

# Rampage, Wounds and Chthonic Desire: A Mythological Complex for the Feminist Poetic Line<sup>i</sup>

SERENA CHOPRA

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## INTRODUCTION

Post-Structuralist feminist theory points to masculine discourse as a fundamental mode of oppression for queer (meaning, culturally nondominant) bodies and spaces. The lingering question about masculine discourse, then, is how to overcome it. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Julia Kristeva posits that semiotic-symbolic integration suggests a possible mode of invigorating the feminine within the

symbolic, thereby weakening the stronghold of phallogocentrism over the symbolic. She notes that the threshold between the chora (associated with the semiotic) and the thetic (associated with identity formation and movement into the symbolic) presents an apt possibility for the instinctual, “maternally connoted” semiotic to emerge with symbolic discourse, thereby disrupting and queering the dominance of phallogocentric structures. Kristeva envisions:

...a linguistics capable, within its language object, of accounting for a nonetheless articulated instinctual drive, across and through the... frontier of meaning. This instinctual drive...refers back to an instinctual body...which ciphers the language

i. This essay is accompanied by a film triptych, “Mother Ghosting” (2018) by Serena Chopra, which is available to view at [www.SerenaChopra.com/artist/mother-ghosting](http://www.SerenaChopra.com/artist/mother-ghosting). The film is organized into three parts that are meant to be viewed simultaneously. Sound for the triptych is available in part #3. The triptych is about eight minutes long (when all parts are started simultaneously), but is meant to run continuously as a loop, wherein the parts will begin to synchronize differently, over time. The film triptych contains nudity and menstrual blood.

with rhythmic, intonational, and other arrangements, nonreducible to the position of the transcendental ego even though always within sight of its thesis. (1173)

Such a linguistics resembles identity formation at the threshold wherein the child undergoes both instinctual imaginings (of the chora) and meaningful, identifying constructions (of the thetic). The ciphering of language “with rhythmic, intonational” arrangements postulates that identity formation at the thetic chora resembles poetic language.<sup>1</sup> The qualities of poetry that make the thetic chora an emergent feminist space are qualities of multiplicity, simultaneity and rhizomic (versus arborescent<sup>2</sup>) intelligence. Poetic economy constructs meaning multi-dimensionally and, rather than linearly erecting and upholding a singular significance or mode of intelligence, it wanders and desires beyond the phallogocentric symbolic, towards Luce Irigaray’s feminine<sup>3</sup> *elsewhere*. The concept of *elsewhere* suggests that the feminine “instinctual body” that is both anterior to and within symbolic discourse empowers the expression of queer bodies and imaginings. Combining two myths that evade the phallogocentric symbolic, I will dissect the tensions and complexes of the feminist poetic line in order to uncover the labors and desires of those instinctual bodies-in-language.

1 Kristeva’s theory suggests that where the symbolic has capital/hierarchical economy and the semiotic has an inarticulate and impossible economy, the thetic-chora has poetic economy.

2 According to definitions presented in Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*.

3 For the purposes of this essay, “feminine” implies the semiotic condition of Kristeva’s (M)other—the other, queer and often marginalized bodies, spaces and expressions that are deemed impossible in phallogocentric symbolic order.

## BORN ONTO THE BATTLEFIELD: THE HINDU MYTH OF DURGA AND KALI

### Etymologies

**Durga:** “impassable and invincible” or “beyond reach”—a *durg* is a fortress.

**Kali:** comes from the feminine form of *kāla*, meaning “black or dark colored,” as well as the feminine form of its homonym, *kāla*, meaning “all-time, appointed time”—which is associated with death and also with the fullness of time. Finally, the word resembles *kālam*, meaning “pen.”

