

Aesthetic Wreck-Diving “Outlaw Emotions” as Curriculum

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First having read the book of myths,
and loaded the camera,
and checked the edge of the knife-blade,
I put on
the body-armor of black rubber
the absurd flippers
the grave and awkward mask. (Rich, 1973, p. 22)

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR BOB WOODWARD, former-now-re-elected President Donald Trump asserted, "I bring rage out. I do bring rage out. I always have... I don't know if that's an asset or a liability, but whatever it is, I do. I also bring great unity out, ultimately" (Pengelly, 2020). The first election of Donald Trump upended the political and public spheres both nationally and globally, ushering in grievance-fueled demonstrations and practices of anger and rage—emotive dimensions that now contour U.S. political and social life often as the rule, rather than the exception. A quick Google search unearthing the most impactful images from the January 6, 2021, insurrection and siege of the U.S. Capitol reflected particularly striking images of not only politically-inspired collective public rage (Luger & Miller, 2025), but also the uneven racial and gender representation of the crowd. While non-White and female-identifying rioters were undoubtedly in attendance, aggression from White male-identifying insurrectionists dominated many of the images (a sample below) of the now-absolved and pardoned rioters (Pres. Proclamation, 10887, January 20, 2025).

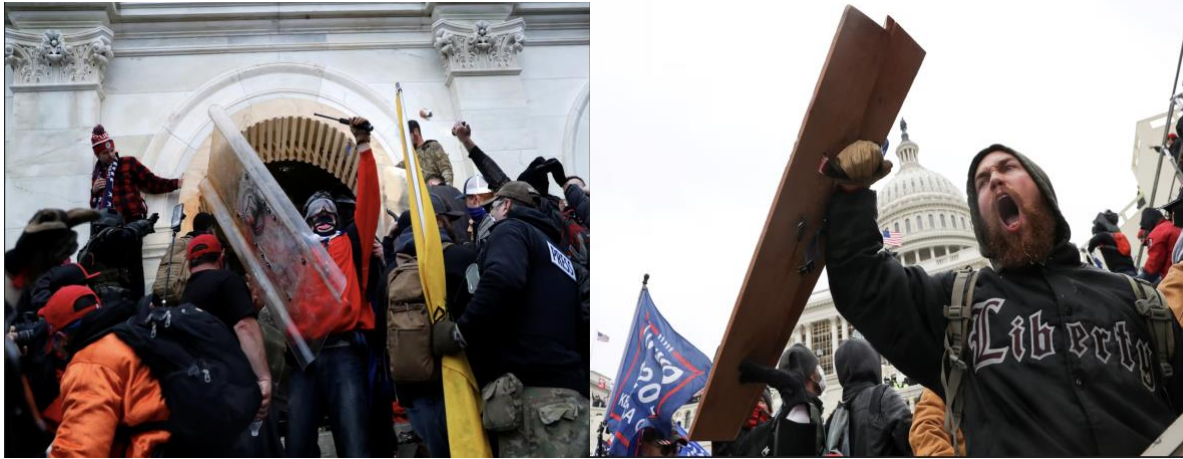


Figure 1. first photo via Shannon Stapleton (2021); second photo via Leah Millis (2021) (both for Reuters).

Politically-exploited difference and disagreement and politician-inspired collective anger have underscored swelling public violence (Cheladyn, 2025; Luger & Miller, 2025)—manifesting the masses’ enduring fears surrounding the ramifications of anger and rage in public life. From suggesting that rally-goers assault protesters, to amplifying White supremacists, to utilizing racial anti-Black and anti-immigrant configurations (Maher & Boyette, 2024), manifestations of xenophobia, racism, and sexism can and have efficaciously mobilize(d) anger toward oppressive and destructive ends. Further, proliferated media and public discourse buttress conditions for emotional outrage through mis/disinformation, overgeneralizing, and partial truths about people, organizations, or groups (Bangstad et al., 2019; Gualtieri & Pedretti, 2025; Sobieraj & Berry, 2011). While public displays of anger and rage—whether tethered to political or social issues or not—often warrant(ed) widespread public rebuke, these rebukes remain unevenly levied onto certain groups over others, illustrating how overarching power structures inform collective responses to publicly displayed affective and emotive dimensions. Individual and collective emotions can acquiesce, flout, or challenge these overarching social norms that govern what public emotions are seemingly acceptable—and by whom.

Organizing the Journey: A Solo Pursuit of Parable

I am having to do this
not like Cousteau with his
assiduous team
aboard the sun-flooded schooner
but here alone. (Rich, 1973, p. 22)

While we might claim to know ourselves, that knowing is both incomplete and contextually dependent, particularly since we are obliged to (re)form ourselves within prescribed social norms: socially, politically, educationally, and emotionally (Applebaum, 2014). Below is my third-grade school picture (Figure 2.), embossing an ear-to-ear grin proudly displaying my newly forming adult two-front teeth, hair sun-kissed from a summer spent outside with friends at the many community pools around Madison, Wisconsin. This picture captured a care-free yet fleeting

moment-in-time, immediately followed by a parent-teacher conference that Fall, when my parents learned that I was an “angry” child—a label that altered my relationship to education, and to myself, forever.



Figure 2. My grade 3 school picture.

During the conference, the teacher recounted an incident in the school library where I loudly demanded another girl “get back here” [to where I was standing] after she had called me a bitch. I wish I could remember the reason for the initial name-calling, as I’m sure there was one (although, like many women, I’ve borne that label-myth-truth more times than I can count). But the name-calling rationale wasn’t what remained salient for me; rather, it was the shame I was “supposed” to feel for a public emotional display, for challenging unfairness in the “wrong” way. Although the just-above-a-whisper name-calling reverberated through ears and heart, it was my response, *my* voice that carried: its disruption of the conventional and acceptable decorum of a library, of educational spaces, and of young girls like me.

