Agenda for Practice,’ *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 8 (2014): 351.

<sup>44</sup> The future course of ‘contemporary-phase’ transitional justice is, of course, uncertain, as is the role that emotion can be expected to play in it. However, one development that might prove promising is the transformative-justice centering of non-institutional and non-Western mechanisms for recovery. A comprehensive discussion of emotion as it functions in indigenous approaches to (and participation in) transitional justice is beyond the scope of this article but constitutes an important area of future research. For some preliminary discussions of the role that anger in particular plays in the indigenous response to injustice, see Catherine Lane West-Newman, ‘Anger in Legacies of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and Settler States,’ *European Journal of Social Theory* 7(2) (2004): 189–208 and Emily McRae, ‘Anger and the Oppressed: Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Perspectives,’ in *The Moral Psychology of Anger*, ed. Myisha Cherry and Owen Flanagan (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 105–122.

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., Fernando Travesi, ‘Repairing the Past: What the United States Can Learn from the Global Transitional Justice Movement,’ *ICTJ*, 15 July 2021, <https://www.ictj.org/news/repairing-past-what-united-states-can-learn-global-transitional-justice-movement> (accessed 2 April 2022); Brianne McGonigle Leyh, ‘No Justice, No Peace: The United States of America Needs Transitional Justice,’ *OpinioJuris*, 6 May 2020, <http://opiniojuris.org/2020/06/05/no-justice-no-peace-the-united-states-of-america-needs-transitional-justice/> (accessed 1 February 2022); and Colleen Murphy, ‘Transitional Justice in the United States,’ *Just Security*, 16 July 2020, <https://www.justsecurity.org/71236/transitional-justice-in-the-united-states/> (accessed 11 November 2020), among others.

have disproportionately been deployed in the global south (presumably at the behest of institutions embedded in the wealthier, 'whiter' global north). Rosemary Nagy picks up on this lack of parity when she asks, "To what extent does transitional justice appear from on high as "saviour" to the "savagery" of ethnic, especially African "tribal", conflict?"<sup>46</sup> This question, and others like it, has given rise to ongoing attempts to incorporate 'indigenous' mechanisms into projects of transitional justice – but it is not at all obvious that these are sufficient to ground transitional justice as a global undertaking, impartially applied.<sup>47</sup>

The question of how transitional justice theorizing imports gestures – if not practices – of racism into its enactment receives a non-negligible amount of attention at the explicit level (e.g., in worries that the ICC is an 'African court' in practice if not in principle, in worries about how accountability mechanisms modelled on Western courts dominate the international landscape, etc.). Far less attention is paid to the question of how transitional justice theorizing imports racially charged concepts and ideas into its practices at an implicit level. I refer to this as the *theoretical commitment to duality*. At base, the theoretical commitment to duality expresses an affinity for simple dichotomies that do not accurately capture the nuance of lived experience. Fittingly, Audre Lorde, whose social and political writings inspired Cherry's account of Lordean rage, offers the preminent articulation of this duality. Lorde argues that the Western European historical tradition of conceiving of differences as simple oppositions ('dominant/subordinate, good/bad, up/down, superior/inferior') is a conceptual barrier that will need to be cleared before we can celebrate and cultivate the diversity of our communities.<sup>48</sup>

We have already seen this theoretical commitment to duality hinted at, if not explicitly practiced, in the second section. For instance, it is worth noting that Brudholm's discussion of Améry is paired with a lengthy discussion of the TRC proceedings in South Africa. The victims of apartheid who participated in the TRC proceedings were, like Améry, often resentful; and, like Améry, they were told both explicitly and implicitly that the nobler path lay in forgiveness rather than anger. Of course, Brudholm notes, '[this] stark dichotomy of either forgiveness or vengeance-hatred-bitterness does not do justice to the actual spectrum of possible attitudinal responses between those two emotional poles.'<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, the TRC leans heavily on what Mihai calls a false dilemma: the intuition that we can either have stability or justice, but not both.<sup>50</sup> If we want to make advances in reconciliation, coalition-forming, institutional stability – the lesson seems to go – we must be willing to forego our anger in the name of a common purpose. Desmond Tutu encapsulates this requirement succinctly when he lauds the seeming transformation of 'anger and tension into [a] display of communal forgiveness and acceptance of erstwhile perpetrators' at one of the TRC hearings on the Bisho massacre.<sup>51</sup> One way, therefore, in which the theoretical commitment to duality expresses itself in transitional justice is through the language of vengeance-or-forgiveness, anger-or-progress, justice-or-stability and so on.

Traces of this theoretical commitment to duality can be found across the transitional justice landscape, even outside of the most familiar conversations about the prioritized goals of transitional justice mechanisms. We find it when we speak of victims and perpetrators, struggling to

<sup>46</sup> Rosemary Nagy, 'Transitional Justice as Global Project: Critical Reflections,' *Third World Quarterly* 29(2) (2008): 275.

<sup>47</sup> For some examples of 'indigenous' approaches to transitional justice, see Agnieszka Szpak, 'Indigenous Mechanisms of Transitional Justice as Complementary Instruments to State Justice Systems: Cases of *mato oput* in Uganda, *bashingatahe* in Councils in Burundi and Navajos' Custom of *naat'aani*,' *Polish Political Science Yearbook* 46(2) (2017): 55–70.

<sup>48</sup> Audre Lorde, 'Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,' in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (New York: Ten Speed Press, 2007), 114.