While slaying the demon, Raktabija, the warrior goddess, Durga, quickly realizes that each drop of the demon’s blood she spills onto the earth replicates into a clone of the demon. Durga, overwhelmed and frustrated, tires physically but is flooded with such intense rage that from her forehead, the goddess Kali—black, emaciated, adorned in skulls and fur—is born onto the battlefield. In a single gesture, Kali lassoes the demon clones with her tongue and swallows them entirely, saving the world from Raktabija. Kali is a timeless force beyond the physical realm but, manifested in flesh, her powers are no less massive. Unfettered from the mindful warrior, Durga, Kali, a force of undirected, timeless feminine fury, rages across the land. She is the manifestation of feminine destructive/creative energy. Kali burns, razes and slaughters—the people beg the god Shiva to save them from her. In one variant of the myth, Shiva simply responds, “Let her dance!” and lies down to watch her.<sup>4</sup>

4 In another variant, she knocks Shiva to the ground, demonstrating that even gods are victim to her supreme force. In still another interpretation, Shiva lies down to

Though Durga bears Kali, she is not her mother; Kali is Durga's rage transposed. From Durga's forehead, Kali manifests as "...very appalling owing to her emaciated flesh, with gaping mouth... her tongue lolling out, having deep reddish eyes, filling the regions of the sky with her roars..." (Jagadiswarananda). She is popularly iconized as standing over a de-erected Shiva, her foot on his chest, her tongue hanging from her open mouth. Since the 19th century, many interpretations of Kali have read her fallen tongue as the expression of shame, anger, or fear common to women. Additionally, except in West Bengal, iconography of Kali is rare, as many Hindus find her intimidating and mocking of mortality—she presents a knowledge that cannot be transposed into the symbolic.

At this juncture of hermeneutics, it is especially important to recognize—as Irigaray, Kristeva and other Poststructural feminists point out—that phallogocentric economies of the symbolic order refuse semiotic, maternal and intuitive possibilities. Kristeva acknowledges that just as sound is anterior to and within syllable, the mother/intuitive/semiotic is anterior to and within the symbolic/language of the father. Though the symbolic emanates from the semiotic, phallogocentric economies don't permit value to semiotic/instinctual articulation. Language, syntax, and articulate speech are the valued literacies of phallogocentrism. Such values maintain and uphold singular, linear, and centralized modes of intelligence and logic, and therefore of power. Inarticulate, impossible, non-linear articulation is cast-off as hysterical, queer, undirected madness. Mediating the semiotic and symbolic, the

poetic economy of the thetic chora, which "ciphers language with the rhythmic [and] international," offers hermeneutics multiplicity, intuition, and simultaneous possibilities.

Kali's tongue poses a feminist possibility for hermeneutics by demonstrating the impossibility of the symbolic to thoroughly articulate hierophany. Her body, as the manifestation of vast, empty spiritual time, lingers iconized with a limp tongue over a de-erected god. As her etymology links her with the Hindi word for "pen" and "darkness," what she scribes doesn't call for enlightening exegesis; rather, her "scripture" asks us to share in her devastation of and devotion to our symbolic predicament.

The myth of Durga and Kali is one in which the primal mother emerges as the semiotic within the symbolic. In Kali we recognize the semiotic as anterior to and within the symbolic; Kali is the thetic chora suspended in the threshold between the semiotic and symbolic. That she is "emaciated," she is not often associated with traditional motherly love and nurturing but is, however, referred to as "Kali Ma."<sup>5</sup> As the emaciated mother, Kali begs of us what we cannot provide her—Can we stand limp in the gaping mouth of time or must we manufacture it symbolic?

Bringing the fullness of vast emptiness to flesh (in her physical manifestation), Kali brings that which is beyond reach—death and time—to our flesh. She wears our bones—a garland of skulls and a skirt of femurs and hands—to remind us what is truly wearing and truly behind the transient fortress of our bodies. Kali stands to remind us of our own tongues at the threshold of instinct and articulation.

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calm Kali, to turn a mirror on her by taking the position of her victim—when she recognizes Shiva, who is also sometimes identified as her consort, she feels ashamed and halts her rampage.

