


## I would like to rage

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**Video URL:** <https://vimeo.com/905668106/df00832901>

**ENG Abstract.** From role playing games to animated GIFs, from reenacted performances to poetic writing, this video essay asks: what is an authentic expression of anger?

**Keywords:** desktop documentary; performativity; reenactment; role playing games.

## ES Quisiera enfurecerme

**Resumen.** De los juegos de rol a los GIF animados, de las representaciones teatrales a la escritura poética, este videoensayo se pregunta: ¿qué es una expresión auténtica de la ira?

**Palabras clave:** Documental desktop; Performatividad; Recreación; Juegos de rol.

**Summary.** 1. Written statement. 2. References.

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### 1. Written statement

At a certain point, I started to suspect I was angrier than I thought.

Leslie Jamison (2018, para. 2)

Short in length but long in the making, this video essay explores a collection of audiovisual media practices to question how we collectively assess the authenticity of varied expressions of rage.

Acknowledging my own difficulties with experiencing and expressing anger, I decided to approach rage from its most phenomenological aspect. Instead of asking what it takes to feel rage, the video wonders what it means to perform it. Gathering a diverse media corpus, from online role-playing games to TV series, to the audiovisual retelling of a therapeutic workshop, I establish a network of anecdotes that aims at enlightening what is at stake in acting or re-enacting rage, depending on whose rage it is, what or whom it is aimed at, and who is there to witness it. In alignment with the rest of this journal issue, the video addresses questions of gender, and questions the dominance of stereotypically male tantrums in contemporary screen-based representation of anger. It also destabilizes the binary of such an analysis by exploring, in its second part, how the early experience of sexual violence can disrupt an individual's relationship to their own anger, independently from their assigned gender.

As I conducted different videographic experiments with the audiovisual corpus I had gathered throughout this research, I became especially interested in the form of GIFs. Functioning as audiovisual 'performances of affects' (Miltner and Highfield, 2017) that translate non-linguistic elements (such as facial expressions or body language) in the digital communication environment, GIFs databases function as a repository of pre-enacted emotions. They provide templates for us to channel and communicate our affects online, while contributing to a standardization of the ways in which these affects may be expressed in offline communications.

Two reasons led me to adopt the GIF form as a structuring aesthetic component in this video. First, as they are re-processed clips from popular audiovisual media, GIFs constitute an excellent object of study for researchers who are interested in cinema's and television's impact on culture and society. Researching what GIFs exist of a given film doesn't tell us much about that film's structure or overall meaning; but it shows what scenes 'sticked' in the audience's hive mind, what lines of dialogues, what sly grin or raised eyebrow have become part of a community's everyday digital language. Angry GIFs therefore provide an image, imperfect yet significant, of what rage looks like in our collective imagination.

Secondly, GIFs typically play on loop. In the attention economy of most platforms, this allows for all

participants in a conversation to catch the full looped video whenever they scroll through the messages. But as I progressed in the development of this video, I started noticing that looping and repetition itself was becoming an underlying theme of the essay. In the Internet show *Critical role*, Travis Willingham's catchphrase «I would like to rage» became iconic through its repetition from one episode to the next. During the workshop on rage, I evoke in the second part of the video, it is only the repetition of the therapeutic exercise over an extended period of time that allows for the anger to sink in and be felt. Even my failed attempts at producing a video essay about rage were repeated over and over, each occurrence leaving me less confident in my ability to produce an articulate discourse on the matter. Looping short audiovisual sequences may be one of the earliest videographic gestures, from Martin Arnold's (1989) *Pièce touchée* to Laura Mulvey's remix experiments of *Gentlemen prefer blondes* (which she described in her 2006 book *Death 24x a second: Stillness and the moving image*), to contemporary scholarly videos like Shane Denson's (2016) *Don't look now: Paradoxes of suture* or Johannes Binotto's (2022) *Loop*. Once I realized that repetition had to be part of my personal process of coming to terms with the rage I was trying to channel in this video, I became convinced that repetition also had to be a defining feature of its videographic language. A realization I tried to enact in the performative final sequence, in which I expose my jocular efforts to learn from Amy Poehler's (NBC, 2009-2015) expressions of anger in *Parks and recreation* through a collage of multiple looping GIFs.

Is this final sequence an 'authentic' audiovisual expression of rage? As it is but a poorly acted recreation of the fictional anger performed onscreen by a comedic actress—no, not by a long shot. But it may be the closest I've come yet to expressing something authentic about rage. In order to conclude this accompanying statement from a scholarly perspective, I'll state that in the making of this video I realized 'authenticity' is not the most productive concept with which to approach rage. Questioning authenticity is a silencing strategy aimed at discrediting the person who speaks; I now understand that the formulation of my initial research question for this piece testifies to internalized forces aimed at dismissing my experiences. I even doubt that authenticity can be a productive concept for approaching any affect (or anything else perhaps—certainly not anything that pertains to the digital realms).

For a more personal conclusion, the pivotal moment in the making of this video was the day when I realized humor could step in where anger kept fading out. This is also something playing with GIFs taught me, especially once I decided to lean

into what fellow videographer Occitane Lacurie, upon watching my video, called a process of 'self-memification'. Among the enabling references I recalled on this matter were Ian Garwood's (2016) humorous self-presentation in *The place of voiceover in academic audiovisual film and television criticism*, Jessica McGoff's (2020) equally funny reenactment of her own shock when she first watched David Lynch's film in *My Mulholland*, and Alice Lenay's (2021) performances in her desktop film *Dear Hacker* and her ongoing videographic project *Twisties!*. In a way I still grieve that my attempts at expressing something more raw kept failing; but according to a quote erroneously attributed to various writers, and conclusively credited to Chris Marker, by Dominique Noguez (2014), humor is «the politeness of despair». But it may also be the subterfuge of the repressed.

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