This wouldn’t be the last time that my—or other—voice would carry, upending educational and public spaces with displays of resistance, anger, or rage. While a small part of me now acknowledges how this formative moment might have (sub)consciously informed my decision to become a teacher—or informed how I teach—this moment also shaped how I came to initially understand emotions, especially my own, as seemingly entirely private, individually-dictated, and often unbecoming choices. In this case, I’d chosen the wrong one, a choice that contoured my stature in my tiny educational world; a choice that altered how my parents viewed me; a choice that damaged my personal and professional relationships with others, and with myself. I did not *act* angry; I *was* angry. And I found it, this label, disastrous—until I carved out an opportunity to “seize” (Greene, 1977, p. 284) meaning within the wreck(age) underneath these unspoken emotion-labels and emotion-rules, and (re)turned to see them differently up close.

Descending, Motivated by [the] Purpose

There is a ladder.
The ladder is always there
hanging innocently
close to the side of the schooner...
I go down. (Rich, 1973, p. 22)

Emotions like anger and rage, increasingly framed as necessitating control, are often linked to destruction and violence, best relegated to “the realm of the unspeakable” (hooks, 1995, p. 12). Amid emotionally-charged and emotion-laden political trends and increased discussion of emotions’ (non)presence within and beyond educational spaces (Boler, 1999), I wonder(ed) what exists within this “unspeakable” [emotional] realm? At what stages, occupying what spaces, bodies, and discourses, must we manage our “affective displays” (Alexander et al., 2023, p. 551)

and suppress our emotions, ignoring their potential instructiveness by hiding them underneath the label of “unspeakable”? These questions demonstrate the importance behind exploring bodily responses to evolving intensities and forces amid broader climates of affective, emotional, and bodily modulation, oppression, and erasure. While both enlightening and informative, affect and emotion reflect distinct categories of thinking-feeling potentials and capacities. Short-term reactionary expressions or affects illustrate body-to-body “felt-sensibilities” (Seigworth & Shomura, 2025, p. ii) or responses to moving social forces—responses that inspire emotions—the consciously focused and socially constructed sentiments fueling and fueled by social context and conditions. Fusing embodied ontology and gendered social conditions, this work primarily engages with the latter: emotions.

Consequently, I [academically] tug at the stubborn boundaries around and the instructive possibilities of “outlaw” or unwelcome emotions of anger and rage (Jaggar, 1989), reframing these seemingly unsavory emotions into less volatile, more vulnerable, and didactic collective constructs shaping and shaped by overarching gendered, social, and political structures. Positioning the embodied-as-legitimate knowledge (MacLure, 2016) and emotions-as-curriculum (Greene, 1995), this paper examines anger and rage as legitimate and enlightening unifiers that represent instructive opportunities in/to the relationship between the self, gender, and social systems. Employing aesthetic engagement with anger and rage from a feminist poststructuralist orientation, this paper utilizes Adrienne Rich’s (1973) poem “Diving into the Wreck” as both anchoring organizational tool and feminist allegorical gateway into the “wreck[age]” of forgotten or unexamined anger and rage across aesthetic formations to illustrate the layered and fluid contours of emotions-as-curriculum. Finally, this work repositions emotions as necessarily instructive, collective, and systemically and socially contingent; representing a rejection of Anglo-patriarchal emotion rules that aim to render emotions as irrational, individualized, incorrect choices.

Sinking In[to] a Feminist Envisage of Emotion-as-Curriculum

Rung after rung and still
the oxygen immerses me
the blue light
the clear atoms
of our human air.
I go down. (Rich, 1973, pp. 22-23)

Although scholarship guides me into the depths of existing thought on curriculum, emotion, and gender, obstacles—the prevailing myths and assertions—arise as I descend into theory and wreckage. As I navigate deeper, I pursue provocations that illuminate a path toward outlaw emotion-wrecks. I pursue challenges to the myth that emotionality signals inferiority and irrationality. I find glimmers, instead, in the expansiveness and instructiveness of emotion down here, knowing-opportunities all their own. Greene (1977) frames curriculum as “opportunities” to “seiz[e]” and create meaning (p. 284) from conscious engagement with the social world. As a counter to the often institutionally and socially framed, evaluated, and contested notion of tangible and narrow scripts characterizing “curriculum,” curriculum is expansive, flowing within and beyond the walls of formal institutions, books, or bodies. Always present and heuristic, even when unacknowledged, the layered and fluid conceptualizations of curriculum empower its straddling

of in/tangibility. Curriculum in all its manifestations *provokes* emotions (emphasis mine) (Marcolina, 2024) about topics, issues, and processes; and these emotions can mutually shape curriculum. And yet, *emotions* are also curriculum, instructive in their contouring, promoting, and informing how we understand and engage with ourselves and the social world. Emotions *as* curriculum intertwine perception, experience, social practices, and gender. However, emotions and curriculum, emotions *as* curriculum, especially within enduring discourses that conceptualize curriculum as tangible, instructional, finite; reflect an unlikely educational pairing. Emotions might hinder learning, objectivity, rationality, or educational processes and procedures. Despite their enlightening capacities, emotions in education are sometimes framed as obstructive, unwelcome intruders. Like sound (Gershon & Wozolek, 2024), I wonder(ed) how emotion could function as a conduit between the self, gender, and education; namely, how “outlaw” emotions like anger and rage provide information related to the relationship between gender and the (non)presence of emotions in education—especially outlaw(ed) ones—but I haven’t sunk that deeply, yet.