5 "Mother Kali"

## MOTHER-DESIRE: THE MYTH OF DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE

### Etymologies

**Demeter:** “earth mother” or “house mother.”

**Persephone:** “maiden” or “female grain thresher,” or “to cause death,” or—erroneously—“to shoot forth.” Plato calls her “Pherepapha” in *Cratylus*, meaning “she who is wise and touches that which is in motion.”

The myth of Demeter and Persephone is one in which the mother-child (specifically, the mother-daughter) continuum has been severed through godly/fatherly intrusion via abduction of Persephone by the god Hades, encouraged by Zeus, Persephone’s father. Persephone’s abduction myth exemplifies Kristeva’s thetic break, wherein the language of the father—that of dominion, property and hierarchy—claims the maiden from the Edenic mother garden and subjects her to male desire, discourse and dominance.

According to Kristeva, during the thetic break, the child’s ego finds secure and meaningful (though delimited and singular) possibility within symbolic (linguistic) order. To attain meaningfulness, his identity must maintain the power structures that erect and support his meaningfulness and dismiss those motilities that do not. The thetic break symbolizes the severed union between mother and child, wherein the child perceives itself as cast-off from the mother, who in the hierarchic capital of the symbolic becomes representative of otherness, impossibility and abjection.

In the moment of the thetic break, the child develops *desire* as a causality of being abjected. Thus, the child’s *primal desire* is for communion with the semiotic/mother. However, the thetic child attempts to satiate primal desire for the mother within the constructs of father/god principles (i.e., communion with the Father). Additionally, phallogocentric economies operate on the othering of the mother<sup>6</sup> and dismiss the feminine as a semiotic impossibility, inarticulate and improbable—“meriting not even the rank of syllable”—for, as primal receptacle, she cannot erect herself into meaning.<sup>7</sup>

In the symbolic, desire is a constant and potent tension because phallogocentric systems of hierarchy and capital innately cannot satiate one’s longing for the Edenic mother garden. For the desiring child, rifted from the semiotic mother and fully initiated into symbolic order, it seems that the mother withholds the Edenic union from him, on the other side of the rift. Thus, across the rift of his abjection, it seems she withholds his desire-satiation from him in an Eden to which he cannot return. Rather than acknowledging oppression of the semiotic within the father/god economy, the insatiability of primal desire is determined to be the fault of the mother. The fixed phallogocentric symbolic order, operating on the otherness and impossibility of the mother, fears integrating the maternal/instinctual, which would place phallogocentric economies at risk.

Pointing to this mother-rift, Kristeva demonstrates how phallogocentrism manufactures our abjection from the mother

<sup>6</sup> Irigaray argues, “For in fact feminine pleasure signifies the greatest threat of all to masculine discourse, represents its most irreducible ‘exteriority,’ or ‘exterritoriality.’”

<sup>7</sup> Kristeva

and thus from primal desire itself. Primal desire is substituted with symbolic desire for values significant to the symbolic economy. Kristeva proposes that by integrating the symbolic and the semiotic—by acknowledging the anteriority of the semiotic within the symbolic and by allowing the symbolic imaginative utterance and the semiotic, meaningful possibility—phallogocentrism loses its stronghold over the symbolic. The thetic chora, the condition immediately preceding the thetic break, exemplifies this integration due to its poetic economy; the thetic chora, like a poem, is absorbed in the function of symbolic imagination wherein an inarticulate self/poem attempts multiple articulative possibilities and imagines multiple meanings simultaneously.

In “Some Notes on Organic Form,” Denise Levertov notes that the organic form of a poem necessitates “fidelity to *instress*.”<sup>8</sup> Levertov defines *instress* as the act of perceiving the essential phenomenon of intellectual, emotional, and sensory experiences. Levertov’s conception of organic form<sup>9</sup> resonates with Kristeva’s thetic chora in that the symbolic emerges by reaching into the inarticulate anteriority within. Poetic economy is the quality of the symbolic attending to semiotic anteriority; it is the fidelity of syllable to sound, of language to nonverbal *instress*.

