

Hello all! My name is Emma Zonn, I use she/her/xie/hir pronouns, and I am speaking to you today from land traditionally stewarded by the Manahoac, Piscataway, and Anacostan peoples. The Piscataway Conoy tribe is still active in my area and you should definitely visit their website to learn more about their work towards tribal reparations and liberation. If you want to learn more about the First Nations stewards in your own region, check out Nativeland.ca to begin your search. If you know the original custodians of the land you're living on, please feel free to drop their name in the chat so everyone can learn!

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We don't have a ton of time together today, so I'm not going to go over my background, but if you have any questions, my contact info is at the end of the session and I always welcome comments, questions, or followup discussion! I will highlight that my identities and experiences absolutely color what I am going to be sharing with you today, so I encourage you to take what is helpful, and leave the rest.

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I am here today to share work that I have done on the Transformative Power of Fury, specifically for "Othered" individuals. We will be covering what it means to be "Othered," the inherent power of the Other, and how to harness and channel that power through Productive Rage.

Anger is an elemental force, and like elemental forces it has both destructive and beneficial natures. The fire that warms a home can also destroy it, water that buoys a boat can also drown it. These opposing natures can also be intertwined, like a forest fire that causes mass devastation and death, but also clears away old growth so that new things can grow, explodes seed pods allowing potential to spread, and enriches the soil with transformed nutrients.

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Because of its elemental nature, divine anger is often connected with earth deities and the unrestrained power of the natural world, which in turn is associated with femininity, as both are inherently connected to the power of creation.

Let's look at some of these qualities manifested in mythological and religious figures. As a note I am pulling primarily from the Ancient Greek tradition, although there are countless examples of divine feminine fury in cultures from across time and around the globe. As I go through these quickly, type in the chat if you notice any recurring themes!

First we have Ma'at, an ancient Egyptian goddess of harmony, truth, and justice- she is responsible for keeping the universe from returning to chaos, as well as weighing a person's heart against her feather of truth when they die. She is often depicted with wings and her scales.

There is Nemesis, a Greek figure of divine retribution, and avenger of crime. She is known as the dark-faced winged one and often pictured with sword, scales, scourge, and measuring rod. She is often associated with Adrasteia- The Inescapable.

This is a figure many of you may recognize- Dyke or Justice. Dike is often conflated with her mother, Themis- the Titan responsible for divine law and order, also mother to the Fates. Both figures are represented with scales and swords.

We have Winged Victory, the Nike of Samothrace.

More wings- The Harpies and the Erinyes. The Harpies pursued evildoers and brought them to the Furies, Earth deities of vengeance and retribution.

Another popular Earth deity is Demeter- goddess of the harvest and mother of Persephone (whose name means “destruction”). Demeter has many aspects, including Demeter Achaëa- mother of grief, Demeter Thesmophoros- the unwritten law bringer, and Demeter Aganippe- the Mare that Destroys. Another goddess of destruction is the Hindu goddess Kali. She is the goddess of time, destruction and death. She is known for devouring her enemies, but also for giving blessings to her followers as a protective mother. She is often pictured wearing a tiger skin and surrounded by snakes, jackals and skulls.

Another goddess of snakes and dogs is Hecate- the Greek goddess of witchcraft, boundaries, crossroads, poison, and death. She is known as “The one who turns away” or “the one who protects”.

Another Victory and creation Goddess is the Celtic Goddess Brigid. Like Hecate she is also a triple goddess, with aspects of maiden, mother, and crone. She is connected to fertility and creativity, as well as war. She is syncretized with the Vodou Iwa Maman Brigitte, a death Iwa who also protects women. Athena is a goddess of both wisdom and war, known to be a vengeful and protective force (it was she who gave Medusa her head of snakes and power to turn people to stone). Artemis is another vengeful, warlike goddess connected to the moon, nature, and animals.

In more modern interpretations, we have Judith Beheading Holofernes by Artemisia Gentileschi, Truth Coming Out of Her Well by Jean-Léon Gérôme, and Pipilotti Rist’s *Ever Over All*, which may look familiar to you if you enjoyed Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* visual album!

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So what are some common themes we can see in all of these figures?

We see nature. We see wings, snakes, and dogs.

- “Goddess/monster myths re-sacralize animals and, concomitantly, those traits we associate with animals in ourselves: intuition, instinct, sexuality, sensuality, and mortality.” (Caputi, *Goddesses and monsters*, 14.)
- Serpents continue to be recognized as bearers of subterranean wisdom, signifiers not only of death but also of infinity and re-birth (Caputi, *Goddesses and monsters*, 13)
- A common theme in monster mythology is defiance of the laws of nature, like super strength or flight. Wings allow these figures freedom, movement, distance, and liberation from the restrictions of gravity.

We see big, open mouths with bared teeth

- the monstrous is linked closely with the fear of the unknown that is the female genitals. Over and over again, the images of caverns, gaping mouths, and yonic symbolism are utilized around monsters
- “The act of a woman opening her mouth with volume and assured force, often in complaint, is coded in our minds as ugly.” The best way to discredit these women, to make them look unattractive, is to capture an image of them screaming,” (Good and Mad: The Revolutionary Power of Women’s Anger, Rebecca Traister)

We see weapons- swords, whips, arrows, spears, and other penetrating tools of violence.