<sup>49</sup> Brudholm, *supra* n 19 at 29.

<sup>50</sup> See Mihai, *supra* n 26 at 29–35. See also Richard Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) for an in-depth discussion of the ways in which this dilemma was leveraged and expressed during the TRC proceedings.

<sup>51</sup> Desmond Mpilo Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Image Random House, 1999), 151.

account for marginal cases or cases that defy our immediate expectations. Dianne Enns is particularly critical of this duality when it is smuggled into transitional justice spaces. She recalls her struggle to encourage students towards nuanced engagement with Ishmael Beah's account of his time as a child soldier in war-torn Sierra Leone:<sup>52</sup>

Abducted at the age of twelve and forced to kill under the influence of drugs and ideology, Beah's predicament provides an excruciating moral and political paradox for anyone concerned with the condition and status of the victim of violence in these times. In a final assignment, I invited my students to reflect on Beah's status as a 'victim-turned-perpetrator,' asking them to discuss the ambiguity of his condition and how we should respond to it. Only two out of many more than one hundred students considered – reluctantly and apologetically – Beah's responsibility for acts of murder and torture.<sup>53</sup>

Likewise, even when we are able to take a nuanced view on who has been wronged and in what ways, this theoretical commitment to duality limits the scope of our moral imagination in ways that are only beginning to become apparent to theorists entrenched in a Western intellectual tradition. Belkis Izquierdo and Lieselotte Viaene situate indigenous ontology as questioning 'dominant modern ... culture/nature, mind/body, human/non-human, belief/reality divides. For indigenous peoples the world is non-dual.'<sup>54</sup> In their discussions of the Q'eqchi' Maya of Guatemala and Belize, as well as the Arhuaco, Wiwa, Kogi and Kankuamo of northern Colombia, Izquierdo and Viaene emphasize the practical and moral benefits that might follow if such indigenous perspectives were allowed to substantially impact recovery from mass violence.

In such instances of transitional justice's theoretical commitment to duality – and a reflection on the legacy of colonial values worldwide along with a lack of parity in international accountability – we can see, in very general terms, how the themes of racial justice projects extend to transitional justice projects. Norms about civility in courtrooms and commissions remind one of the demands of respectability politics placed on anti-racist activists; ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda's '[urging] patience' to Palestinian and Israeli community members affected by the ongoing violence in the region puts one in mind of Martin Luther King Jr's famous resistance to waiting for injustice to be addressed.<sup>55</sup> Our tendency to see negative emotions – among them, anger and resentment – as 'barriers to liberal political goals' is as much a core feature of our attempts to come to terms with legacies of mass violence as it is a core feature of our attempts to instantiate anti-racist change.<sup>56</sup> Being cognizant of this connection explains, at least in part, why we might do well to look to Lordean rage as particularly instructive within transitional justice theorizing.

## CONCLUSION

Enumerating the concrete contributions that a turn towards Lordean rage can provide is a task that must be ongoing and experiential. Nevertheless, here at this nascent juncture, we can begin to articulate some of its specific promise. As transitional justice trends more towards the transformational (as Gready and Robins describe it), the role of participation becomes increasingly

<sup>52</sup> See Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> Dianne Enns, *The Violence of Victimhood* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 2.

<sup>54</sup> Belkis Izquierdo and Lieselotte Viaene, 'Decolonizing Transitional Justice from Indigenous Territories,' *Peace in Progress*, No. 34 (2018), <https://www.icip.cat/perlapau/en/article/decolonizing-transitional-justice-from-indigenous-territories/> (accessed 25 October 2023).

<sup>55</sup> Fatou Bensouda, 'Statement of ICC Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, Respecting an Investigation of the Situation in Palestine,' *International Criminal Court: News*, 3 March 2021, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-fatou-bensouda-respecting-investigation-situation-palestine> (accessed 30 May 2023). See Martin Luther King Jr, *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (London: Penguin Modern, 2018).

<sup>56</sup> Cherry, *supra* n 2 at 3.

central. This emphasis on participation is key to understanding the promise of Lordean rage in transitional justice.

We have already seen that theorists are becoming increasingly comfortable with allowing negative emotions to penetrate the transitional space. More and more attention is being paid to the role that anger can play within the context of transitional justice. However, this attention reproduces one last duality: speaker/listener. Chakravarti's discussion of the tripartite value that anger brings to truth commission and trial proceedings, Mihaï's discussion of the practical stakes for finding the right balance of anger in recovery from political instability – theories such as these assume a divide between the transitional justice theorist and the transitional justice participant. They exhort us to listen. We should hear expressions of resentment and anger in the aftermath of violence for the sake of the survivors, for the sake of the recovery process, for the sake of rebuilding. Lordean rage pushes us a step further, encouraging us in addition to focus on our role as active, emotion-laden participants in the world-building process. If transitional justice theories of anger increasingly say 'be willing to listen to anger,' then Lordean rage says 'be willing to get angry.'

This call to action is clearly not the final word on the matter. We must grapple with questions about who precisely is entitled to such anger (though I would argue that Lordean rage extends a welcome hand to anyone who is affronted by performances of systemic injustice). We must investigate the limits of Lordean rage such that it can become clear to us when we are veering away from productive, generative anger and towards something more morally and politically fraught. This is and should be an ongoing task of transformatively minded transitional justice theorizing. In the interim, Lordean rage gives us the directive that we must, if nothing else, refuse to avail ourselves of the privilege of dispassionate distance when facing injustice.

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