Persephone is the goddess *within* nature—before there were seeds, there was Persephone. She is the anterior expression

(the semiotic sustenance) within all flora. As such, Persephone exhibits the poetic economy of the thetic chora, wherein the emergence (of flora) expresses the anterior, inarticulate within (the goddess “seed”), demonstrating Levertov’s assertion that “Form is never more than a *revelation* of content.”

Demeter and Persephone live in a paradise far from the other gods. When Hades abducts Persephone, he opens the earth and pulls her through a rift leading to the underworld. This exemplifies a kind of thetic break between Demeter and Persephone. Once Persephone enters the underworld, she enters patriarchal economy and hierarchy—she becomes the “queen of the underworld.” Additionally, the rift occurring as a break in the earth is significant for this narrative—as Demeter and Persephone are both goddesses associated with vegetation and earth fertility, the rift in earth is a wound shared by both of them.

During Demeter’s grieving search for Persephone, the earth becomes barren of harvests, and Persephone’s abjection from Demeter doesn’t only function as a break into the symbolic; Persephone’s thetic break casts her into the symbolic order of the sleeping and the dead. As life living among the dead, Hades has abjected Persephone from her own nature (mother-nature). Indeed, Irigaray warns of “...the (male) sexual organ, of the proper name, of the proper meaning... separating and dividing, that contact of at least two (lips) which keeps woman in touch with herself, but without any possibility of distinguishing what is touching from what is touched” (26). As the goddess within nature, Persephone represents reproduction before the use of seed—she is the instinctual “touch of that

8 A term she extracts and manipulates from Gerard Manley Hopkins.

9 Levertov writes, “It seems to me that the absorption in language itself, the awareness of the world of multiple meaning revealed in sound, word, syntax, and the entering into this world in the poem, is as much an experience or constellation of perceptions as the *instress* of nonverbal sensuous and psychic events.”

## IAMBE SUBTEXT, EYE TO WOUND

which is in motion,”<sup>10</sup> the semiotic motility undisturbed by the intrusion of phallogocentric propriety. Persephone is so antithetical to the symbolic ego “of the (male) sexual organ, of the proper name, of the proper meaning,” that in certain ancient traditions, it was forbidden to speak her name—*Persephone*, “meriting not even the rank of syllable.” Like Kali raging across the earth, Persephone mother-desiring from below the earth is a manifestation of the semiotic within the symbolic. Persephone calls out to her mother, not with “proper meaning,” but inarticulate, vast devotion—it is a call from the improbable (from one alive among the dead) for the improbable mother-daughter communion. Homer writes in the “Hymn to Demeter,” of Persephone, “...and the heights of the mountains and the depths of the sea rang with her immortal voice: and her queenly mother heard her.” Though she heard her daughter, Demeter could not find her; but Persephone’s voice keeps Demeter in motion; Demeter, measuring and portioning the earth by where her daughter is not. With daughter-voice ghosting her meter, Demeter searches the earth to find her daughter, as herself, embodying the rift of their shared wound.

The myth of Demeter and Persephone exemplifies primal desire (mother-desire) as not superseded by symbolic desires of phallogocentric economies. Demeter desires Persephone and Persephone desires Demeter, and neither attempts to compensate for their desire in the symbolic. As the myth does not hinge on desiring for the father/god principle, it evades the oppressive phallogocentric stronghold of the symbolic. Instead, the myth energizes and animates primal desire, proving its devotion and possibility.

