

Anger Gaslighting and Affective Injustice

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ABSTRACT. Anger gaslighting is behavior that tends to make someone doubt herself about her anger. In this paper, I analyze the case of anger gaslighting, using it as a paradigm case to argue that gaslighting can be an affective injustice (not only an epistemic one). Drawing on Marilyn Frye, I introduce the concept of “uptake” as a tool for identifying anger gaslighting behavior (persistent, pervasive uptake refusal for apt anger). But I also demonstrate the larger significance of uptake in the study of affective injustice: just as the concept of credibility names the epistemic behavior whereby we take someone seriously as an epistemic being, the concept of uptake names the uniquely affective cooperative behavior whereby we take someone seriously as an affective being. I answer Miranda Fricker’s epistemic notion of a prejudicial credibility economy with the affective notion of prejudicial uptake economies: uptake, like credibility, can be produced in a deficit for one social group relative to a surplus for another. Deviating from the parallels with Fricker, for whom the injustice of epistemic injustice is due to prejudice in the motives or character of individuals, as well as from accounts that ground it in aptness or affective goods, I suggest that the injustice of anger gaslighting behavior can be located at the structural scale of power relationships between social groups, in the tradition of Iris Marion Young. Anger gaslighting behavior counts as unjust wherever it (re)produces prejudicial uptake economies. Adapting sociological concepts of feeling rules and the emotion work they demand, I introduce the concepts of “uptake rules” and “uptake work” to further enable analysis of uptake economies as affective social structures, and to suggest a site for resistant or reparative affective agency.

"I could finally tell people on a Thursday that I'd been angry on a Monday. I couldn't tell them in real time."¹

"[Anger] was so effectively severed from my use that, instead of being a catalyst for change, feeling angry invalidated both my confidence and my own experiences."²

"For years, I described myself as someone who wasn't prone to anger. 'I don't get angry,' I said, 'I get sad' at a certain point, I started to suspect that I was angrier than I thought."³

INTRODUCTION

What Marilyn Frye observed in the 1980s about women's anger—that it is “not well-received”—can still be observed: a large North American study conducted in 2010 found that “only 6.2 percent of people thought that women's expressing anger was ‘appropriate’.”⁴ But censure has not always had the last word: consider the public and powerful fury of the women who led and participated in #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter. If you are inclined to celebrate what women's anger has accomplished despite everything that has been done to dismiss, distort, and punish it, then recent public intellectual literature has served you well: three book-length works on this topic were published in 2018 alone.⁵

¹ Gloria Steinem, quoted in an interview with Rebecca Traister (*Good and Mad: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Anger*, 57).

² Soraya Chemaly, *Rage Becomes Her: The Power of Women's Anger*, 262.

³ Leslie Jamison, “I Used to Insist I Didn't Get Angry. Not Anymore: On Female Rage.”

⁴ Frye, “A Note on Anger”; Chemaly, *Rage*, 261.

⁵ See Chemaly (*Rage*), Cooper (*Eloquent Rage*), and Traister (*Good*).

In the first-person accounts of women’s anger gathered in that literature, I recognized an experience with which I am personally familiar. Though I have commiserated about it with feminist friends, I know no vernacular term for it. I selected the epigrams above from these descriptions. It is an experience, not of anger merely dismissed, but anger impaired. In my 2018 article on affective injustice, I described it as a disjointed intentionality.⁶ More recently I have begun to think of it as “anger gaslighting.” If garden-variety gaslighting makes you second-guess your perceptions, evaluations, or beliefs, anger gaslighting makes you second-guess your affective responses—specifically, your anger. My epigrams describe three variations of the experience of this anger gaslighting effect: if I have been successfully anger gaslit, then my anger has been impaired in its spontaneity (consider the first epigram, from Gloria Steinem), its conviction (consider the second, from Soraya Chemaly), or its legibility—not only to others, but to myself (consider the third, from Leslie Jamison).

Gaslighting is currently discussed in feminist philosophy primarily as an *epistemic* injustice (an injustice related to knowledge and credibility).⁷ But the phenomenon of anger gaslighting offers me an occasion to explore my suspicion that gaslighting can also be an *affective* injustice (an injustice related to

⁶ Whitney, “Affective Intentionality and Affective Injustice.”

⁷ In 2017 an entire philosophy conference dedicated to “Gaslighting and Epistemic Injustice” was held at Carnegie Mellon University, and in 2020 *Hypatia* published a special issue “On Gaslighting and Epistemic Injustice.”

emotions and affective influence).⁸ The modest goal of this paper is to demonstrate that. But my more ambitious goal is to use the case of anger gaslighting as an opportunity to craft concepts that give us purchase on that affective dimension of injustice more broadly—beyond gaslighting, and beyond anger.

I first wrote about affective injustice in 2018, where I described variations of affective injustice that corresponded to some of Iris Young’s five faces of oppression in her account of social injustice: uniquely affective varieties of marginalization, exploitation, powerlessness, and violence (*affective marginalization* disables or withholds social or interpersonal sense-making conditions for the affects of a targeted social group, *affective powerlessness* deprives a social group’s affects of their influence, *affective exploitation* deploys the affective resources of one social group in a manner that systematically transfers power to another,⁹ and *affective violence* injures or impairs the affective capacities of a targeted social group).¹⁰ That article began

⁸ See my 2018 article, “Affective Intentionality and Affective Injustice.” Amia Srinivasan also published a piece that year coining the same term to more narrow ends (“The Aptness of Anger”). Articles published on the topic since then include Francisco Gallegos, “Affective Injustice and Fundamental Affective Goods”; Alfred Archer and Georgina Mills, “Anger, Affective Injustice, and Emotion Regulation”; Alfred Archer and Benjamin Matheson, “Commemoration and Emotional Imperialism.” José Medina’s call for a discussion of the affective dimension of epistemic injustice has been fruitful in provoking me to more consideration of the relationship between these areas of study (*The Epistemology of Resistance*).

⁹ See also my work on affective and emotional labor (“Byproductive Labor”).

¹⁰ Alfred Archer and Benjamin Matheson have since published an important extension of my account to Young’s fifth category of oppression: cultural imperialism (“Commemoration and Emotional Imperialism”).

with the premise that affective injustices exist, and aimed to produce a theory of affect that could accommodate that possibility. Here my focus is to aid in crafting concepts that help us to identify affective injustices, and open dialogue with the scholarship on epistemic injustice.

While my own thinking about the scope of affective injustice as an area of study has expanded since I first wrote about it in 2018, as I travel and present on my research my elevator pitch for introducing it has narrowed, focusing on anger gaslighting as a paradigm case in parallel to epistemic injustice. Epistemic injustices, I remind the inquirer, are injustices that have to do with knowledge and credibility. I propose that affective injustices are injustices that have to do with emotions and affective influence. The paradigm case of epistemic injustice is a testimonial injustice, in which one suffers a deficit of credibility.¹¹ Say I am telling you about something that I witnessed, and you dismiss my testimony because I'm a woman. That's an epistemic injustice: you failed to take me seriously in my capacity as an epistemic being. Now say that I get mad at my colleague for telling a sexist joke, and you don't take my anger seriously because I'm a woman. (Maybe you tell me to lighten up: I'm overreacting, I can't take a joke, I'm cute when I'm mad, you're sorry it upset me but can we just move on, etc.) You didn't let my anger direct your attention toward my

¹¹ See Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*.

concerns. Instead you focused on my emotional state as an obstacle, even casting doubt on my capacity to regulate my emotions properly. That's an affective injustice: you failed to take me seriously in my capacity as an affective being, just as in the case of testimonial injustice you failed to take me seriously in my capacity as an epistemic one.

This has proven to be a successful on-ramp to productive conversations about affective injustice—not only with philosophers, but also with humanities and social science scholars in other disciplines, and even with nonacademics. Even before I mention the testimony referenced in my epigrams about the anger gaslighting effect, interlocutors will sometimes call the case I am describing “emotional gaslighting,” or volunteer the observation that when others fail to take my anger seriously, it becomes difficult to take it seriously myself, and that this can result in an injurious alienation from one's own anger. I have lost count of the times that individuals—frequently women—shared experiences of a gaslight effect in their own anger response similar to the ones mentioned in my epigrams.

So anger gaslighting as a paradigm case is useful to develop affective injustice as an area of research: it brings affective injustice into focus in a manner that is quickly grasped and taken seriously, and lends itself to

demonstrating both analogies and differences between affective and epistemic varieties of injustice.

The key concept I developed in studying anger gaslighting is the concept of *uptake*.¹² Uptake is a second-person affective behavior: it concerns how I am moved by someone else's affects. As I will demonstrate, I can define anger gaslighting behavior in terms of uptake. (How do you gaslight someone's anger? Deprive it of uptake.) I think that the concept of uptake has special significance for the study of affective injustice because *it does for the theory of affective injustice what the concept of credibility does for the theory of epistemic injustice*. Just as the concept of credibility names the uniquely epistemic cooperative behavior whereby we take someone seriously as a knower, the concept of uptake names *the uniquely affective cooperative behavior whereby we take someone seriously as an affective being*.

In this paper, I develop the concept of uptake for anger in particular, answering Miranda Fricker's epistemic notion of a prejudicial credibility economy with the affective notion of prejudicial uptake economies: uptake, like credibility, can be produced in a deficit for one social group relative to a surplus for another. I develop the notion of uptake injustice as an affective analogue for

¹² My notion of uptake builds on Marilyn Frye's adaptation of the notion from Austin's speech act theory ("A Note on Anger"), and María Lugones's continuation of that work ("Hard-to-Handle Anger").

testimonial injustice. Whose anger gets uptake, or doesn't—and about what, when, toward whom—is one of the ways dominating or oppressive relationships between social groups are constituted. I suggest that there are uptake injustices concerning emotions other than anger as well.

But I also deviate from the parallels with Fricker, for whom the injustice of epistemic injustice is due to prejudice in the motives or character of individuals. I suggest that the injustice of anger gaslighting behavior can be located at the structural scale of power relationships between social groups, in the tradition of Iris Marion Young: anger gaslighting behavior is not only injurious but unjust wherever it (re)produces prejudicial uptake economies. Adapting sociological concepts of feeling rules and the emotion work they demand, I introduce the concepts of “uptake rules” and “uptake work” to further enable analysis of uptake economies as affective social structures, and to suggest a site for resistant or reparative affective agency.

ANGER GASLIGHTING: WHAT IS IT?