We see motherhood and death, creation and destruction.

We see evildoers being punished and the vulnerable protected.

Many of these themes may seem contradictory, but that is exactly where their power lies- intersecting and integrating antonymical qualities into a singular identity. Many of us can relate to this, especially as we navigate our own complex identities with qualities of both oppressor and oppressed.

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In a cishet patriarchal society rooted in white supremacy, capitalism and puritanical christianity, "The Other" encompasses all things that do not align with CHPWCC (chipwick) values. Non-men, BIPOC, queerness, etc. But this violent othering can be a source of power rather than punishment, as the qualities and identities that are "Othered" are many and powerful. To tap deeper into this power, we need to embrace our collective rage and monstrosity.

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I love horror, especially when read as a textual time capsule of a society's fears. Horror is a cross-cultural phenomenon, and like all stories and media it is used to police the actions of a society, as well as reveal and pass on socio-cultural norms. Its influences are omnipresent, and omnitemporal, but it manifests itself most strongly in places and times of great cultural stress. We are all currently living in times of great stress, and CHPWCC powers are definitely doubling down to protect their status quo, specifically from "monsters" like us. The defining quality of monstrosity is transgression- a crossing of borders and a defiance of boundaries.

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Monsters have two uses in horror- one is to patrol the boundaries of the status quo and destroy anyone who goes beyond it, and the second is to serve as a model of what a person or society may become if it fails to respect the status quo. This aspect of monstrosity has always been the most interesting to me, because it is this aspect that gives those who embrace their monstrosity the power to undo the society that created them in the first place.

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The core of horror is the abject- that which does not respect borders. The ultimate abjection is death, which is why so many of our mythical models of feminine rage and power are also connected to death and the underworld. Death is the ultimate border, the boundary no being can cross. But Goddesses and Monsters frequently do. The status quo is threatened by complex, layered beings, with boundless identities, just like the mythical figures we've covered.

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Like art that is made to comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable, we are the monsters of society- beings which defy binary and transgress borders. Like Frankenstein's creation, our bodies are too big, fallible and incohesive. Like the Mummy, we are Black and Brown, equipped with ancient knowledge. Like Dracula we are immigrants, full of the mixed blood of countless races. Like Carmilla we are queer, sexual, and unrestrained in our desires and hungers. We have feminine phalluses and masculine vulvas, genders and loves and brains on spectra with innumerable axes.

While being an Other may seem disenfranchising, it actually has an element of power in it, for when an individual is Othered, they are no longer bound by the rules of society, since they have been cast aside from it. Embracing monstrosity, therefore, provides a potential for agency for people who have no other means of obtaining power, or who have had what little power they did have taken away from them.

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We see this played out in the genre trope of “the final girl”- “Final girls,” are the ones who survive the horror tale, and emerge at the other end wiser and worldier, usually after killing the monsters who have hunted them, often with the same weapons their attacker wields. In doing so, these women must take on an active agency which allows them to appropriate the “male” strength of the monster to destroy it. Monsters frequently punish social deviance through CHPWCC hypermasculine qualities of predation, violence, and aggression. When these monstrous qualities are enacted by female bodies (the vampire Carmilla or the mummy-princess Ankh-su-namun for example), they often are paired with a concrete explanation, an origin story, frequently revealing that the monster was once a victim themselves. Female monsters and Final Girls are victims and survivors who repurpose the toxic masculinity of their attackers, and bond it with their inherent female Otherness to become empowered bodies, and use it to wreak havoc on the power structures that harmed them in the first place.

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Rage is frequently a tool of oppressive power structures weaponized against disempowered people in order to maintain the status quo. But like a chainsaw in Texas, we can take this tool and turn it against those who would wield it against us. But how do we keep from turning into aggressors ourselves?

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The first quality of productive rage is a focus on protection rather than predation. Punishment is a quality that can split the difference between the two, and while it may be necessary (as many of our mythological models have shown us) it should be used with caution, because as any behavioral psychologist or prison abolitionist will tell you, punishment is an entirely ineffective means of education or correction.

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Productive Rage takes systems of power and subverts them, rather than recreating them. Like the model of the final girl, the most important element of repurposing rage is incorporating the tool of the oppressor into our experiences as the oppressed. If we lose sight of that, we leave ourselves open to becoming the first kind of monster- one that exists purely to punish and prevent others from achieving liberation themselves.

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It's important to remember that fury is meant to be a catalyst for change. If our anger does not spark change, it is not productive rage, and instead drains us of our energy and strengthens the status quo. While there is a great deal in our world to grieve and mourn, sadness and victimization can keep us weighed down and paralyzed by the magnitude of what we must overcome. Silence and fear keeps us trapped, unable to express our needs or wants, or communicate with our communities and co-conspirators. Productive anger frees our bodies and our voices and allows us to move forward, even in the face of insurmountable odds.