I first make an affective, embodied turn in my thinking, disrupting the binaries that often divorce reason and embodiment (Boler & Davis, 2018; Jaggar, 1989). From a feminist orientation, the body, then, represents an ontological, curricular source through which to make meaning, inclusive of sensations (affect) and sentiments (emotions). Affect and emotion float through temporal and relational dimensions (Boler & Zembylas, 2016), and both can be imperceptible. Affect(s) arise outside of deliberate consciousness, reflecting bodily capacity/ies to [affect and be affected] in their encounters with the social world (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Seigworth & Shomura, 2025). Often not a “logical move” (Helfenbein & Roziek, 2025, p. 243), affect is always *on the move*—fleeting, immanent responses to social forces and intensities. Swimming between emotion and discourse (Boler, 1998), affect harnesses social, political, and identity-driven dimensions (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009), particularly through its surface-level manifestations (e.g., skin sensations, language variation, tonality shifts). Although we try to generalize—and gender—affect, its fluidity keeps it unboxed and moving.

Emotions, however, linger. They are about something; they sit with(in) us as effects of the contextual factors, conditions, triggers, and affect(s) that sometimes precede them. Emotions are focused; they manifest our values, beliefs, and the sociocultural and historical dimensions in which they occur (Ahmed, 2004; Boler & Davis, 2018). So, emotions are relational, intentional, and deeply dependent on context, as deliberate embodied feedback to existing social conditions. Far from the myths undergirded by beliefs of emotion’s role in irrationality, emotions cultivate nuanced perceptions of behaviors, social practices, and decision-making; they expand understanding of the social world—emotions *as* curriculum. However, prevailing viewpoints rarely frame emotions as instructive. Instead, our collective inattention to and myth-circulation about emotions underscore our struggles to name, express, and welcome them. More often, we seek to engulf, capture, and manage emotions, especially in public spaces. Inspired by what Hochschild (1979) calls “feeling rules,” we abide by these (un)spoken racial, gendered, and class-driven rigid armor-norms that govern how we “should” or “deserve” to feel about something—privately, and especially publicly. These feeling rules reify our confining emotion-myths, myths that more poignantly and unevenly apply these feeling rules to certain groups over others (Ahmed, 2004), perpetuating beliefs that some emotions remain socially unacceptable to publicly exhibit.

Seeking Clarity through [the] Aesthetic

Despite emotions' historically integral roles in information-gathering and cultivating social movements (Curnow et al., 2021; Rico et al., 2017), contemporary tribalism and siloed media ecosystems heighten awareness, gendering, and racializing of public emotional displays (Boler & Davis, 2018; Sellar & Zipin, 2019). These silos intersect with overarching feeling rules to not only govern notions of reality, but also the emotions we [publicly] direct toward broader social issues and which emotions we deem socially acceptable. Increased avoidance of emotion-triggers from opposing information silos also underscores the belief that such encounters would stimulate public displays of taboo, unsightly, and unbecoming emotions meant only for private toiling; however, employing a feminist politics of emotion brings some scholarly lucidity: By positioning emotions as instructive and socially-constructed curriculum, I observe the connection between emotion, aesthetic, and social systems, how the emotion-aesthetic constitutes a curricular chance to grasp meaning underneath emotion-myths (Greene, 1977, p. 284). As I descend, I recall what I felt forced to pursue underneath the emotion-surface(s).

The act of inquiry expands perspectives, troubling what one sees versus what one is *taught* to see (Boler & Zembylas, 2002). Inspired by the intersecting collective volatility and the legislative and discursive control of non-White, non-heteronormative males in the United States, I framed this inquiry pursuit as an opportunity to dive into and immerse myself in public displays of volatility at the intersections of gender, race, and the aesthetic. I wondered how “refusals,” “recreations,” and “reconstructions” (p. 283) of emotion-myths and feeling rules might expand and welcome the feminist conceptualization of emotions-as-socially tethered-knowledge, buoyed by potential implications for education. So, I sought to trouble gender-race-emotion intersections beyond academic scholarship and beyond the classroom—aligned to Greene’s (1977; 1995) conceptualizations of curriculum as opportunities to capture meaning and to facilitate a “wide awakesness” that transcends physical and pedagogical limits. With Dewey, (1934), I positioned the aesthetic broadly to examine manifestations of anger and rage through these art(ful) entry points, buoyed by the hope that such displays of outlaw emotions could foster such “wide awakesness” (Greene, 1977) to previously unknown or ignored dimensions of emotion-myths in the social world, myths-to-truths lying just below the surface of what we often take for granted. It is through varied representations of the social world—through art, literature, music, and movement—that we can progress myths to truths lying just below the surface of what we often take for granted, whereby emotions and the aesthetic as curriculum represent gateways into expansive conceptions of the self, gender, and education. Therefore, our listening, reading, and seeing shape and are shaped by emotion-provocations from the aesthetic work; we become *immersed* in its edges, stories, and depth(s), challenging what we witness against what we’re *taught* to witness (Boler & Zembylas, 2002).

Luminosity to Darkness: Plunging toward the “Outlaw(ed)”

First the air is blue and then
it is bluer and then green and then
black I am blacking out and yet
my mask is powerful
it pumps my blood with power... (Rich, 1973, p. 23)

From their formative roles in emancipatory social movements (Applebaum, 2014; Boler, 1999; Reifen Tagar et al., 2011), to their involvement in oppressive identity-focused exclusion, to their contributions to unfettered U.S. gun violence not limited to educational institutions (see Borchard, 2015), we cultivate anger and rage within and beyond the aesthetic and political—even as we collectively ignore their escalation or chastise their public renderings. Conventionally associated with hostility and aggression, we classify anger and rage as “outlaw emotions” (Jaggar, 1989) deemed inappropriate or disruptive to the status quo, even when they’re warranted. Outlaw emotions diverge from dominant perceptions and cultural norms of what’s publicly acceptable behavior. Inspired by desires to restore situational control or escape, anger in particular, evaluates injustice, harm, and sometimes facilitates punishment of others (Boler, 1999; Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009). Anger manifests as both affect and emotion: Affective sensations mirror those of excitement (e.g., adrenaline, heartbeat), while context and emotion rules inform anger’s emotive dimensions.