“Gaslighting” names a unique injurious effect, and the behavior that tends to produce it.¹³ When a person is successfully gaslit, they are not only doubted by

¹³ This is consistent with its roots as diagnostic term in clinical psychology: diagnostic terms often identify a disease by its symptoms and call them by the same name to relate them. The term “gaslighting” was inspired by a 1944 film in which Ingrid Bergman plays a woman whose husband married her under false pretenses. While he is in the attic searching for family valuables

others, but may begin to doubt themselves.¹⁴ The concept of gaslighting includes the idea that the latter is accomplished by way of the former: casting doubt on someone is the means through which she was made to doubt herself.¹⁵ In gaslighting, the way others respond to me begins to impair an aspect of my relationship to myself. In particular, the noncooperative response I receive from some second person(s) when I express my experiences to them begins to impair some aspect of my ability to make sense of my own experience to myself in the first person.

In each of the passages highlighted by my epigrams, a woman describes an experience of her anger as what critical phenomenologists would call an inhibited or disjointed affective intentionality: an impairment of her anger response in the first person.¹⁶ But her goal is not merely to report on the first-person experience of this injury. It is to link the injurious effect to its cause: the dismissal or uncooperative behavior she had come to expect from others in response to her anger. Her anger was being disabled by the way others

to steal, the gaslights in the house flicker. When his wife observes this, he denies that it is happening. By systematically casting doubt on her perceptions and reactions, he eventually succeeds in making her doubt them herself. The term circulates in clinical psychological contexts to describe a form of interpersonal abuse, and increasingly circulates in vernacular contexts to describe sociopolitical manipulation.

¹⁴ “Dismissal simply fails to take another seriously as an interlocutor, whereas gaslighting is aimed at getting another not to take herself seriously” (Abramson, “Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting,” 2).

¹⁵ “Without people to back us up, it is hard to trust ourselves wholly” (Thomas, “Movies of the Mind: Gaslight and Gaslighting,” 118).

¹⁶ See my work on anger as a “disjointed intentionality” (“Affective Intentionality and Affective Injustice”) and Young on “inhibited intentionality” (“Throwing Like a Girl”).

responded to it. This link is what we bring into focus by identifying these experiences as cases of anger gaslighting.¹⁷

In each case, the speaker suggested that she felt targeted for this noncooperative response to her anger, not as an isolated individual, but as a member of a given social group: as a woman. While the term “gaslighting” circulated in the twentieth century in clinical psychology to describe a form of interpersonal abuse, the last decade or so has seen an expansion of the concept’s use beyond interpersonal contexts and into sociopolitical ones. For example, one might hear it said that politicians or corporations are “gaslighting” the public; or that a minoritized social group is “being gaslit” when their reports of discrimination are dismissed as oversensitivity.¹⁸

Notice that the anger gaslight effect is not only that my emotion doesn’t move others appropriately. My affective responses may themselves be disabled: if anger is a response to insult or injury, then when anger gaslighting is

¹⁷ Though the philosophical conversation has focused on its epistemic dimension, there is precedent in the clinical psychology literature for thinking about gaslighting as an affective phenomenon. For example, James Dorpat grounds his 1996 analysis of gaslighting in psychological literature as early as 1959 about techniques that undermine, not only the other person’s “perception of reality,” but also their “confidence” in their “affective reactions” (Dorpat, *Gaslighting*, 32). Interestingly, Dorpat describes a phenomenon he calls “the double whammy” in which a person is first gaslit about their perceptions and beliefs (“I never said that”), and then anger gaslit when they get mad at the initial gaslighting (“I was only joking—you have no sense of humor”). While my account of anger gaslighting demonstrates that it can function as a first-order gaslighting, Dorpat’s suggests that it can also function as a second-order multiplier for other varieties of gaslighting.

¹⁸ See for example Davis and Ernst (“Racial Gaslighting”), Beerbohm and Davis (“Gaslighting Citizens”), Johnson et al. (“It’s Not in Your Head”), and Tobias and Joseph (“Sustaining Systemic Racism through Psychological Gaslighting”).

successful, my anger response is impaired. In each of the passages excerpted in my epigrams, the woman does not merely lament the frustration or status injury of her anger being dismissed by others. She describes a deeper, more internal injury as well: one in which her own capacity to respond angrily to genuine insult or injury with spontaneity, conviction, and legibility has been impaired. The signal power of her anger has been jammed at its source, not merely in its receivers.

In the epistemic register, the concept of gaslighting expands our understanding of injustice by identifying a set of injurious effects that are not confined to its target's epistemic influence on others (testimonial credibility), but infect her relation to herself. When a person is successfully (epistemically) gaslit, they are not only doubted by others, but may begin to doubt themselves. In this way, (epistemic) gaslighting can function as a form of *violence*, not merely status subordination within the credibility economy.¹⁹ So while (epistemic) gaslighting is related to testimonial injustice, it is more injurious. Testimonial injustice enacts deficits and surpluses of its targets' *perceived* competencies, but (epistemic) gaslighting goes further, enacting deficits and surpluses in its targets' *actual* abilities to make sense of her

¹⁹ See Rachel McKinnon, "Gaslighting as Epistemic Violence"; see also my work on affective injustice as including uniquely affective forms of violence (Whitney, "Affective Intentionality and Affective Injustice").

experience. When fully successful, epistemic varieties of gaslighting can impede its target's epistemic powers and competencies: undermining not only credibility to others, but also self-trust, experiential coherence, and powers of deliberation in the privacy of one's own mind.

Similarly with affective varieties of gaslighting: the effect is not only that my uniquely affective abilities to make sense of my experience have been misrecognized; it is that they have been disabled. If anger is a response to insult or injury, then when anger gaslighting is successful, the spontaneity, conviction, or legibility of that response is impaired. The person whose anger has been jammed by anger gaslighting may have had her anger response desensitized so that it is delayed (see the epigram from Steinem), or even illegible as anger (the epigram from Jamison). Or she may remain sensible to anger, but experience it as undermining rather than motivating or focusing (the epigram from Chemaly). Just as garden variety gaslighting may constitute injury to the target's epistemic confidence, affective varieties of gaslighting may constitute an injury to the target's affective spontaneity, conviction, and legibility.

ANGER'S FUNCTIONS: WHY DOES ANGER GASLIGHTING MATTER?

Insofar as anger gaslighting has the potential to injure one's affective capacities (in excess of a status injury), this makes it a more compelling paradigm case for

affective injustice than mere dismissal. But do affective capacities really matter? No one would deny that emotions matter personally, but why should we think they matter politically? I will address this about anger in particular rather than emotions in general.²⁰

One implication of the time-honored feminist wisdom that the personal is political is that where we draw the line between the personal and the political is itself a practice of political import. We can see this playing out in a contest over anger in the contemporary political landscape. Recall Greta Thunberg's wrathful "How dare you" speech to the United Nations, or Brett Kavanaugh's tearful rage in his Supreme Court confirmation hearings; or recall the angers *at* misogyny and white supremacy mobilized in #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter protests, and angers *of* misogynists and white supremacists mobilized by the Trump campaigns. Whose anger is taken seriously, directing our collective conversation toward its objects? And whose anger is treated as a tantrum to be contained and disciplined? Will it be angers of insubordination, or angers of aggrieved entitlement? Both angers abound in the current moment: ones that punch up, and ones that punch down. Which ones will we take seriously as politically

²⁰ Note also that I follow a convention in the scholarship on the moral psychology of anger of narrowing my scope to moral anger: anger that constitutes its object as a wrong or injustice, not merely an obstacle or nonmoral thwarting. We might call the latter irritation to mark its difference from the moral emotion I am discussing. (So if you stomp on my foot and I demand that you apologize, that's anger. If I stub my toe on the table and swear, that's irritation.) See Flanagan's discussion of this distinction in the introduction to *The Moral Psychology of Anger*.

significant, and which ones will we dismiss as a personal maladjustment or an incivility that needs to be down-regulated is itself a matter of great political significance.

So anger matters politically, at least in the sense that it is a site of political contest. But what is the prize in this contest? What precisely do we lose when our anger response is impaired, or gain when it is not? To answer, we must consider how anger matters in ways that are not contingent on the mood of the times, but due to its unique functions in our moral psychology. Philosophers have long maintained that anger has unique moral and political functions. It has been called the political emotion par excellence: as our sense of injustice, anger enables us not only to register injustice but also to take a forceful stand against it, both singly and together.²¹ Anger gaslighting can lead us to doubt ourselves in ways that sabotage those functions.

Some functions of anger are self-directed, but some are other-directed. The former fall into two categories. First, my *anger orients me*. It has a function in first-person moral perception. Just as fear is my sense of alarm and grief is

²¹ To be sure, what anger's functions may be and whether they should be enabled or disabled is a topic of some philosophical controversy. In the Western tradition, we may look back to the ancient debate between Aristotle and Seneca about whether anger is always a vice or can be a virtue. Happily for my argument, feminist philosophers have been less divided on the uses of anger. There one finds a robust contemporary conversation defending anger at injustice in particular (see Cherry, Tessman, Bell, and Srinivasan, among others; for an exception to the pro-anger consensus, see Nussbaum's *Anger and Forgiveness*). This inherits a twentieth-century feminist discussion defending anger at injustice (see Lorde, Jaggar, Spelman, Frye, and Lugones, among others).

my sense of loss, anger is my sense of injustice: it is an important part of my moral compass.²² To be sure, our sense of injustice may be miscalibrated: senses are not infallible, and anger is no exception. But these misfires and miscalibrations are the exceptions that prove the rule: that I rely on my senses as a way to get my bearings in a situation, to focus and direct my attention, to make sense of what matters and how. In making me second-guess my anger, anger gaslighting disorients me. It spins my moral compass. That makes it a uniquely powerful tool of subordination.

Second, *anger takes a stand*. It has a role in moral motivation and action. If the first function is perceptual, this one is agentic and appetitive.²³ I mean not only that anger is a powerful motivator of further actions, but also that anger is itself already an action. It takes a stand about the meaning of a shared situation, making demands on oneself and others in accordance with my projects. In this way, an angry response claims status, demands respect, demands accountability, and fuels resolve.²⁴ Marilyn Frye's illustration is helpful:

²² I am aware of accounts of this function dating as far back as Aristotle's (*Rhetoric*). See Callard ("On Anger") for one recent account of anger's perceptual role in our moral psychology. Srinivasan ("Aptness") offers another.

²³ That anger is appetitive is uncontroversial; what precisely anger wants is a topic of some debate. Nussbaum thinks it wants revenge (see *Anger and Forgiveness*). Lorde thinks it wants change (*Sister Outsider*). I am more in the Lorde camp. But what my account here is committed to is that anger enacts an even more fundamental appetite (variations of which may be shared with other episodic emotions): an appetite for meaning-making agency in a shared situation.