As Kali meets Shiva at the end of her rampage, Demeter encounters Iambe, who relieves her of her grieving. In both myths the goddesses’ trajectories are met by receptacle figures. In each, the female mouth(s) unsettles and subverts the singular, “proper meaning” and linear intelligence of masculine discourse. Where Shiva de-erects to watch Kali dance, acting as a receptacle to hold her instinctual articulations, Iambe is figured as the receptacle absorbing Demeter’s grief through bawdy performances in which Iambe exposes her genitals and indulges in crass humor. Icons of Iambe portray her as “a woman who consists of almost nothing but her two mouths... [which are] welded together into an inarticulate body mass... [where] the position of the two mouths is reversed. The upper mouth for talking is placed at the bottom of the statue’s belly. The lower or genital mouth gapes open on top of the head” (Carson 135). The confusion of mouths and their performativity suggest a subversively intended subtext to Iambe’s burlesque.

The old crone, Iambe, daughter of Pan and Echo—daughter of the god of wild and impromptu musicality, and of the nymph speaking only in repetition—mimics the vulgar feminine, providing a stage and subversive platform for its mouths. As Irigaray writes,

To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself—inasmuch as she is on the side of the “perceptible,” of “matter”—to “ideas,”

in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make “visible,” by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language. It also means “to unveil” the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function. They also remain elsewhere: another case of the persistence of “matter,” but also of “sexual pleasure.” (76)

In her performance, Iambe is scripting “the feminine in language.” She unveils to Demeter that the sound of her desire is not the shame of her wound. Rather, the sound of her desire is her persistence, her devotion, which need not find solace in symbolic articulation, but may spread and haunt and “remain elsewhere.” So, it may not be the *bawdiness* of Iambe’s performance that rouses Demeter from her grief. Rather, it may be that Iambe presents Demeter with “what was supposed to remain invisible.” In her performance Iambe is repeating and mimicking the wound of primal desire, making visible a possible articulation of the feminine. Within masculine discourse, Iambe sub-textually and subversively holds space for and kinship with Demeter’s grief by exposing her own vulnerabilities. The power of eye to mouth-wound, receptacle to receptacle and undivided by the “proper,” is the power of feminine devotion—when we can vulnerably share our (likely, shared) wounds, we can bring kinship and empowerment to them, rather than bandaging them in victimizing, patriarchal discourse.

The vulnerability of Iambe is illustrated in the way the semiotic haunts beyond the jesting, all-too-regular, iambic meter. The semiotic instinct of a poem can be sonic—what Levertov calls a *non-aural rhyme*—where-in images and other poetic complexes constellate beyond the symbolic constructions of the poem. In other words, the semiotic instinct of a poem ghosts the symbolic infrastructures. With her wild caught up in mimesis of masculine discourse—of what a poem should, infrastructurally, croon like—Iambe, as feminist practice, exposes “the feminine in language,” by allowing it to haunt in the subtext. Between the wound and eye, the feminist poetic line expands, like a ghosting, elsewhere, and the devotion between them casts a trajectory for mutual comprehension and resonance. Of a similar force in poetry, Levertov writes, “...the drone in Indian music is known as the horizon note...This sense of the beat or pulse underlying the whole I think of as the horizon note of the poem.” That Iambe is regulated, she is also trembling below and along the horizon of the feminist poem—she holds *elsewhere* intentionally and sub-textually even, exposing herself to the desperate meter, the Demeter, of the feminist poetic line.

## A CONCEPTION OF THE FEMINIST POETIC LINE

Whereas the Durga/Kali myth imagines the feminine embattled at the threshold between instinct and articulation, the Demeter/Persephone myth signifies *primal mother-desire* through communion of the shared feminine wound.<sup>11</sup> Placing these

<sup>11</sup> Which is the mother-bject-daughter/daughter-bject-mother wound (for which “daughter” is feminine discourse/possibility, not specifically female, and “mother” is



voice"<sup>12</sup> imitates the feeling of Demeter's devotion-desire experience. The meter of the feminist poetic line, hardly linear, is the expression of the desire of the shared wound and the mother-devotion that follows her daughter's chthonic voice across the earth. When meter reaches the end of the line, her grief is relieved by Iambe, who exposes meter, wound to eye. This is the receptacle-a-receptacle at the end of the feminist poetic line. Rather than a break, the end of the feminist poetic line experiences *choratic*<sup>13</sup> transformation.