A related but seemingly more sinister, darker “outlaw emotion,” existing in a state of “rage” involves an uncontrollable tumult, drawn from intense feelings, most often contoured by wrath and anger (Merriam-Webster, 2024). Rage can be an individual and collective expression often stemming from disappointment over broken promises (Ahmed, 2010). Broadly, public displays of anger and rage, regardless of moral underpinnings, retain widespread skepticism and neglect. We shame and shun anger and rage because they can collectively swell from individualized offense, become mainstream, chided-yet-normalized, always living with/in bodies and relations, and capable of provocation. We focus attention on their unruly, exclusionary, and seemingly extreme undertones that stem from individual grievances to collective exclusionary practices. So, our attention skips forward to anticipated, more terrible, oppressive consequences of anger and rage. Augmenting these fears, current conditions remain susceptible to the seductiveness of rendering anger and rage as political tools to coalesce social and political grievance(s), exacerbated by siloed ecosystems and narrow feeling rules, further demonstrating how rage and anger remain mobile, nebulous, and systemically and socially contingent.

We often describe these outlaw emotions through binaries, obscuring their complexity: We separate the “good” moral anger from the “bad” destructive anger (Linklater, 2014), often premised on feeling rules (Hochschild, 1979). The overarching civility discourse increasingly admonishes public outlaw emotions along racialized and gendered feeling rules. Inspired by settler colonial perspectives equating measured behavior with modernity and rationality (Linklater, 2014), anger’s portrayal in media and public discourse pressures the masses into displaying an ill-defined “correct” anger narrowed by dominant groups who seize feeling rules to demonize and other norm-deviant anger displays such as labeling Black Lives Matter, anti-genocide, or Women’s Rights protesters as too angry (Sandlin & Snaza, 2018).

Consequently, dismissing outlaw emotions disrespectfully reinforces existing hierarchies (Applebaum, 2014). As a result, widespread feeling rules premised on alleged civility govern public and private anger and rage. Knee-jerk instincts to pressurize and muzzle outlaw emotions further universalize the belief that these emotions are individualized, biological, impulsive, and worth controlling. If we relegate these outlaw emotions to the underbelly because we view their mobility as what makes them so shadowy and cataclysmic, we perpetuate the emotion-myth that socially constructed emotions remain abhorrent, internal instincts to suppress and fix. As this emotion-myth blurs my inquiry journey, I remember that outlaw emotions like anger and rage are relational (Lorde, 1984)—they, like the aesthetic, thrust and squeeze us in closer, constraining us to face what we uncover with/in the social world.

(Re)Orienting: Girls Shouldn't Get Angry! And Other Gender(ed) Emotion-Myths

the sea is another story
 the sea is not a question of power
 I have to learn alone
 to turn my body without force
 in the deep element. (Rich, 1973, p. 23)

As I struggle against the scholarly elements contouring this continued inquiry, I return to the journey, knowing I haven't gone deep enough—that there's more to this story. Outlaw emotion-myths perpetuate anticipatory fears of anger and rage germinating, ballooning, and irrationalizing. And yet, to (re)position outlaw emotions as instructive, as curriculum facilitating extended consciousness, we are called to examine the “deep element[s]” (Rich, 1973) of our individual and collective outlaw emotion-myths. Feminist approaches to embodiment embrace the nuanced relationship between knowledge and emotion, where emotions represent mobile, socially contingent, and cognition-intention mediators (Ahmed, 2004; Boler, 1998; Sandlin & Snaza, 2018). A feminist approach to emotion disrupts the myth that emotions represent individualized choices—they're rational and knowledge sources (Boler, 1997). With roots in the women's liberation movement challenging patriarchal structures, a “feminist politics of emotion” (Boler, 1998; 1999) conceptualizes emotions-as-knowledge that intersect with social structures.

Nevertheless, enduring misogyny and rigid distinctions between rigor and feeling fuel the deep-seated bias chiding feminist-emotion scholarship and emotion work. Blanket assumptions that men and women are innately and fundamentally different entrust rigor and reason with the men-dominated public sphere and emotionality and irrationality with the private, women-dominated domain—illustrating gendered feeling rules at work. These rules and contrasts consequently perpetuate myths that women's public emotion displays render them “too emotional” (Boler & Zembylas, 2016, p. 3), promoting admonishment of women's public anger (Boler, 1999) and fixed discourses framing women as nurturers or ball-busters (Fischer, 2016). Such gendered myth-scripts encourage women's emotional self-policing, social subjugation (Lorde, 1984), and perceived inferiority.

Medusa—the most infamous yet sinister Gorgon—possesses a fraught mythical history as person/possession/powerful force and protection source. She's retained formidable mythical and transcendent notoriety through her capacity to turn others—namely men—to stone (Morford et al., 2018). An early sculpture depiction renders her not as conquered by Perseus, but as a tormented monster: A bodiless head whose contorted face conjures a mixture of anger, anguish, and fury (see Figure 3.), whose snake hair twists and twirls, careful to keep her face unmasked. However, Garbati's (2008) more recent sculpture flips this myth-script with Medusa holding Perseus's head (see Figure 4.) in one hand, and a weapon in the



Figure 3. Medusa sculpture by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1644).

other. Her open, naked, unbridled stance exudes power; her face is unconvinced and unmoored, as she stares down spectators (or skeptics).