²⁴ There is empirical research on anger's functions in this respect. See for example Kazdin: "In the face of adversity, [anger] can mobilize psychological resources, energize behaviors for corrective action, and facilitate perseverance. Anger serves as a guardian of self-esteem, operates as a means of communicating negative sentiment, potentiates the ability to redress

“You walk off with my hammer and I angrily demand that you bring it back. Implicitly, I claim that my project is worthy, that I am within my rights to be doing it, that the web of connections it weaves rightly encompasses that hammer ... Anger implies a claim to a domain—a claim that one is a being whose purposes and activities require and create a web of objects, spaces, attitudes and interests that is worthy of respect, and that the topic of this anger is a matter rightly within that web.”²⁵

Notice that, in Frye’s example, while my anger takes a stand about you and me with respect to the hammer—that you wrong me in walking off with it—my anger also takes a stand about something much more fundamental. My anger enacts my claim to a degree of meaning-making jurisdiction in our shared situation. It takes a stand not only regarding this particular project, but regarding my affective agency itself, my capacity to become invested in things like hammers, my right to have projects in this domain (construction projects? household maintenance?). Even if I turn out to be wrong about the hammer-related specifics of my anger’s demand (perhaps in fact you had prior claim I was unaware of), my anger can still be right to take a stand about this more fundamental demand that my affective investments should be taken seriously by others. In being angry that you took my hammer, I assert myself as someone

grievances, and boosts determination to overcome obstacles to our happiness and aspirations. Akin to aggressive behavior, anger has the functional value for survival” (*Psychology*, 170). For philosophical treatments of this view, see Frye (*Politics*, 84–94) and Spelman (“Insubordination”) for one account of anger’s role in demanding respect; Lugones builds on their work (*Pilgrimages*, 103–18), and Tessman (*Burdened*), Bell (“Anger”), and Srinivasan (“Aptness”) offer more recent accounts. See also Lorde (*Sister*) and Cherry (*Rage*) for an account of anger’s role as a moral energy and motive force.

²⁵ Frye, *Politics*, 87.

whose projects and interests are worthy and weighty; someone who is a player in negotiating the shared meaning of the situation. Anger gaslighting threatens our capacity to stand up for ourselves and others in this uniquely affective way.²⁶

But anger also has an other-directed function: *anger is influential*. Frye says that anger is a “social act”: anger is a way of directing and focusing the perception and attention of others, orienting them toward my affective investments.²⁷ I already said that my anger functions to orient me. What I am adding now is that (with a little cooperation from you) my anger can also function to orient *you*. I said that my anger functions to take a stand and makes demands; what I am adding now is that this meaning-making action is not only personal, but interpersonal. Anger is a social action in the sense that its significance is social: it aims to act, not only on oneself, but also on others. When anger makes sense of the situation as an injustice, it aims to make this sense of the situation not only privately, but also publicly. It aims to publish this sense of the situation, to broadcast it to others. But it is also social action in the sense that it cannot be accomplished unilaterally: my anger offers you an

²⁶ No doubt episodic emotions other than anger also have this more fundamental function of publishing and negotiating the meaning of a shared situation. Anger is again helpful as a paradigm case insofar as its specific scope tends to express jurisdictional disputes in this meaning-making activity. See my account of this in Whitney, “Anger and Uptake” (2023).

²⁷ Frye, *Politics*, 89.

orientation, but it cannot complete this act without a little cooperation from you.

Notice that anger's social action is not only an act of communication, but an act of orientation. Frye says that anger, like a speech act, not only communicates something, but *does* something. The difference between saying "you wronged me" dispassionately vs. saying it angrily is that "you do not just assert or report something ... you also reorient yourself *and another person*."²⁸ My anger offers me an orientation in our shared situation. But it also offers *you* an orientation in our shared situation. My anger is a way for me to get my bearings, but it is also a way for *you* to get my bearings. What is at issue is not merely knowledge, but affective orientation: being moved.

What sort of orientation does my anger offer you (and me)? In the hammer example, we can distinguish two levels of orientation. One concerns the particulars of our respective claims on the hammer: my anger offers you an orientation toward me as someone wronged (more specifically, someone who has a prior claim on the hammer—a claim that was violated when you grabbed it). But more fundamentally, my anger offers you an orientation toward my affective agency: an orientation toward me as someone whose projects and interests are worthy and weighty, someone who is a player in negotiating the

²⁸ Frye, *Politics*, 88. Emphasis mine.

shared meaning of the situation. And this is not only an orientation toward me, but toward my affective investments: the web of projects, interests, and attitudes that radiates out from me. Indeed, it is an orientation toward our whole shared situation as remapped by the contours of my concerns. Thus my anger offers you an orientation toward me as someone whose affective investments are to be taken seriously; someone whose affective life matters in your own negotiation of our shared situation.

Anger gaslighting is a way you can sabotage the other-directed function of my anger. By failing to take me seriously as an affective being, anger gaslighters sabotage my anger's affective influence in our shared situation. But recall that gaslighting is distinct from mere dismissal: dismissal declines to take me seriously, but gaslighting (if it succeeds) gets me to stop taking myself seriously. So anger gaslighting threatens not only to sabotage my affective influence on others, but to undermine my own ability to take myself seriously as an affective being (at least with respect to my anger response, my sense of injustice). *If anger can be gaslit, then noncooperation with the other-directed functions of anger can eventually disable the self-directed ones as well.*

To understand why there is something uniquely affective at stake here, it helps to focus on the "act" part of Frye's speech act analogy for anger. The analogy is not to speech but to a speech *act*. This suggests that my anger is

doing more than carrying a message. My anger can sensitize you to what matters to me, the affective geography of our situation according to me. In this way my anger can accomplish much more than a dispassionate report. We could say that anger communicates, not only *diegetically* (telling), but *mimetically* (showing). Anger doesn't just *tell* you what matters to me, it *shows* you; it gives you a *feel* for the world according to me.²⁹ Instead of merely symbolizing or indicating its object, it summons or evokes it: makes its presence felt. It is moving.

Thus my anger shows you my sense of injustice rather than merely telling you about it. This capacity of anger to reorient its witnesses is key to what makes it so socially and politically potent. And it is the aspect of anger's function that is most uniquely affective, resisting liquidation into a more strictly epistemic framework that would see it as a special case of testimony. Notice how this function of anger exceeds that of testimony in ways that are especially socially and politically important in cases where there is significant hermeneutical injustice—for example, where my social group's experiences have been marginalized in the dominant discourse.³⁰ If you and I don't yet share a common set of terms, or if my experience has been marginalized such that the

²⁹ For an account of affect as mimetic rather than diegetic communication, see Anna Gibbs, "After Affect: Sympathy, Synchrony, and Mimetic Communication."

³⁰ See Fricker on hermeneutical injustice; she points to the lack of a concept of sexual harassment as a paradigm case (*Epistemic Injustice*).

discursive resources to render it legible to you are lacking, it may be impossible to *tell* you my concerns in a dispassionate report. The background sense-making conditions for that may be unavailable.

Indeed, in cases of serious hermeneutical injustice, sense-making conditions for injustices I experience may be unavailable to myself as well as to you, so that it is difficult to make my experience clearly legible even in the privacy of my own thoughts. Like Lugones's "hard-to-handle anger," I may struggle with a sentiment of injustice that frustrates my attempts to make it legible and respectable.³¹ In these circumstances of hermeneutical injustice where I find myself on the wrong side of respectability and even intelligibility, my anger response is a vital form of agency. It connects me with others who share my predicament, and serves as the raw material out of which we build new sense-making conditions to make our anger intelligible and respectable (consider the role of anger in feminist consciousness-raising practices that eventually produced a conceptual vocabulary for sexual harassment).

In these situations, using my anger to make my concerns felt by those who don't (yet) sense the injustice for themselves may be my best or even only nonviolent recourse.³² With a little cooperation from you, it may still be possible through anger to show you my concerns even where I cannot yet clearly tell you

³¹ See Lugones, *Pilgrimages*; also Cooper, *Eloquent Rage*.

³² See Whitney, "Anger and Uptake" (2023).

about them. In such cases a demand from you that I swallow my anger in the service of dispassionate communication may appear an innocent call for reason and calm, but it functions to preserve hermeneutical injustices, disabling one of our key tools for repairing them.

Sometimes when I talk about “affective influence” or “being moved” to describe this other-orienting function, this is received with some suspicion—as if I am attributing a magical or occult power to emotions. In fact I mean only to name a quotidian (though no doubt under-theorized) social act of affective orientation: an *other-directed function through which my emotion makes the world according to me (my affective investments in our shared situation) sensible to someone else*. Emotions are not exclusively private phenomena. They are a unique and important way of making our presence and concerns felt in a shared situation: a way of weighing in about what that situation means, sensitizing others to what matters to us. Unlike a magical or occult power, this social action is not something an emotion can accomplish unilaterally. As Frye observes, like a speech act, it requires cooperation from others in order to come off. Marilyn Frye calls this uniquely affective gesture of cooperation “uptake,” and I will have more to say about it in the next section. For now, it is enough to observe that anger gaslighting is a tool for exploiting anger’s need for cooperation. Anger gaslighting matters not only because it tends to disable

anger's self-directed functions, but also because it mutes or backfires anger's other-directed function. Anger gaslighting sabotages my anger's ability to orient others to my concerns, redirecting attention away from what I'm angry about and onto scrutiny of me and my emotional state instead.

In this section I have given an account of anger's functions, but occasionally suggested that some of my observations may have a broader scope among other episodic emotions. To be sure, I think any emotion can be politically salient. If fear is our sense of danger, grief our sense of loss, gratitude our sense of gifts, or joy our sense of goods, etc., then any of these may have moral and political functions. These functions are self-directed insofar as the emotion is part of our first-person perception, motivation, and action. They are other-directed functions insofar as the emotion operates as a social action, offering affective influence to others in the shared situation they make sense of.

But anger's purview as our sense of injustice makes it especially sociopolitically salient, an important target for oppressive structures. Soraya Chemaly writes: "[T]he dynamic of who gets to express anger matters in all unequal social relationships."³³ In other words, that contest over whose anger is taken seriously is one of the ways we do hierarchies. Whose anger is cooperated

³³ Chemaly (*Rage*, 261).

with, enabling its affective influence, and whose anger is refused this cooperation is one of the elements out of which relationships of domination and subordination are built. Anger gaslighting is a multipurpose tool of subordination and oppression: not only gender, but also race, class, and age are sites of anger gaslighting; and they ramify the ways that gender is a site of it. That's all the more reason to think that anger gaslighting is a singularly important case of affective injustice, as well as a uniquely instructive paradigm case for understanding how emotions can be weaponized in social power struggles.