From the end of one line, the urgency of Durga on the battlefield of the next line pulls the force of Kali from her own gaping mouth (O, over Shiva at the end of the previous line), and through Durga's forehead at the beginning of the next line—O through O, receptacle through receptacle, the wound via wound of mother replication. The work of the feminist poem is, in this way, the act of "beginning again and again and again."<sup>14</sup> The insistent arrangements of phallogocentric symbolic order is exemplified by the cloning demons that keep Durga, the primal mother, in an uphill battle wherein her rage can only find expression in masculine discourse. In other words, Durga's rage is the inarticulate primal desire impossibly attempting expression by battling masculine discourse with masculine discourse, erecting her sword against their many swords, until Kali surges forth. The feminist poetic line is energized by this impossible surging of the dark feminine. As Irigaray discusses, it is only through subversive repetition of the

feminine that we can escape the phallogocentric stronghold over the symbolic. In other words, feminist practice is the work of beginning again and again in the battle-field, unleashing feminine impossibility at the threshold of instinct and articulation.

At the end of her rampage, Kali indicates the un-held feminine mouth, the unfettered feminine jaw, the intimidating feminine tongue curving over the lip, the de-erected god at the mouth of each choratic transformation. The end of the feminist poetic line is a meditation—listen overly, as a ghosting, listen out. The posture of female mouth(s) in each myth signifies the ways in which the feminist poetic line necessarily refuses a traditional masculinist turn by inciting multiplicity in meditation, rather than singularity towards a centralized logic. Levertov, in discussing the poem as the demand of constellated experiences, points to contemplation as the fulfillment of that demand. She writes, "And to meditate is 'to keep the mind in a state of contemplation'; its synonym is 'to muse,' and to muse comes from a word meaning 'to stand with open mouth'—not so comical if we think of 'inspiration'—to breathe in. So—as the poet stands open-mouthed in the temple of life, contemplating [her] experience, there come to [her] the first words of the poem..." I have expanded my reading of this conception to indicate not just the first words of the poem, but the first words of each poetic line.

The beginning of each feminist poetic line is inspired by Kali and Iambe standing at the end of the previous line, above with open mouth.<sup>15</sup> Inciting the many muses and musings of *elsewhere*, the mouths of Kali

<sup>12</sup> Homer

<sup>13</sup> Here I am pointing to Plato's and Kristeva's use of *chora*, Derrida's *chora*, which implies a between space, a place that is neither in nor out, as well as denoting the qualities of a chorus, especially in Greek tragedy, or of a choral arrangement that demonstrates simultaneity and multiplicity.

<sup>14</sup> Stein

<sup>15</sup> (where inspired contemplation leads to choratic transformation)

and Iambe start and stare into the inarticulate territory of no-line. The end of the line hinges on the musing breath of subversive jest that carries us over the lip of the line, at the mouth of our shared wounding, and through the rifted earth following Persephone's descent and landing us in Durga's battlefield. According to Levertov,

there must be a place in the poem for rifts too—(never to be stuffed with imported ore). Great gaps between perception and perception which must be leapt across if they are to be crossed at all. The *X*-factor, the magic, is when we come to those rifts and make those leaps... when that devotion brings us to undreamed abysses and we find ourselves sailing slowly over them and landing on the other side—that's ecstasy. (76)

Demeter's devotion brings us to "undreamed abysses"—to the primal cry rifted between Iambe-Durga-Kali-Iambe, the vast horizontal note that allows woman to "remain elsewhere... [as] the persistence of 'matter,' but also of 'sexual pleasure.'" Descending the rift-wound (of choratic transformation, a kind of receptacle-a-receptacle pleasure/ing), the horizontal note communes the language acts of meter, or surface devotion, with chthonic desire of voice (-phone), those flourishes ready to spring forth in the next line. Meter's choratic transformation, not "stuffed" with phallogocentric intrusion,<sup>16</sup> suggests the inspired, twisting momentums resembling Persephone within nature—in the feminist poetic line, the choratic pleasure of poetic language carries us through the rift-wound.