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Trauma-informed somatic literacy tells us that preference is our avenue to movement- when we experience a freeze response because of trauma, our preferences are what allow us to move forward and break out of that paralysis. Anger is inherently connected to preference, because anger is a sign that we have a need that is not being met, or a boundary that has been crossed. Boundaries are, as they say, the space at which I can love both you and me equally. Anger is a signal, like pain, it tells us when something is wrong or needs to be fixed. And like pain there are different degrees and types, and it is

imperative to practice self-awareness and introspection so you understand what these feelings are telling you. Your anger is telling you something. Listen to it. Honor it. Then use it.

At the conclusion of this lecture, participants will be able to:

- Define productive rage and name three mythological figures who embody it
  - Productive rage focuses on protection rather than predation
  - Productive rage takes systems of power and subverts them
  - Fury is a catalyst for change
- Define three characteristics of monstrosity & the Final Girl theory & apply them to GSRM experiences
  - Monsters patrol the borders of society- punish people who defy them, and people who defy the status quo become monsters themselves
  - Monsters transgress social boundaries and defy binaries, like GSRMs
    - Their bodies are too big, fallible
    - Too sexual- unrestrained desire, wanting, id
    - Made of many parts- amalgamations of The Other
    - Connection to nature/hybridization between man and beast
    - Defy the laws of nature (flight, super strength, queer reproduction, resurrection)
  - The Final Girl- the ones who survive the horror tale, and emerge at the other end wiser and worldlier, usually after killing the monsters who have hunted them. In doing so, they take on an active agency which allows them to appropriate the strength of the monster to destroy it.
- Give three examples of how productive rage can strengthen relationships
  - Rage helps us to care for ourselves and our loved ones
  - Rage helps us identify boundaries (the distance at which I can love you & myself equally)
  - Rage helps us to identify and communicate needs
  - Different types of anger encourage us to introspect so that we can communicate with others more clearly

### Assorted Bonus Thoughts that Didn't make the Final Cut

- Women: A Journal of Liberation in their issue one, volume six for 1978.
  - The cover featured the image of the Gorgon Medusa by Froggi Lupton, which the editors on the inside cover explained "can be a map to guide us through our terrors, through the depths of our anger into the sources of our power as women"
- issue three, Fall 1986 for the magazine Woman of Power an article called Gorgons: A Face for Contemporary Women's Rage by Emily Erwin Culpepper
  - "The Amazon Gorgon face is female fury personified. The Gorgon/Medusa image has been rapidly adopted by large numbers of feminists who recognize her as one face of our own rage."
- Elisabetta Sirani, Timoclea Killing Her Rapist (1659)
- Hesiod's "Theogony"
- monsters are extreme boundary transgressors. Behaviors associated with monsters are almost always extreme manifestations of masculine behaviors (physical destruction, aggression, sexual predation) enacted by feminized characters, either female monsters, or male monsters with female characteristics. Their monstrosity stems from the disruption of an ordered binary and their Otherness.
- physical extremes serve to repulse the observers, and suggest to them the dangers of individuals who do not fit proper, mainstream society's opinion of appearance
- There is a fear rampant in Gothic monster literature, particularly Dracula and Frankenstein, that the monsters in question are going to breed and out-populate the "good" people, brought on by ethnocentric and nationalistic concerns of purity
- monsters, by their presence, and by their mere existence, change and defy the laws of nature. Dracula himself is described as scaling the walls of his castle like a lizard; gravity, that force which controls the lives of men, has no effect on him
- The monsters "transform the fragments of otherness into one body." They are pieces and parts stitched together with no regards to proper separation into self and Other; for them, their Selves are construed of every Other (Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 92.)
- Female victims are also the most likely to be killed because of their gender. While monsters serve as a warning about the Other, by creating a grotesque, amalgamated body formed out of elements of the Other, they also serve as the punishment administered to Others, which is why women are often targets of monstrous killings, as the female is a representation of the Other.
- Providing women with the potential for empowerment, since female victims are allowed (and even expected) to take on the nature of their (usually male) attackers and become monsters with justification.
- Demeter- harvest/earth goddess; mother of Persephone (destruction); victim of sexual assault and incest- caused a global famine as she retreated to a cave to purify herself
  - Thesmophoros- divine order/unwritten law bringer; keeper of sacred law and the cycle of life and death
    - Thesmophoria- female only festival
  - Thesmia- law goddess

- Erinyes- "Fury" with a function similar with the function of the avenging Dike (Justice), goddess of moral justice based on custom rules who represents the divine retribution and the Erinyes (The Furies)
- anger itself might free us from everything from cheating spouses to systemic racism and sexism. When Beyoncé's bat busts open a fire hydrant, children frolic in its spray, and when she smashes a car's windshield, an explosion erupts, silhouetting her in fire like an avenging angel. But what's most striking is her lack of apology. She grins and grimaces, smashes and struts, as rage becomes her. (<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-history-female-rage-art>)