ANGER UPTAKE: IDENTIFYING ANGER GASLIGHTING BEHAVIOR

I've described the effects of anger gaslighting and why they matter. What is the behavior that causes the anger gaslighting effect? How will we recognize it? Frye observes that anger requires cooperation to accomplish itself as a social action; I've suggested that anger gaslighters decline to cooperate, disabling rather than enabling anger's functions. How can we identify that behavior? Here are four descriptions, the first from Alicia Garza in 2018, the second from Myisha Cherry that same year, the third from Audre Lorde in 1983, and the fourth from Marilyn Frye in that same year:

[Black women's] anger gets dismissed and devalued and gaslighted We get told all the time that our anger is disruptive, that it is a

distraction, that it is ... divisive and moving us backwards Yet nobody ever seems to question: why are you so fucking mad?³⁴

An undergrad witnesses racist behavior from his teacher's assistant. Being quite angry with the TA, the student sets up a meeting with the TA to discuss the matter. The TA responds to the angry complaint by saying, "You are imagining that what I said was racist. My behavior wasn't that bad. If you were not a sensitive snow-flake who gets crazy ideas of racism from the media, we would not be having this conversation."³⁵

I speak out of a direct and particular anger at an academic conference, and a white woman says, "Tell me how you feel but don't say it too harshly or I cannot hear you."³⁶

It is a tiresome truth of women's experience that our anger is generally not well-received Attention is turned not to what we are angry about but to the project of calming us down and to the topic of our 'mental stability'. It is as common as dirty socks [Our anger is d]eprived of uptake.³⁷

The behavior these statements describe is similar, despite the 35 years between them. Anger gaslighters don't pay attention to what I am angry about. They refuse to allow my anger to turn their attention toward my concerns. This may be done relatively passively: a dismissal that remains aloof, refusing to be moved by my anger's other-directed function. Or it may be done more actively: anger gaslighters may explicitly pathologize my anger, demanding that I swallow it, or otherwise make my anger the issue. In the more passive case, anger gaslighters may be indifferent, refusing to cooperate with my anger

³⁴ Alicia Garza, quoted in Traister (*Good*, 54).

³⁵ Cherry, *Errors*, 61.

³⁶ Lorde, *Sister*, 125.

³⁷ Frye, *Politics*, 84.

(and with me insofar as I'm angry). Like Lorde's interlocutor at the conference, they may respond to my anger by demanding calm, holding communication hostage until I swallow my anger, and demanding that I liquidate my anger's concerns into a dispassionate report. In the more active case, anger gaslighters seize on my anger itself as the real problem, the proper focus of concern in our shared situation. Instead of allowing their attention to be oriented by my anger toward my concerns, their attention seizes on my emotional state. Like Garza's anger gaslighters, they may focus on my anger as counterproductive. Or like Frye's and Cherry's anger gaslighters, they may explicitly cast doubt on my capacity to regulate my emotions properly, treating my anger itself as an indication that I am a "crazy": oversensitive, overreacting, and not to be taken seriously.

Either way, the anger gaslighting behavior seems to go further than an erroneous evaluation of my anger as inapt.³⁸ Indeed, Lorde's and Garza's anger gaslighters police their target's tone while sidestepping questions of aptness. If pressed, they could concede that the anger is apt, but persist in refusing to be moved by it and in demanding that it be swallowed. Thus an erroneous evaluation of the anger's aptness is not sufficient for anger gaslighting behavior, and it may not be necessary. The definitive aspect of the anger

³⁸ Here my diagnosis of anger gaslighting behavior goes further than Cherry's ("Errors," 61).

gaslighting behavior is that anger gaslighters refuse to cooperate with anger's other-directed function: *anger gaslighters treat my anger as if what it offers to them is an obstacle rather than an orientation*. In doing so, they fail to take me seriously as an affective being.

To call this anger gaslighting rather than mere dismissal is to position it as part of an actual or potential pattern of such behavior, and suggest that if this treatment is persistent and pervasive, then it tends to undermine my capacity to take myself seriously as an affective being. The cost is not only anger's other-directed functions. Eventually the self-directed functions of my anger may also be impaired. Even in an isolated episode, the anger gaslighting behavior disables my affective influence on others. But when it is persistent and pervasive, targeting a particular individual or social group, anger gaslighting also threatens to injure one's sense of injustice in the first-person as well. This is what is at stake in conceptualizing this behavior as anger gaslighting rather than merely dismissal.

What should we call this cooperative affective behavior that anger gaslighters withhold? Marilyn Frye called it *uptake*. Uptake is a second-person affective behavior. It's not a matter of how one feels oneself, but of how one responds to someone else's feelings. More precisely: uptake is not a matter of producing an emotion myself, but of *cooperating with another person's emotion*

in a manner that provides their emotion the conditions needed to complete its social action, its other-directed function of affective influence. Frye writes that when my anger is deprived of uptake, it “is left as just a burst of expression of individual feeling. As a social act, an act of communication, it just doesn’t happen.”³⁹ The “social act” at stake is not only “an act of communication,” but also the uniquely affective social act of “reorient[ing] yourself and another person”: the other-directed function of affective influence, of being moved in a way that is in turn moving to others.⁴⁰

This act is “social” both in the sense that it has social significance and in the sense that it cannot be accomplished unilaterally. Frye borrows the notion of uptake from J. L. Austin, comparing anger not merely to speech, but to a speech *act*.⁴¹ Speech acts are things we *do* with words, but they cannot be accomplished alone: they require cooperation from others. Likewise, when anger is refused uptake, its other-orienting action is “non-played.”⁴² In refusing my anger uptake, you withhold from it the conditions needed to complete its social action, its other-directed function. Whether or not I succeed in *telling* you about how I feel, when you refuse my anger uptake it fails to *show* you how I feel: to

³⁹ Frye, *Politics*, 89.

⁴⁰ Frye, *Politics*, 89.

⁴¹ Frye, *Politics*, 88: “you do not just assert or report something ... you also reorient yourself and another person.”

⁴² Frye, *Politics*, 89.

sensitize your perception and attention toward what matters to me in our situation. You neutralize (or backfire) my anger's influence.

My view of uptake follows Frye's in many particulars, with this modest yet significant extension: I suggest that *giving uptake is a way of taking someone seriously as an affective being* just as giving credibility is a way of taking someone seriously as an epistemic being. More precisely: just as refusing someone credibility is a way of refusing to cooperate with their epistemic meaning-making agency in our shared situation, refusing someone uptake is a way of refusing to cooperate with their affective meaning-making agency in our shared situation. Since my anger offers you an orientation, not only toward its objects, but also toward me as someone whose affective investments are to be taken seriously in your own negotiation of our shared situation, it follows that what is at stake in anger uptake is not only taking my anger seriously, but taking me seriously as an affective being.

And of course my other addition to Frye's account is the connection to gaslighting: in conceptualizing apt-anger-uptake-refusal as anger gaslighting, I am suggesting that as the uptake refusal persists, it may begin to take a toll at the level of the emotional habits of the would-be angry person, as illustrated in my epigrams. Starved of uptake, not only anger's other-directed function but

also its self-directed ones may begin to wither. The spontaneity, conviction, or legibility of her anger response may begin to fade.

GIVING UPTAKE

Uptake can be given or refused. Giving uptake means that you have cooperated with my anger enough for it to fulfill its other-orienting functions: it has given you my bearings in the situation, sensitized you to my concerns. It has accomplished its affective influence.

Giving uptake doesn't require you to capitulate to my anger's demands. Frye's example is helpful: when you walk off with the hammer I am using, and I respond angrily, giving uptake does not require that you give the hammer back.⁴³ But it does require that you let my anger sensitize you to the web of projects, attitudes, interests, and objects that make up the affective geography of the situation for me. The hammer is woven into that web, and my anger when you walk off with it is the stickiness of my web of meanings still tugging on the hammer. It is a thread you can brush off (as if my anger is merely an outburst, an obstacle to dispassionate communication, informing you only about a disturbance in my personal emotional state, but offering you no bearings on our shared situation—nothing to take seriously). Or you can trace the thread

⁴³ Frye, *Politics*, 87.

back: let my anger draw you in to the world according to me, sensitizing you to my concerns and the way they populate our situation.

Giving uptake requires that you respond to my anger in a way that follows its thread; and that as you weave your own web of meanings in the situation, you contend with mine. So uptake in the hammer example could involve apologizing and returning the hammer. But it could also involve a more contentious response: insisting that you have a prior claim to the hammer, or that your project is more urgent than mine (perhaps I am building a bookshelf, while you are shuttering the windows in advance of a hurricane!). Either way, when you give uptake to my anger, you lend to my anger your own affective capacities—your interest, concern, and curiosity, your feel for the situation—allowing my anger to express itself through them, and to populate your own feel for the situation with my anger’s concerns, and with how they vie with your own.

What does it look like to give anger uptake?⁴⁴ Discussing with a Black colleague what uptake for the protest anger of the Black Lives Matter movement has meant in her life, she told me that what her neighbors paid attention to had changed. Her sons had a habit of stopping at the corner store on their way home from school. The proprietor called her one day when he did

⁴⁴ I offer a more in-depth account of uptake in my article “Anger and Uptake.”

not see them, checking to make sure they got home safe. Another neighbor offered rides. What mattered to my colleague was not that her neighbors recognized and validated or joined her in her feelings about racial injustice: her anger, her fear as a parent of Black children. What was important, she told me, was that *her neighbors had become sensitized to the world according to those feelings*. Instead of rejecting Black Lives Matter anger as inappropriate or out of bounds, it began to have weight in how they got their bearings, part of what must be taken into account in distinguishing what is in and out of bounds in the first place. My own experience as a white woman of giving uptake to the anger of Black people at racial injustice often involves, not stepping into their shoes, but experiencing the weight of my own white skin in the world differently. Resentment flashes once again across the face of a student in one of my classes, and while I had found it incomprehensible before, knowing I had not personally done anything to deserve it from him, something shifts as I tune in to his anger, getting a feel for myself and our situation by its lights. No, it wasn't something in particular I did, but that's exactly it: here I am, one more white authority figure in an institution full of them. This experience of anger-plus-uptake has the potential to accomplish something much more profound than mere understanding of an injustice, or recognition that repairs a status injury. It

reorients us, giving the angry person a uniquely affective kind of power: affective influence in our shared situation.