Both portrayals convey emotion-stories that we can only speculate, as their emotional displays suggest deeper wells that intersect with the social, potential challenges to emotion-myths. And yet, these renderings offer opportunities to entrench Medusa's polarity—of weakness or power, agony or authority—and to reify women's emotional depth. While Carol Ann Duffy (1999) opens her poem "Medusa" by reifying the title character's potent, terrifying qualities as a reflection of arguably both sculptures.

A suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy
grew in my mind,
which turned the hairs on my head to
filthy snakes
as though my thoughts
hissed and spat on my scalp.
My bride's breath soured, stank
in the grey bags of my lungs.
I'm foul mouthed now, foul tongued,
yellow fanged.
There are bullet tears in my eyes.
Are you terrified? (Duffy, 1999, p. 40)



Figure 4. Medusa sculpture by Luciano Garbati (2008).

Her work slowly subsides into humanizing Medusa, who reckons with her public and private emotional complexity.

And here you come
with a shield for a heart
and a sword for a tongue
and your girls, your girls.
Wasn't I beautiful?
Wasn't I fragrant and young? (Duffy, 1999, p. 41)

Women are similarly dichotomized: monsters or saviors, ball-busters or nurturers (Fischer, 2016), reasonable or [too] emotional (Boler & Zembylas, 2016), while continually struggling against the aphorismic assertion that girls should never get angry (Boler, 1999). Consequently, understanding women's emotions-as-curriculum means understanding how gendered feeling rules sustain women's emotion-policing and broader emotion-myths, cultivating opportunities to engender meaning. Gendered feeling rules govern perceptions of women's anger, sustaining myths that women's anger remains "unfeminine" (Applebaum, 2014, p. 133) instead of instructive, legitimate, and status quo-challenging. Amid pressures to be accommodating, silent, and compliant (Curnow et al., 2021; Rodriguez & Boahene, 2012), women's anger scrutinizes and disrupts

existing hierarchies, forms of oppression, and privilege (Reifen Tagar et al., 2011). Anger empowers, dares, and remains useful for social change and pursuing justice. Anger builds coalitions by combating racism and sexism (hooks, 1995; Lorde, 1984), disputing the myth alleging only its destructive foundations. Women's anger is cathartic through public displays of unhappiness (Ahmed, 2010), clashing with fallacies that assert its enduring harm. Despite struggles against women's anger conventions, traditions, and falsehoods, I'm beginning to recognize the complexity, depth, and courage in our anger.

[Discursive] Exploring: Permissible “Outlaw[s]” Shrouded in White

I came to explore the wreck.
 The words are purposes.
 The words are maps.
 I came to see the damage that was done
 and the treasures that prevail.
 I stroke the beam of my lamp
 slowly along the flank
 of something more permanent
 than fish or weed. (Rich, 1973, pp. 23-24)

Despite skepticism of its productivity (Applebaum, 2014) and myths of its repulsiveness, women scholars, political figures, and artists have sought to reclaim rage, in particular. Arguing its distinction from hatred, rage can sprout political consciousness (Reich, 2020), remedy experiences of oppression (hooks, 1995; Lorde, 1984), and illuminate shifting tides across dimensions of the social world. Alongside its increased presence in U.S. political discourse and the American cultural zeitgeist, musicians, like sculptors, commenced wielding elements of rage to enlighten sociopolitical conditions (Lewis & Bock, 2018) in their music, illustrating the nuanced intersections between music, emotion, and the social world. Historically, music holds a long tradition in the mutual shaping of social, cultural, and political shifts in the U.S. Artists, and their songs convey particular purposes and stances, sociocultural message-carriers irradiating contemporary circumstances, controversies, social movements, or systemic issues that encapsulate target emotions meant to enrapture the listener.

Alongside illuminating sociopolitical conditions, artists and their songs similarly embrace and encourage particular emotions, including rage, in their music and their listeners. Sounds, songs, and musical genres might convey joy, hope, or counterhegemony in conjunction with outlaw emotions (Lewis & Bock, 2018), charting the masses' attention toward social systems, sentiments, or symbols. Over the last few decades, female artists have increasingly espoused and engendered anger and rage in their music (e.g., Courtney Love, Tina Turner, Alanis Morissette, Shirley Manson, among others), depicting the potent relationship between emotion, gender, and music—laying groundwork for future female artists to exhibit emotional complexity (e.g., Chinchilla, Olivia Rodrigo, Brittany Howard, Sophia Urista). Mapping this music-emotion blueprint meant desecrating gendered feeling rules governing social systems and mainstream music genres.

And I'm here, to remind you / Of the mess you left when you went away / It's not fair, to deny me / Of the cross I bear that you gave to me / You, you, you oughta know! (Morissette, 1995)

While many came before and after her, Alanis Morissette's (1995) album *Jagged Little Pill* was and remains an anthological anthem of female outlaw emotion in music, famously inspired by a man's broken promise(s). Morissette's work represented a groundbreaking aesthetic public demonstration of female anger. However, Morissette's album did not occur in a musical and cultural vacuum and wasn't spared public scrutiny and hesitation to [mainstream] acceptance. Alongside artists like Courtney Love, Morissette's emotional rawness similarly allowed *White* women collectively to demonstrate the same, and mirrored broader sentiments reflected in the late 1990s American experience—trickling into, germinating, and taking hold of wider social, political, and cultural swells at the intersection of music, gender, and public displays of outlaw emotions. While Morissette's work offered a blueprint for challenging gendered feeling rules and mainstream sense-making of women's emotional complexity, stubborn emotion-myths around rage remained—especially the myths' racialized contours.