Notice that giving uptake is not itself necessarily a mimetic behavior even though it is still an affective behavior: you don't have to join me in my anger to give uptake to it. In giving uptake, you become a receiver or amplifier tuned in to my anger, not necessarily a transmitter of your own. Uptake is an affective behavior insofar as it is a way of being moved. But it is a way you are moved by *my* anger, rather than simply being moved to your own.⁴⁵ To give uptake, you need not get mad on my behalf, nor put yourself in my shoes. When you give uptake to my anger, this is not a vicarious experience: you are not put in my place in our situation. Instead you stay in your own place in our shared situation, but become sensitized to it differently, as remapped by the contours of my concerns.⁴⁶

REFUSING UPTAKE

⁴⁵ Giving uptake can thus be distinguished from emotional contagion, as well as from sympathy and empathy—at least in their vernacular sense; philosophical accounts of sympathy and empathy are legion, and some may include what I call uptake here. In the relevant vernacular notion of sympathy, you have (or induce) a sympathetic anger in yourself: you get mad on my behalf. In the relevant vernacular notion of empathy, you have (or induce) a vicarious experience of my anger: you put yourself in my shoes. Uptake is distinct from these since when you give uptake, your perception and attention are oriented by my anger. There is a single episode of anger (mine), and you cooperate with it enough for it to complete its own function as a social act. The anger does not thereby become yours, or put you in my place.

⁴⁶ Though if you repeatedly lend your affective capacities to my anger in this way, your affective capacities may become educated/trained: for better or worse, in giving uptake, you may become sensitized to what moves me at the level of your own emotional habits.

Refusing uptake declines to cooperate with my anger's other-oriented function. When you refuse my anger uptake, you brush it off as if it is an outburst that does not offer you meaningful bearings on our shared situation. If you acknowledge my anger, you treat it as a disturbance inside me, a phenomenon that can give you information about my mental state or level of agitation, but doesn't orient you toward anything in the external world outside my psyche.

Refusing anger uptake can take many forms. In addition to the passive dismissal and more hostile pathologizing forms I have already identified, we might add some that are maddeningly benevolent. When you take my hammer and I respond angrily, you might smile and tell me I'm cute when I'm mad. This superficial compliment at best changes the subject; at worst, it is objectification offered up as a thin disguise or consolation for the insult of refusing to take me seriously as an affective being. And pathologizing responses that cast doubt on my capacities to regulate my emotions may be close on its heels: consider the familiar social script in which I get mad at this failure of yours to take my initial anger seriously, upon which you snap at me that I can't take a compliment, or have no sense of humor. So this sort of uptake refusal too can be an anger gaslighting behavior.

Uptake refusal might also take the form of validation that remains unmoved, maddeningly affectively distant. No doubt many of us are familiar

with how infuriatingly dismissive the response “I can see that you’re very upset” or “I’m so sorry you feel that way” can be. Those responses may be sincere, and they do not necessarily pathologize my anger, make an erroneous evaluation that it is inapt, or cast doubt on whether I am regulating my emotions properly. But they still withhold any affective engagement, refusing to be moved. They decline to cooperate with my anger, disabling its other-directed function as anger. So they neutralize my anger’s social action as effectively as dismissing me as a “crazy bitch” (indeed, in the right conditions, they neutralize it much more effectively). They offer validation as a means to pacify or neutralize my anger’s influence. In so doing, they tend to treat my anger as an obstacle in our shared situation rather than an orientation in it: they refuse my anger uptake. This is no doubt why those sorts of responses often feel condescending even when they are not pathologizing. Admiration or emotional validation, no matter how sincere, are no substitute for uptake. And they too can play a part in anger gaslighting.

The distinction between apt anger uptake refusals that actively pathologize vs. those that merely decline the effort of uptake is relevant to an ethical discussion of whether the uptake refusal is blameworthy or blameless. Surely an active, pathologizing uptake refusal for apt anger is culpable in a way that a passive dismissal due to exhausted emotional resources is not. However, even a

passive uptake refusal may still be functionally conscripted into a broader social practice of anger gaslighting that targets a social group. Refusing uptake to apt anger can thus still be gaslighting even when it does not actively pathologize.

Thus we can define anger gaslighting behavior as *persistent, pervasive refusal of uptake for the apt anger of an individual or social group*.⁴⁷ And we can classify anger gaslighting as a particular species of affective injustice: an uptake-related affective injustice, or an *uptake injustice*.

COMPLICATING UPTAKE

Can refusing uptake be good? I think there are times when it is best to decline to cooperate with anger. When anger is inapt, refusing uptake is usually appropriate (notice the anger must be apt for uptake refusal to count as gaslighting on my definition). Indeed, I think there are times when *giving* uptake may be *bad*: less just or caring than the alternatives. Consider the angers of aggrieved entitlement, in which the angry person's emotional competencies are biased. Their moral compass is miscalibrated: entitlement makes them experience demands for equality as marginalization, an insult or injury worthy of their wrath. All other things being equal, it is appropriate to refuse uptake and

⁴⁷ We might add: either in general, or with respect to some domain. Frye observes that domains matter when we track practices of uptake giving and refusing. For instance, the anger of women about sexual harassment may be targeted for anger gaslighting even as the anger of women on behalf of children is given uptake (*Politics*).

do my part to neutralize the influence of this inapt anger. Indeed, it may be beneficial: in an inversion of the injurious effect of anger gaslighting, refusing uptake to *inapt* anger may help to recalibrate the inaptly angry person's moral compass and *repair* their anger's self-directed functions. Refusing uptake to these inapt angers of aggrieved entitlement is more appropriate and may be more beneficial than giving it.

Indeed, giving uptake to inapt, biased anger risks not only triangulating the miscalibration (thus impairing anger's self-directed functions) but also signal-boosting its miscalibrated other-orienting affective influence as well. This would serve to deepen, not only this case of miscalibration, but also the unjust hierarchies that tended to miscalibrate the person's anger response to begin with. But it is all too easy to fail to question the emotional competency of powerful people even when we should. Just as ignorance can be an epistemic privilege, emotional incompetence can be an affective one.

Indeed, we might think that anger gaslighting has an inverse; let's call it "anger coddling." Anger's functions may not only be sabotaged by uptake *deficits* that mute and backfire *apt* anger, but also hijacked by uptake *surpluses* that amplify *inapt* anger. If anger gaslighting is persistent and pervasive uptake *refusing* for *apt* anger, anger coddling is persistent and pervasive uptake *giving* for *inapt* anger. As we persist in giving uptake to the angers of aggrieved

entitlement, letting them focus our attention and direct our public conversation, we feed the entitlements that conditioned them, amplifying their influence.

Can giving uptake to apt anger ever play a role in an anger gaslighting? Say you selectively give uptake only to my anger where it targets certain individuals and social groups, and refuse uptake to my anger in cases outside your selection.⁴⁸ For example, you give uptake to my anger at misogynistic street harassment when the harassers are working-class men of color, but refuse uptake when the harassers are affluent white men. It seems to me that the affective injustice here concerns uptake, but exceeds gaslighting. The injustice lies not only or primarily in the undermining of my anger's social action and the potential eventual impairment of my anger response, but in the surfeit of sympathy you are affording to white men who practice misogynistic harassment. So the definition of anger gaslighting behavior remains intact: it is persistent, pervasive refusal of uptake for apt anger.

Are there limitations to a binary opposition between giving and refusing uptake? To be sure. Some anger episodes seem to call for something in between. Consider: regardless of their etiology, tantrums and outbursts are real things that sometimes require response from us; and they are common not only among tyrants, but also among children. Enraged children's affective

⁴⁸ Thanks to Alfred Archer for asking me to consider cases of selective uptake giving.

competencies need mentorship to grow, and while refusing uptake to a child's inapt rage may be necessary to reduce harm, it is not in itself reparative. Caregivers may face an uptake dilemma in which refusing uptake is no better than giving it: a more complex affective response is required. Consider also the case of people who live in circumstances of profound and pervasive injustice, thus finding themselves burdened with such an abundance of good reasons to be angry that their anger response is overtaxed and misfires, spilling justly motivated fury onto ill-fitting or inappropriate objects.⁴⁹ These episodes surely warrant a more complex affective response than simply giving vs. refusing uptake.⁵⁰ Thus the ends of care as well as those of affective justice will require more finely grained distinctions, identifying a more complex spectrum of uptake-related affective gestures. The work of justice as well as care may sometimes be anger uptake work, a craft of discernment and affective engagement that takes place in the complex terrain between the poles of giving and refusing uptake.⁵¹

⁴⁹ See Lorde's essay, "Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger," for a discussion of this (*Sister Outsider*).

⁵⁰ See Lorde on the toxic excess of anger that is sometimes a byproduct of living as a Black woman in a racist and sexist world. The anger is apt in that she has good reasons to be angry, but the sheer volume of apt anger accumulates into a toxic excess that tends to spill over, so that it is projected or displaced. Its cause and object come apart. She describes this displaced anger as a kind of moral tragedy: she "vomited anger at the least scent of anything nourishing" (*Sister*, 161), "throw[ing] off waste products of fury" (156) onto what she most loved and desired connection with, including other Black women. What non-gaslighting responses to Lorde's misplaced but well-motivated fury are available to her, to those targeted by it, or to some third person in such an encounter?

⁵¹ Ellie Anderson's work on a hermeneutical variety of emotional labor may be relevant here

When giving my anger uptake would be the best response, does it follow that you owe it to me? I am not convinced that it does. Giving uptake can be laborious, and energy is a scarce resource: there are limits to how much uptake you can give. That raises many questions: when you are forced to be selective, how should you prioritize? To what risks of exploitation is uptake work subject? If your uptake for my anger is produced in exploitative conditions such as unjust gendered divisions of emotional labor, how should those conditions factor into your deliberation about whether you should give or refuse uptake? This line of questioning is important, but beyond my scope here, and must be deferred to a discussion of affective injustices concerning the exploitation of emotional labor.

Does uptake matter for emotions in addition to anger? I think it undoubtedly does. Kate Manne's notion of himpathy concerns *distress* uptake (himpathy involves giving uptake to the distress of powerful men who get caught harming women while refusing uptake to the distress of the women they harm). Consider the ways *desire* may be gaslit ("You say you have a crush on another girl, but it's just a phase—you'll grow out of it soon."), *fear* may be gaslit ("You're just being paranoid!"), and *grief* may be gaslit ("Cheer up—it was only a miscarriage!"). Surpluses of uptake are also good candidates for uptake-related affective injustices: consider the ways that surpluses of uptake not only

("Hermeneutic Labor").

for the angers but also for the desires, fears, and griefs of privileged social groups play a constitutive role in producing their dominating or oppressive relationships with other social groups.

Clearly uptake and its variations deserve more enumeration and description, as do a whole field of applied and normative ethical questions about what sorts of uptake we should give to whom and when, and what sorts of reasons should be weight-bearing in our deliberations about that. But the key point for my argument here is that the concept of uptake allows me to define and classify anger gaslighting behavior (as *persistent, pervasive refusal of uptake for the apt anger of an individual or social group*). And we can classify anger gaslighting as a particular species of affective injustice (an uptake-related affective injustice, or an *uptake injustice*).

UPTAKE INJUSTICE AND TESTIMONIAL INJUSTICE

Notice that anger-related uptake injustice is not limited to gaslighting. Indeed, even before it produces the injurious gaslight effect, apt-anger-uptake-refusal may constitute various *uptake injustices*. Both credibility refusal and uptake refusal will tend to eventually produce the gaslight effect. But credibility refusal produces testimonial injustice before that. Similarly, uptake refusal is likely to produce at least three other effects short of the gaslight effect that are

candidates for affective injustice: *anger smothering*, *anger muting*, and *anger backfiring*. These provide affective analogues to features of testimonial injustice; I will discuss the first two below and the third in the next section.

One reason anger gaslighting behavior does not always succeed in producing the anger gaslighting effect is that individuals and groups whose apt anger is routinely denied uptake often adapt to this persistent, pervasive uptake refusal by *swallowing* our anger in anticipation of uptake refusal. No doubt in some cases this is merely the first symptom of the gaslight effect. But I hesitate to reduce it to that: as an adaptive response to a non-choiceworthy situation, anger swallowing is an expression of one's agency, and not reducible to damage or to the internalization of our own oppression. Indeed, anger swallowing is often a smart and effective harm reduction technique. We're not necessarily brainwashed or gaslit when we choose to swallow our anger; we're just making a rational choice between bad options. The self-directed functions of our anger response may remain intact: for instance, as Audre Lorde points out, swallowed anger can still be metabolized as fuel, energizing and motivating our struggle against the anger's cause.⁵²

Even so, if I am persistently and pervasively obliged to swallow my apt anger, this is likely to become injurious. As I integrate my adaptive choice to

⁵² Lorde, *Sister*, 127, 152, 163.

swallow my anger more and more deeply into my character and emotional habits, it may eventually become indistinguishable from the gaslight effect. And even if I manage to avoid the gaslight effect and keep the self-directed functions of my anger intact, frequently swallowing apt anger is likely to eventually become toxic in one way or another. Soraya Chemaly collects research on the literal toxicity of persistently swallowing apt anger.⁵³ Lorde has a searching and insightful account of the moral injuries that may come of it.⁵⁴

But even where anger swallowing is not injurious, I think we should still consider the *demand* to swallow apt anger as a candidate for affective injustice. That is to say: anger swallowing is not an affective injustice, but *anger smothering* may well be.⁵⁵ The affective injustice is in the background conditions that make swallowing our apt anger the smart choice.⁵⁶

Another effect of anger gaslighting behavior, *anger muting*, provides an analogue to the paradigm case of testimonial injustice. Recall that apt-anger-

⁵³ See Chemaly (*Rage*), especially the chapter on “Angry Bodies.”

⁵⁴ Lorde’s account (*Sister Outsider*) suggests that frequently swallowing apt anger can result in a toxic excess of anger in one’s character that erupts onto ill-fitting objects and harms relationships and community (she speaks of swallowing so much apt anger at injustice that she begins to “vomit out fury onto things I love”). That’s injurious in a way that is meaningfully distinct from the more straightforward pathogenesis I’ve suggested for anger gaslighting. But it too involves injury to one’s affective capacities: an impairment of anger’s functions in one’s moral psychology.

⁵⁵ See Alison Bailey’s concept of “anger smothering,” which she links to Dotson’s notion of testimonial smothering (Bailey, “Silence”).

⁵⁶ Srinivasan’s (“Aptness”) and Gallegos’s (“Affective Goods”) accounts of affective injustice can support the claim that swallowing (not just smothering) apt anger is itself an affective injustice: the would-be angry person has been denied the uniquely affective good of aptly affectively registering their situation (as angering).

uptake-refusal sabotages anger's other-directed functions. So when you refuse uptake to my anger, even if my anger's self-directed functions remain uninjured—I have not (yet) been successfully anger gaslit—your uptake refusal *mutes* my anger's influence in our shared situation. This happens right away: no need to persist in uptake refusal and wait for the gaslight effect to eventually take hold. In refusing my anger uptake, you have undermined its power to sensitize you to my concerns, giving you a feel for the world according to me. Your uptake refusal has disabled my anger's capacity to orient your attention (and perhaps dampened or garbled my anger's broadcast to others as well). In *anger muting*, we have a close affective analogue to testimonial injustice: *just as credibility refusal sabotages my testimony's other-directed functions, uptake refusal sabotages my anger's other-directed functions.*

PREJUDICE IN THE UPTAKE ECONOMY

A credibility refusal counts as testimonial injustice when it is due to prejudice in a prejudicial credibility economy.⁵⁷ A prejudicial *credibility* economy is one that produces surpluses and deficits of credibility for social groups in accordance with (and partly constitutive of) social hierarchies. Can we observe prejudicial *uptake* economies that produce surpluses and deficits of uptake for social

⁵⁷ See Fricker on “prejudice in the credibility economy” (*Epistemic Injustice*).

groups in accordance with (and partly constitutive of) social hierarchies? If so, we can say that an uptake refusal counts as uptake injustice when it is due to prejudice in a prejudicial uptake economy, and add that qualification to the account of anger gaslighting. Behavior counts as anger gaslighting when it is persistent, pervasive uptake refusal for apt anger; but anger gaslighting behavior counts as affective injustice *when it (re)produces a prejudicial uptake economy*.

In order to observe prejudicial anger uptake economies, we should consider one more effect of anger gaslighting behavior that I am inclined to count as a candidate for affective injustice even in the absence of the gaslight effect: *anger backfiring*. Anger muting makes my anger ineffective at its other-directed functions. But uptake refusal for apt anger sometimes goes further, making the anger *counterproductive* instead of merely ineffective. Instead of merely neutralizing apt anger's social action, uptake refusal may *backfire* the anger's other-directed action. Consider the 2015 study showing that when men conduct their arguments angrily, this *increases* their persuasiveness to others; while when women made their arguments angrily, the opposite effect occurred: it *decreased* their persuasiveness.⁵⁸ That's not just muting the anger's other-

⁵⁸ Salerno and Peter-Hagene, "Twelve Angry Women."

directed function, but backfiring it. The uncooperative response to women's anger is rendering it, not only ineffective, but also counterproductive.

Notably, while women's anger was muted and backfired, men's was *amplified*. All other things being equal, men who get angry can expect the rewarding response of increased cooperation from others, while women who get angry can expect the punishing response of less cooperation from others—regardless of aptness. Rebecca Traister observes:

“[A]nger works for men in ways that it does not for women [M]en like both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders can wage yelling campaigns and be credited with ... compellingly channeling the rage felt by their supporters while their female opponents can be jeered and mocked as shrill for speaking too loudly or forcefully into a microphone.” (2018)

Another study showed that while men tend to experience anger as empowering, women tend to experience it as disabling. Dare I suggest that our feelings about this are apt? Background conditions created by uptake practices have made anger's social action a power afforded to men, while for women anger is not merely ineffective but risky: disincentivized by the threat of punishing responses. There is a social practice here that is *producing anger as a surplus of social power for one social group relative to a deficit for another*. In this example of anger backfiring vis-à-vis anger amplifying, we see the surpluses and deficits of uptake produced by a prejudicial uptake economy.

There is an oversimplification in these examples and data: Traister and both of these studies focus on gender in isolation from other dimensions of social identity, thus obscuring how structural intersectionality ramifies the gendering of anger. Race seems to me to be an especially conspicuous omission, since race so obviously inflects whether and to what extent anger “works for men” and “does not” for women. Consider: Traister’s example compares US presidential candidates who are white men to their female opponents, but how is the anger of a Black opponent received? Recall that Barak Obama famously could not expect anger to work for him: this was the premise of the popular Key and Peele sketch in which Keegan Michael Key plays “Luther,” Obama’s anger interpreter. Obama, it seems, could not count on waging a “yelling campaign” like his white men counterparts. Background conditions were such that the smart choice for Obama was to swallow his anger in anticipation that it would be refused uptake. And it seems to me that white women’s anger can expect some uptake after all when we deploy it in favor of white supremacy and patriarchy (think of white moms angrily denouncing school desegregation, or conservative middle-class white women denouncing feminism’s attack on family values). So we need to attend carefully to the intersectionality of these uptake-related affective injustices.

But these reflections on how anger smothering, muting, backfiring, and amplifying interact according to intersecting social group memberships are only more reasons to take seriously, not only that there is an other-directed function of anger that requires social cooperation to enable it, but also that this cooperative gesture (uptake) is produced by a *prejudicial uptake economy*. Our social practices of giving and refusing anger uptake produce deficits and surpluses of uptake that stick to social group membership.

Frye claims that tracking anger uptake is an “instrument of cartography”:
anger uptake maps power.⁵⁹ If we track whose anger gets uptake (from whom, with respect to what domain, etc.), that will yield a map of social hierarchies. This is a fascinating claim, positioning anger uptake as a potent tool for mapping complex intersections of power. The notion of uptake economies extends Frye’s insight by suggesting that the study of uptake maps power because the practice of uptake shapes the territory: it raises mountains and lowers valleys; it is one of the ways that social hierarchies are made. The concept of uptake is an instrument for the cartography of power because the practice of giving and refusing uptake is an instrument of power itself. I think this is so not only with uptake related to anger, but also with uptake for any emotion that has other-directed functions.⁶⁰ Prejudicial uptake economies

⁵⁹ Frye (*Politics*, 93–94).

⁶⁰ Frye’s essay sometimes suggests that uptake is power-making. But an argument for this

produce a uniquely affective variety of power as a privilege afforded to some social groups and denied to others.

If this is so, then whether something counts as an affective injustice is a question that should be posed at the level of the uptake economy. Affective injustices arise where there are large-scale patterns of inflating the affective influence of one class of people vis-à-vis its deflation for another class in a manner that is complicit with or even constitutive of hierarchical social group relationships. Questions of uptake-related affective injustice need not be deferred until after we have divined whether prejudice was present in the psychology of the uptake refuser, or even until the anger has been vindicated as apt. In this, I deviate from Fricker, for whom the injustice of testimonial injustice is due to prejudice in the motives or character of the credibility refuser.⁶¹

Consider again the study comparing anger's persuasiveness for men vs. its persuasiveness for women. It demonstrates a deficit of cooperation with women's anger, not in relation to some level of cooperation determined to be apt, but in relation to the cooperative response afforded to the anger of a

drawn from her account would have to rely on the unique ways power is directly at stake in anger and its uptake, and thus its conclusion would be restricted to anger as a singular case. I am making a broader argument about uptake being power-making broadly, beyond the singular case of anger.