It's just one of those days when you don't wanna wake up / Everything is fucked, everybody sucks / You don't really know why, but you wanna justify / Rippin' someone's head off! (Limp Bizkit, 2000)

Released a few years after Morissette's album, Limp Bizkit's (2000) single "Break Stuff" rose to prominence within the genre-fluid Nu-Metal orientation, but not without significant controversy. Nu-Metal's explicit welcoming and wielding of anger and rage in lyric, sonic, and stage presence drew demonstrable scrutiny from mainstream media, and political circles swooped in to establish discursive connections between Nu-Metal rage (e.g., Marilyn Manson, Limp Bizkit, Slipknot, Linkin Park, among others) and its role in social wreckage (Borchard, 2015).

Amplifying public consternation emerged following Limp Bizkit's performance of "Break Stuff" at the Woodstock '99 festival, which cultivated widespread violence and arson. Petrusich's (2021) connections between the riots and arson of the Woodstock '99 festival and the January 6, 2021 insurrection on the U.S. Capitol illuminate the racial similarities of the rioters: Both instances involved "out-of-control White people foregoing decency and rectitude in order to express a kind of deep, nameless, long-festering anger" (Petrusich, 2021, p. 1). However, the predominantly male participation in both events remains salient, too. Widespread arson, rioting, and death—and swift public condemnation of anger's destructiveness—contoured both Woodstock '99 and the 2021 insurrection. Nevertheless, what rose to prominence were the efforts to gradually sanitize, rationalize, and normalize the physical, racial, political—and sexual, in the case of Woodstock '99—damage at the hands of White (and overwhelmingly, male) rage (Petrusich, 2021). The well-documented violence and rioting in both cases found fuel from White male orators (Fred Durst and Donald Trump), whose calls-to-attention resonated with predominantly White attendees who dared to embody the sentiment that "Everything is fucked / Everybody sucks" (Limp Bizkit, 2000). Gendered feeling rules emboldened White male public spectacles of unrestricted slow-but-permissible and boundless anger at the continued and continuous expense of women's and Black people's emotion-truths and personhoods—itsself a curriculum that demonstrated the enduringly racialized and gendered feeling rules governing U.S. social structures (Luger & Miller, 2025; Seigworth & Shomura, 2025).

Angry [and] Black: Oscillation, Racialization, & (Re)clamation

And now: it is easy to forget
 what I came for
 among so many who have always
 lived here... (Rich, 1973, p. 23)

As discussed, poetry, song lyrics, and sound can both impair and repair (Gershon & Wozolek, 2023), illustrating how the relationship between art, sound, and emotion reflects nuanced social knowledge. Poetry, sound, and song lyrics *do* things: They hold instructive, social functions in their capacities to act upon people (Jarvis & McKenzie, 2024), fostering opportunities to capture meaning undergirding the intersections between emotions, art, and the self. However, poetry, sound, and song lyrics are produced within overarching social, political, and cultural structures, illuminating how these systems of power consequently shape our meaning-seizing of the structures governing the public and artistic displays of emotion—what emotions are allowed as “art,” and what emotions remain unwelcome—and from whom.

While anger and rage broadly draw ire, Black people’s public displays of outlaw emotions receive augmented rebuke. Our privileging of White outlaw emotions coincides with the pathologizing of Black anger and rage (Applebaum, 2014), reifying stereotypes of Black people’s susceptibility to violence and irrationality (hooks, 1995; McCann, 2013). Such pathologizing mirrors public obfuscation of the deep relationship between Black power, outlaw emotions, and oppressive sociopolitical conditions (Applebaum, 2014; McCann, 2013). Consequently, framing Black outlaw emotions-as-knowledge represents a seemingly inconceivable possibility when up against emotion-myths that Black outlaw emotions necessitate widespread control. It is no coincidence that many of the aforementioned artists pioneering the complexity of outlaw emotions through music are White. Nevertheless, hip hop and rap music genres—in their fusing of racial pride, social consciousness, and issues of Black morality and precarity—reflect nuanced performance(s) of the historical, enduring entanglement between the aesthetic, [outlaw] emotion, and the racial/ized self (McCann, 2013). Captivated as I am by artful, timely lyrical brilliance, feeling rules continue swirling.

And not the other color so police think / They have the authority to kill a minority / Fuck that shit, 'cause I ain't the one (NWA, 1988).
 Instead of war on poverty / They got a war on drugs / So the police can bother me (Shakur, 1992).

While artists like NWA (1988) and Tupac Shakur (1992) (among others) facilitate(d) similar outlaw emotions as White, Nu-Metal and grunge counterparts, we tend to obscure the socially conscious and emancipatory contours underscoring the genre (McCann, 2013). As a result, our collective instinct to admonish Black rage—and to consequently villainize Black artists for their public display of emotional complexity—remains an enduring and widespread outlaw emotion-myth that coalesces meritocracy, emotion dismissal, and White supremacy. Artists’ exploration of racialization, commodification, and calls-to-action within difficult sociopolitical conditions evokes an expansive emotional depth for artists and listeners, demonstrating the genre’s boldness and bravery illuminated through the intertwining of Black outlaw emotions, the aesthetic, and a wide-awakeness (Greene, 1977) via social commentary. Black artists, scholars, and literary luminaries, therefore, courageously reclaim outlaw emotions, publicly demonstrating their

capacity to not only heal and challenge oppression; but also, that Black outlaw emotion—the aesthetic and resistance—remains a fundamental, enduring entanglement contouring the American experience.

“The Angry Black Woman” as Myth—or Allegory

...swaying their crenellated fans
between the reefs
and besides
you breathe differently down here. (Rich, 1973, p. 23)

White creators have historically relied on both racial privilege and the “Africanist other” (Morrison, 1992, p. 16) to navigate complex emotion-dilemmas, employing essentialist characterizations, tropes, and half-truths about the Black experience and Black emotions. These renderings frame Black outlaw emotions as destructive, divergent, and socially unintelligible impulses that warrant restraint, entrenching racialized feeling rules. The suppression and shaming of rage and anger—Black rage especially—remains prevalent and coincides with sanitizing and constraining broader discussions of race (hooks, 1995). However, emotion-myths suffocate Black outlaw emotion displays, especially so for Black women. The “too emotional” and irrational gendered emotion-myths still afford White women some privilege of public, literary, and lyrical anger displays, an entitlement ruptured for Black women. For example, Toni Morrison’s legitimate literary accounts of racism inspired Right-wing manufactured outrage (PBS, 2024) —illustrating the very point she, and others, wish(ed) to make about gendered and racial feeling rules that transcend the page, absolve White men, but pathologize Black women. Race-to-rage-talk begets public scrutiny and sociocultural rebuke, as Black women’s outlaw emotions are only tolerated when relegated to “the realm of the unspeakable” (hooks, 1995, p. 12). Black women, then, are caught between rigid reefs of gendered *and* racialized feeling rules governing their public emotion displays, a dimension of this wreck that warrants additional depth-diving.

Slipping in[to] [a] different portrayal of Black women’s outlaw emotions involves embracing the instructiveness of snark as an integral dimension to this aesthetic-emotion voyage. The mutual relationship between outlaw emotions, snark, and humor empowers the public practice of outlaw emotions through a seemingly more digestible display (Curnow et al., 2021). For example, inspired by a White male flight passenger who unjustly took her Black companion’s seat, hooks (1995) explains her “killing rage” contouring the moment’s racist and sexist undercurrent: “I wanted to stab him softly, to shoot him with the gun I wished I had in my purse... I would say to him tenderly ‘racism hurts.’” (p. 11). Although snark makes it to the page, it’s often confined there, as hooks (1995) chose not to act on her rage. Others, however, take their snark to the airwaves, calling attention to their outlaw emotion-displays *and* the myths that seek to restrain them.

Cunty, country, petty, petty, petty / All the same to me, Plain Jane, spaghetti / No sauce,
no sauce, ugh / Too soft, too soft, ugh / They salty, they shootin', like Curry / One hand on
my holster, then pass it to Hova / Thought it was sweet when they was walkin' / In the
backdoor of the kitchen past the dirty dishes / Now we on a mission / Tried to turn me to
the opposition / I'm appalled 'bout the proposition / Y'all been played by the plagiaristic /

Ain't gon' give no clout addiction my attention / I ain't no regular singer, now come get everythin' you came for! (Beyoncé, 2024)

As critically acclaimed, genre-bending, transformative, emancipatory—and snarky—as Beyoncé's (2024) *Cowboy Carter* album proved to be, she was—once again—snubbed from Country Music Award (CMA) consideration in 2024. As one of the Whitest music genres, country music in the U.S. similarly rebuffs its Black roots—one of many social issues that *Cowboy Carter* tackled through intertwining snark, outlaw emotion, gender, and the aesthetic. While the album's release narrowly missed the nomination window, slighting Beyoncé's 2024 album mirrored the spurning of her performance of “Daddy Lessons” with The Chicks in 2016 (Romano, 2024).

Despite Beyoncé reaching #1 on the Billboard country chart with *Cowboy Carter*—the first Black woman to do so—the limited country radio promotion of the #1 debuting single “Texas Hold ‘Em”—further demonstrated the narrow confines of racial and gendered aesthetic structures for Black women in a White-dominated industry. “This ain't a country album, it's a Beyoncé album,” Beyoncé herself keenly asserted, as she distanced herself from designating her work as exclusively country (Romano, 2024). Because the country—and the music industry generally—are friendlier to male genre-bending artists, *Cowboy Carter* and its country/CMA snub(s) illustrate enduring exclusion of Black women from White-dominated spaces, positions of power, and, as Beyoncé herself notes—from places where they feel or are unwelcome. More than anything, *Cowboy Carter*—as a country/pop/Beyoncé album—represents a deeper exploration of what lies beneath an oft-ignored legacy of Black people in country against a backdrop of misogynoir, a backdrop that transcends country, music, and the cultural zeitgeist. But not all was—is—lost: Aesthetic, scholarly, social-world discovery forces us to reckon with the emotion-myths confining or excluding aesthetic representation, as the aesthetic can cultivate a wide-awake opportunity to make meaning, to witness emotion-wrecks up close.

Arriving Where I Started...

the thing I came for:
the wreck and not the story of the wreck
the thing itself and not the myth
the drowned face always staring
toward the sun
the evidence of damage
worn by salt and sway into this threadbare beauty
the ribs of the disaster
curving their assertion
among the tentative haunters.
This is the place. (Rich, 1973, p. 24)

I was twelve years old at the time of the 1999 Columbine High School shooting—a grim hallmark that ushered in the intersecting, incredulously-enduring school-gun violence era—a demonstrable swelling of destructive anger and violence within and beyond educational spaces. Its gruesome notoriety even inspired a video game: *The Super Columbine Massacre RPG!* (Borchard, 2015) that illuminates the aesthetic relationship between music, philosophy, and

emotion repudiation in educational spaces. By allowing the player to bear [emotional] witness to an actual massacre, the disastrous game upends the emotion-myth that emotions are private, individual choices. Instead, we learn how emotions reflect collective manifestations inspired by intersecting environments, discourses, and social forces necessitating acknowledgement and interference, layers that—although not producing a deadly massacre—in some fashion, reside in ourselves, buried so deeply until something in our educational or social worlds forces us to speculate and remember.