⁶¹ See Fricker: "The speaker sustains ... a testimonial injustice if and only if she receives a credibility deficit owing to identity prejudice in the hearer" (*Epistemic Injustice*, 28).

different social group (men). Thus at the scale of social group relations, it is possible to identify deficits and surpluses of anger uptake that are not deficits and surpluses relative to the aptness of a given anger episode, but relative to the cooperation that the anger of other social groups receives.

Strikingly, the study's use of the dispassionate approach as a same-gender control group (the decrease in cooperation for angry women was measured relative to dispassionate women, the increase for men relative to dispassionate men) demonstrates that the gendered difference in anger reception is *qualitative* rather than quantitative. Relative to the same-gender control group who employed a dispassionate approach, men's anger *positively* affects the cooperation they receive, while women's anger *negatively* affects cooperation. The angry men did not merely receive *more of the same thing* than the angry women. The angry men and women received *different things*: men's anger was *given* uptake, and women were *refused* it. Men's anger was incentivized, while women's was penalized. Another study shows that while women's anger tends to be attributed to internal causes ("she's being emotional"), men's tends to be attributed to external causes ("something must be making him mad").⁶² It's as if we are cognitivists about men's emotions, and suddenly become behaviorists about women's: men's emotions are received as rational responses to

⁶² See Brescoll and Ulmann, "Can an Angry Woman Get Ahead?"

something in our shared world, and women's are received as mechanisms firing dumbly.

Thus the injustice of this gendered and racialized practice of anger backfiring (and anger amplifying) is not merely a distributive one, as if a good (uptake) is being distributed to one group, while another group is being (comparatively) deprived of it. Instead, the injustice occurs further upstream: in production rather than distribution. The gendered (and racialized) practice of granting vs. withholding uptake *makes* anger a powerful instrument for (white) men, and at the same time *makes* it ineffective or counterproductive for women (and Black men). The practice of giving uptake to some social groups and refusing it to others does not merely *distribute* a good, but *produces* a scarcity: it produces surpluses and deficits relative to each other. And these are prejudicial in the sense that the surpluses and deficits stick to social group membership, resisting redistribution in the manner characteristic of social injustices.⁶³ In this way, the uptake economy is not merely a distributive mechanism. It is directly productive of a power differential: a social hierarchy.

⁶³ See Young on why accounts of social injustice should be wary of “the distributive paradigm” (*Justice*). Briefly: social injustice concerns not only the distribution of goods, but the production of power. Since power is produced in the constitution of social group distinctions (and accordingly with the formation of individuals), investments of power often cannot be liquidated, sticking to social groups rather than being fungible in the way that is amenable to (re)distribution.

If this is so, then there is a uniquely affective type of sociopolitical power at stake in anger-plus-uptake. An uptake deficit is not merely status injury, but a substantial *disempowerment*: a depletion of agency in the affective domain.⁶⁴ Consider: if women's apt anger is likely to be refused uptake, the cost for us goes beyond the potential for the injurious anger gaslighting effect, and beyond the status injury of being marginalized. It is that we will be disempowered in our social milieu: denied participation in a socially valued type of agency; indeed, we will be penalized if we try to participate in that form of agency.

WHAT'S UNJUST ABOUT AFFECTIVE INJUSTICE?

One of the reasons why the anger gaslighting case is especially compelling as a paradigm case of affective injustice is that in the case of anger gaslighting, there is a clear injurious effect. But injury is not a sufficient condition for injustice. Anger gaslighting behavior is injurious, but what makes it *unjust*?

This is an important question for our emerging area of study to tackle. In my notion of prejudicial uptake economies, I have already deviated from Fricker's account of the injustice of epistemic injustice, which depends on prejudice being present in the motives or character of individual actors.⁶⁵ In

⁶⁴ I am thinking here of Young's taxonomy of domination and oppression, in which *disempowerment* is one of the five varieties of oppression (*Justice*). Gaslighting would count as *violence*, and anger muting as *marginalization*.

⁶⁵ See Fricker: "The speaker sustains ... a testimonial injustice if and only if she receives a

addition to my own, I am aware of two more accounts of the injustice of affective injustice that are on offer at the time of writing. Amia Srinivasan argues that there is a uniquely affective good to be acquired in aptly affectively registering the injustice of one's situation as angering.⁶⁶ Francisco Gallegos has worked to expand the notion of fundamental affective goods, so that we can identify affective injustices where someone is denied an affective good they are owed.⁶⁷

I think each of these accounts is valuable. Gallegos's and Srinivasan's bear on urgent, important, and (to my mind) intrinsically interesting questions about the ethics of emotional life: which affective behaviors are praiseworthy vs. blameworthy, which are appropriate vs. inappropriate, and which are beneficial vs. detrimental; and on questions about affective just deserts at the individual and interpersonal level: whether an assignable individual got (and gave) what they deserved.

As valuable as those accounts are, they do not address the need for a *political* concept of affective injustice: one that bears, not only on questions of which affective behaviors are appropriate or which goods and bads are owed to individuals, but also sociopolitical questions about power and privilege and how

credibility deficit owing to identity prejudice in the hearer" (*Epistemic Injustice*, 28).

⁶⁶ Srinivasan, "Aptness."

⁶⁷ Gallegos, "Affective Goods."

they accumulate at the level of relations among social groups. Which affective behaviors participate in practices that produce social group relationships of domination and oppression? Much has been said about the relationship between power and knowledge, the epistemic dimension of regimes of domination and oppression; but in what ways might domination and oppression have a constitutive affective dimension? The concept of affective injustice that I myself sense the most urgent need for is one that helps us to bring into focus *the structural stakes of interpersonal interactions* (rather than one that is located largely on the more granular scale of whether individuals got what they deserved).

I do not think analogies with Fricker's theory can help us here: Fricker's account of the injustice of epistemic injustice is concerned with an ethical rather than a political register. For her, a credibility refusal counts as a testimonial injustice "if and only if [it is] ... owing to identity prejudice in the hearer."⁶⁸ The person withholding credibility must be motivated by stereotypes about social group identities such as gender or race. While useful for ethical considerations, this strategy produces an account that can only address the sociopolitical stakes of credibility refusal that are due to prejudice in the motives or character of the hearer. Yet the sociopolitical stakes of credibility

⁶⁸ See Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (28). See also her discussion narrowing testimonial injustice to cases where the hearer can be deemed "culpable" (41–42).

refusal persist even where prejudice is absent, undetectable, or present in consequences or background conditions rather than in the hearer.⁶⁹ Fricker proceeds in this way because she hesitates to make culpability for testimonial injustice “too easy.”⁷⁰ But if we aim to produce a political notion of injustice, a better solution is to distinguish the ethical question of culpability from the political question of injustice. This way we can concede the ethical significance of prejudicial motives while still insisting on the political significance of prejudicial consequences and background conditions.

My own view of injustice follows in the tradition of Iris Young—in this, it has not changed since my 2018 article. For Young, social injustice is located in relations of power among social groups.⁷¹ What is at stake in social injustice is not primarily the maldistribution of goods and bads, but *the production of sociopolitical powers and privileges in surpluses and deficits stuck to social group membership* (thus prejudicial, resisting redistribution). She classes these unjust social group relationships as either dominating or oppressive, and identifies five distinct forms of oppression. What matters to me here is not any specific content of Young’s notion of domination or oppression, but the scale

⁶⁹ Another weakness of this approach for the purposes of addressing social injustices is that since the credibility refuser has privileged information about their own motives and character, the approach leaves them with considerable authority over whether their action counts as an injustice. This worry is one of Manne’s reasons for adopting a more structural account of misogyny (see *Down Girl*).

⁷⁰ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (42).

⁷¹ See Iris Marion Young, *Justice*.

and terrain where she sites them in order to articulate a distinctive notion of social injustice. Young insists that questions of social injustice are only properly posed on the scale of social group relations.

This move to the structural scale of analysis is one Kate Manne makes in her ameliorative definition of misogyny following contemporary feminist usage of the term.⁷² Instead of reserving the term “misogyny” for acts committed only under the influence of antipathy toward women in the motives or character of their agents, Manne crafts a concept of misogyny that may be attributed to acts and events insofar as they participate in specific social practices of subordinating women. In particular, Manne identifies misogynistic acts and events as those that reproduce a gendered moral economy in which certain feminine-coded goods are women’s to give, and men’s to take. Acts of praising and blaming or otherwise enforcing the material incentives or punishments consonant with this gendered moral economy are correctly identified as misogynistic just insofar as they function to enforce it. The question of misogyny need not hang on whether prejudice or antipathy is present in the motives or character of the enforcer. Nor need it hang on ethical questions about whether the agent of the misogynistic action was culpable, what any individual woman who was affected deserved, or whether the misogynistic

⁷² Manne, *Down Girl*.

action supplied any goods or bads measured on an objective or fundamental scale. All of those ethical questions are important, and (to me) intrinsically interesting. But we need not settle them before we can establish whether the action counted as misogynistic.

In the same way, I think as we craft the concept of affective injustice, we should be wary of framing it such that ethical questions of what individuals deserve must be decided before we can address political questions about affective forms of domination and oppression, questions which are properly posed at a structural scale. This is why, in adapting my notion of the prejudicial uptake economy from Fricker on prejudicial credibility economies, I proposed that *the prejudicial deficits and surpluses persist at the structural scale of the credibility economy itself* rather than in the motives or character of individual agents.

Though I am using the language of surpluses and deficits, I invoke an economic model not to emphasize distribution, but production. Recall that I specified that the uptake behaviors that count as affective injustices are the ones that *(re)produce* a prejudicial uptake economy. An important influence on my thinking here is Young's warning against relying on a "distributive paradigm" to analyze social injustice.⁷³ To be sure, distributive injustice occurs and is

⁷³ Young, *Justice*.

important: where there exists a maldistribution of goods and bads, we should remedy this. But as I understand her worry with the distributive paradigm, it is the concern that social injustices take root further upstream from distribution: in production. Social injustice concerns, not just the material production of goods and bads, but the social production of them *as* goods and *as* bads, the cultural coding of their benefits and burdens as belonging to one group or other, and the corresponding social-group-coded divisions of work and agency in the practices that make up these production processes. Domination and oppression are indeed characterized by an accumulation of powers and privileges as surpluses and deficits. But insofar as the production of these surpluses and deficits adheres the relevant powers and privileges constitutively to social group membership, that adherence is sticky: prejudicial in the sense that it resists redistribution.⁷⁴ The power at stake in these surpluses and deficits has been invested in the social groups at a constitutive level, and cannot easily be liquidated and invested elsewhere. The problem (and remedy) should be sited in its production, not (only) its distribution.

⁷⁴ For example, the deficit of prestige associated with feminized labor seems to stick, not to the tasks themselves, but to gender as a social group in a manner that survives the redistribution of “women’s” work to men. Consider the superlative praise fathers may receive for small contributions to housework and childcare, or the prestige and pay cooking began to receive when done by men chefs in restaurants instead of women cooks at home. Indeed, this work tends to be responded to as work when men do it, and gender expression when women do it (so that our responses do not simply give men who do this work more of the same thing that we give women, but actually give them something different).

UPTAKE RULES, UPTAKE WORK: REGULATION AND PRODUCTION IN THE UPTAKE ECONOMY

What does it mean for an uptake economy to be prejudicial if not simply that actors in it are motivated by prejudice?

Drawing on Arlie Hochschild's germinal work, sociologists use the term "feeling rules" for the category of social norms and expectations that prescribe first-person affective behavior (which emotions are appropriate for one to feel, toward whom, when, with respect to what—e.g., sadness at the funeral, happiness at the wedding, etc.).⁷⁵ Social norms that oppose femininity and anger, for instance, function as a feeling rule against women's anger. Studying uptake suggests the need to introduce a new category of feeling rules to refer to social norms and expectations that prescribe second-person affective behavior (how one is moved by the affective behavior of someone else). Let us call them *uptake rules*. Manne's notion of "himpathy," for instance, expresses an uptake rule that the distress, anger, and fear of powerful men should be given uptake, and that the distress, anger, and fear of the women they harm should be refused uptake.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ See Hochschild, "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure," and *The Managed Heart* (especially the chapters on "Feeling Rules" and on "Gender, Status, and Feeling").

⁷⁶ My account of uptake as a distinct affective behavior opens the possibility of distinguishing giving uptake from giving sympathy, as I noted in an earlier footnote. The phenomenon Manne calls "himpathy" may involve both.

Hochschild studied feeling rules as features of social structures she sometimes calls *affective economies*: social structures for the production and regulation of emotional experience, the division of emotional toil, and the distribution of emotional resources.⁷⁷ As social imperatives, feeling rules are a *productive* apparatus of the affective economy. A feeling rule constitutes a demand for emotional work: managing our emotions to induce or suppress the prescribed feeling (work up some sadness at the funeral, some happiness at the wedding, etc.).⁷⁸ Just so, uptake rules function as a demand for a different kind of emotional work: managing our attention and emotional resources to give or refuse uptake. Thus we can introduce a new category of emotional work corresponding to our new category of emotional social rule: uptake work (give uptake to sadness at the funeral, refuse uptake to happiness; do the inverse at the wedding).⁷⁹

⁷⁷ See Hochschild, “Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure,” and *The Commercialization of Intimate Life* (especially the chapter on “The Economy of Gratitude”).

⁷⁸ Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.

⁷⁹ Some uptake rules seem to be first-order phenomena—Kate Manne’s notion of “himpathy,” for instance. But other uptake rules seem to function as ancillaries to corresponding feeling rules, where a feeling rule constitutes a demand for first-person compliance, but its corollary uptake rule constitutes a demand for second-person enforcement of the initial feeling rule. Himpathy demands that I give uptake to the distress of powerful men, not as a reward for the way this distress complies with a feeling rule, but as a good that is owed to powerful men. But second-order uptake rules demand cooperation with the feelings of others insofar as they comply with the feeling rules, and noncooperation when they break the feeling rules. In this way, conformity with second-order uptake rules produces social cooperation or noncooperation as incentives or penalties conferred in accordance with the feeling rules.

How do feeling rules function as a productive apparatus in *prejudicial* affective economies? Consider: feeling rules that oppose anger and normative femininity function as a demand for women to do the emotional work of swallowing our anger, thus muting women's anger. If the affective economy itself is prejudicial, then social punishments and rewards generate incentives to comply with those feeling rules *whether or not one has internalized a relevant prejudice*. These incentives would include (but not be limited to) the social cooperation of uptake and the noncooperation of its refusal. In this way, the affective economy itself is discriminatory: prejudice is baked in at the level of the feeling rules that structure social interactions, and the incentives that enforce those rules. Prejudice need not be activated in the psychology of the actors in order to be operative in the feeling rules that constitute productive forces in the affective economy.

Similarly, uptake rules are a productive apparatus in prejudicial uptake economies. Himpathy's uptake rule that the distress of powerful men should be given uptake, for instance, also functions as a demand that we manage our attention and emotional resources in accordance with that rule. Cooperate with his distress: attend to it as an orientation (let it sensitize you to his concerns, get your bearings in the situation by it); meanwhile, treat her distress as an obstacle (a cry for attention, a disturbance to be calmed, an embarrassment to

be hushed up, an unproductive or inconvenient emotional state to be gotten over, etc.). The social punishments and rewards built into the prejudicial uptake economy would generate incentives to comply and penalties for noncompliance with these uptake rules whether or not one has internalized a relevant prejudice (consider: someone engaging in himpathy may not even thematize the gender of the individuals as salient; they may simply be reacting in a way that feels habitual, socially rewarded, or less socially risky than alternatives). By demanding uptake behavior in accordance with social hierarchies, uptake rules condition whether and how the other-directed functions of our affects find purchase in others.

Thus feeling rules and uptake rules can bake uptake injustices like anger gaslighting and himpathy into the background conditions of our lives, so they can be actively influencing how we respond to each other's emotions without necessarily activating prejudices in the motives of the individuals involved. When I angrily demand my hammer back from you, and you just smile and say I'm cute when I'm mad, this may be due to uptake rules operating in the background, prescribing the domains in which women's anger should be granted uptake: anger on behalf of construction projects was not included.

Feeling rules and uptake rules can interact in an affective economy to create setups for social failure at the intersections of social groups. Recall

Obama’s anger interpreter: if feeling rules about masculinity and anger call for anger from Black men, but uptake rules about race and anger promise noncooperation or even punishment for obeying, this generates a unique setup for social failure for Black men in the intersection of feeling and uptake rules about gender and race. If feeling rules about femininity demand that Black women swallow their anger, but racial stereotypes of the “angry Black woman” project it onto them anyway, then this generates a unique setup for social failure for Black women, positioning them as always already both breaking an anger feeling rule and failing at femininity.

This move—explaining prejudicial phenomena, not as individually internalized prejudice, but as structural rules that incentivize compliance by the way they set up conditions for success or failure—is one Olúfemi Táíwò makes.⁸⁰ People tend to comply with unjust structures, Táíwò proposes, not only or primarily because we’re brainwashed by our internalized privilege and oppression, but because the rules of the game have been set up to incentivize behavior that reproduces the prevailing hierarchies.

Nevertheless, if the feeling rules and uptake rules are particular hegemonic, they may diminish our collectively available resources for making sense of affective behavior that fails to conform. This is the injustice that primarily

⁸⁰ Taiwo, *Elite Capture*.

concerns Frye in her original discussion of anger uptake: she observes that often women's anger is refused uptake because the uptake refuser genuinely cannot make sense of it.⁸¹ Resources for making sense of women's anger in certain domains may become so scarce that it is unintelligible to the uptake refuser—or intelligible only as “craziness.” The uptake refusal is not due to personal prejudice, or anything located within the individual uptake refuser. If prejudice is operative, it is operative in the background conditions, where there is a gap in the hermeneutical resources for making sense of women's anger. This is an uptake-related hermeneutical injustice.⁸² And it is an additional way that the uptake economy itself may be prejudiced in a manner that is not reducible to the presence of prejudice in the psyche of individual actors.

Thus feeling rules, uptake rules, and the emotional work they demand help to describe how the operation of uptake economies can be prejudicial even when a given uptake behavior is not directly motivated by prejudice. It follows that to determine whether an uptake economy is prejudicial, it is not necessary to look inward, asking the actors in it to introspect and report on the presence or absence of prejudicial motives in their inner lives or character. Instead, we can look outward, studying feeling rules and uptake rules in consultation with social scientists.

⁸¹ Frye, *Politics*.

⁸² See Whitney, “Anger and Uptake.”

DOING THINGS WITH UPTAKE: AFFECTIVE ACTIVISM

Uptake is not only a method for mapping the weaponization of emotions in power struggles, but also a form of agency and power itself: a uniquely affective mode of influence that plays a constitutive role in structures of social injustice. Just as Austin suggests that we need uptake in order to do things with words, we need uptake to do things with emotions. It is not anger alone that is influential, but anger-plus-uptake. That makes uptake a potent site of affective activism.

If the uptake work that social uptake rules demand of us produces prejudicial uptake economies, then uptake work in particular can be a site of affective activism. As feminist philosophers such as Myisha Cherry and Elizabeth Spelman have observed, breaking feeling rules is an act of affective activism or repair (e.g., the anger of subordinates at those placed above them is an act of insubordination that can make progress, not only toward protesting injustice, but repairing it).⁸³ Similarly, we can break uptake rules (e.g., refusing uptake to angers of aggrieved entitlement and giving uptake to angers of insubordination are also acts of insubordination).

⁸³ See Spelman (“Insubordination”) for a discussion of how anger itself may constitute an act of insubordination. See also Cherry on breaking racial feeling rules through rage (*Rage*, 93–117).

Insubordination is always risky, and its risks are rarely distributed evenly. I am not suggesting this is a panacea, or something that should be undertaken without circumspection. I'm just suggesting that emotional work—in this case, uptake work—is an instrument of political struggle.

Consider Sara Ahmed's feminist killjoys, who might (for instance) refuse to join in the laughter about a sexist joke.⁸⁴ Feminist killjoys are smile strikers: refusing the first-person emotion work of inducing happiness in themselves. That breaks feeling rules that demand working up a polite laugh along with others, the demand to be made happy by what makes others happy. But feminist killjoys are also *uptake* strikers, refusing the second-person emotional work of giving uptake to the delight others take in the sexist joke. That's uptake insubordination: breaking uptake rules that demand giving uptake to others' happiness, that demand allowing their laughter to orient us toward the situation as contoured by the concerns of sexist happiness.

Thus feminist killjoys use our capacity to undermine the affective influence of the joke by withholding uptake. We kill the joy, backfiring the joke's affective influence, the other-directed function of this episode of joy. The feminist killjoy doesn't just *say* the joke isn't funny. She *makes* the joke not funny. She doesn't tell, she shows. She goes beyond the feminist critic who might ask us to

⁸⁴ Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 50–87.

become aware of the joke's misogynistic significance. She's doing the transformative work of arresting its influence. Uptake is not only a concept we can reflect on, but a practice we can engage in.

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