Educational institutions represent sites that perpetuate existing practices of emotion management, and outlaw emotions reflect especially unwelcome, unsavory intruders. Our obsession with student dysfunction inspired seemingly common-sense educational concepts like “emotional intelligence” that discursively mask emotional self-policing (Boler, 1998), or that educational success depends on meritocracy, success divorced from the nuisance of emotion (Sellar & Zipin, 2019). Although we sometimes signal to the presence of emotion in education—namely, how emotions in education reorganize relationships and institutions (Boler, 1998)—we largely obscure or ignore them, unwilling or inconvenienced by what might lie beneath our surfaces. Our complicated history concerning emotions in education emerges through taming the seemingly labile student who disrupts emotional conformity. The labile student, theorized decades ago, demonstrates perceived behavioral lapses and instabilities that disrupt conventional emotion and social norms (Boler, 1997). We shame, blame, or constrain the labile student’s emotionality, amplifying the practices of [emotional] control and surveillance in schools, resulting in unhealthy and misguided emotion-myths that we hold related to the self, affect, emotion, and the social world (Reich, 2020). To enact a curriculum of outlaw emotions, we must reckon with the emotion-myths we (sub)consciously perpetuate, and how these myths amplify oppression through gendered and racialized feeling rules. A feminist politics of emotion (re)situates emotion as central to making meaning of one’s place within discourses of gender, race, and how these shape the self and manifest in educational environments.

...At Uncomfortable Stillness: The “Third Response” (Morrison, 2009)

We circle silently
about the wreck
we dive into the hold.
I am she: I am he...
We are, I am, you are
by cowardice or courage
the one who find our way
back to this scene. (Rich, 1973, pp. 24-25)

Morrison (2009) notes that “naming and violence” represent just two possible responses to wrecks. The other response is stillness. Stillness isn’t the latter fight-flight-freeze, but rather, stillness “can also be art... [for those] who construct meaning in the face of chaos must be nurtured, protected” (p. 4). When we engage with the aesthetic, we cultivate our “social imagination” (Greene, 1995), and the opportunities to coalition-build, empathize, and acknowledge our individual and collective wrecks as art(ful), instructive, curricular beginnings. However, to enact this aesthetic-emotion curricular ontology, we must consider how emotion-myth-feeling-rules

contour what we see and what we are *taught* to see. How could education and our educational practices evolve if we positioned outlaw emotions-as-knowledge as socially embedded, constructed, and art(fully) instructive? Through an aesthetic “pedagogy of discomfort” (Boler, 1998; Zembylas & Boler, 2002), we can enact a feminist politics of emotion that invites students to explore settled emotion-myths—not as wrecks, but as instructive, luminous opportunities to explore the intersections between education, the self, and feeling rules governing outlaw emotions. An enduring challenge in educational environments is to provide space for open inquiry toward witnessing our myth-wreck(s) up-close, to acknowledge how we’ve supported racialized and gendered emotion-myths, but to embrace the residual emotive currents propelling an aesthetic pedagogy of discomfort. So, the aesthetic in education offers an instructive opportunity to examine others’ grappling with and challenges to our settled emotion-myths. Doing so expands our understanding of our individual and collective roles within larger systems of emotive oppression (Curnow et al., 2021) and how these shape our educational and social experiences. While still human-driven and language-dependent, the socio-relational dimensions of emotion can disrupt education’s preoccupation with knowledge and rationality divorced from embodied ontology, embracing students’ emotionality, rather than constraining it.

Rather than suppressing and ignoring our emotion myth-wrecks, I invite us to witness them up-close, to make them visible, public, and to sit within the uncomfortable stillness. However, I acknowledge how my privileged status as a cisgender, White, native English-speaking, documented citizen of the U.S. authorizes particular emotive displays—although maybe less so now (see Seigworth & Shomura, 2025). Nevertheless, I remain swept in the ever-growing current of gendered feeling rules seemingly more widespread and entrenched than previously acknowledged. Instead of resting in the misguided belief that outlaw emotions—especially women’s public demonstrations of these—create(d) wreckage, I think alongside Lorde (1984) to situate outlaw emotions as useful, playful, even. For this work, I sought lively aesthetic and public representations of outlaw emotions across race and gender, salient, timely, and instructive examples that demonstrate how the aesthetic tugs at the edges of, performs, and dares emotion rules to compel us to believe that emotions are flaws, blemishes, or private hindrances to be remedied individually.

Selfishly, but vitally, I chose anger and rage to challenge my—our—collective misgivings and misinterpretations about our misunderstood emotion-companions, at a time of particularly acute and tangible anger and rage that’s still believed to be best rationalized privately. Because outlaw emotions cut across time, disciplines, genres, political divides, discourses, and bodies, I no longer seek to manipulate emotions and affective displays (Alexander et al., 2023). Instead, I return to the library, to the aftermath of that parent-teacher conference, and I implore my younger self to question her settled, gendered emotion-myths; and to continue speculating and acting upon relational, embodied, and affective knowing in service of discomfort and cultivating [anti-fascist] sensitivity (Cheladyn, 2025) that recommits to our capacities to feel and attune. I invite her—and us—into artful(ly) disrupting conditions governing our emotional experiences, to swim alongside the fullness of our capacities to emote publicly, to affect, and to be affected (Seigworth & Shomura, 2025).

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