Persephone, who "touches what is in motion," is nature/woman touching herself. Through the earth of the poetic line, Persephone emerges as primal mother-desire. Her pleasure in touching herself in motion, which is the manifestation of her vegetation, opens the earth in many small rift-wounds that represent her desiring for meter/mother. Her desire emerges in the mimicry of her natal garden, which touches, ecstatically, her mother's devotion at the surface. As the eye encountering the wound brings subversive kinship, primal desire encountering mother-devotion allows the emergence of "feminine in language,"—this is the language of the feminist poetic line and it is vegetal, seasonal, fleshly.

This emergence inevitably entangles with the battlefield surface tensions of the poetic line. The feminist poetic line is rhizomic and non-hierarchical.<sup>17</sup> Persephone and Kali reflect the persistence of elsewhere in matter and pleasure through their emergence from their respective fortresses of the chthonic and of Durga. The emergent "feminine in language" encounters Kali, the threshold of instinct and articulation, surging across the horizon. Demeter also communes with Kali, the manifestation ("scripture") of the feminine dark all-time. When the dark time threshold script of Kali communes with the wandering meter/mother, the feminist poetic line inherits the labor of elsewhere, of speaking and perceiving multiply, like Iambe, in the language of a receptacle mouth. To wear the rhythms of feminine dark time in our own flesh, in the fleshy language of our desire, the feminist poetic line intuitively the body script of rage born onto the battlefield.

<sup>17</sup> Levertov notes that, "...for precision of language...is not a matter of one element supervising the others but of intuitive interaction between all the elements involved."

<sup>16</sup> Line(ar) thetic) break, "imported ore"

[Chthonic Colony: My Body Invades the Theory]

The way the mother works.

This isn't about women.

She finds herself in the light of the sun! Holy!  
She remembers she will burn on top his deceased body.

To attempt oneself in antithetic discourse.  
The way darkness rubs itself against itself and takes the form of the home, giving me water  
from its faucet.

Imagine the edge of skin akin the mirror of faucet.  
To need water; to ask darkness her dis-appearance.

Father, we could stay inside and get light as white.  
As my white mother and bury yours sun-ashed in the sun—her own pyre/ never widow.  
Burned.

The way a mother works.  
A daughter works.  
A Son.  
Works better.

Must have a son. Repeat your husband-father.  
“Then you can lay down and sleep, like me.”<sup>18</sup>

Chthonic plague of recitation.  
Of Father/Son/Holy.

Mother ghosting.  
This whole goddamned harvest ghosted with raped daughter, damned.

Arborescent nymphs.

The women up and down the steep Himalayan trails.  
Collecting fire.  
Wood on their back, their heads/men/holy sleeping.

Sigh.  
Beneath the skylight, the dawn's quiet snow claps into panting rain.  
A spring rain transports me—the earth opening again its devious abjection.

18 “Get married, have a son and then you can lay down and sleep like me,” said my Taai Ji (my father's elder brother's wife)

In the bathtub mom tells me.  
She is nervous when applying the cream to the wounding between me.<sup>19</sup>

To need water, to ask darkness her dis-appearance.  
Persephone is that she recites Mother.

Whose wounds are the sprouts.  
Daughter provokes.  
Chthonic modes of intelligence.

In the short hall between our rooms, me on my back, mom on crouched knees looks  
her eye between.  
Me seriously bites her lip we go quiet as the cold cream.  
Of our contact.

Our desire is the myth of this contact.<sup>20</sup>

She tells me to remember my spelling of *together*, think.  
*To-Get-Her.*

Some signs might recognize desire by repeating it.  
To get her, to get her.  
“This is an economy that can no longer be put in economic terms.”<sup>21</sup>

What are the repetitions that queer me.  
The mirror, the odor.

19 From a neighbor boy, my babysitter, who sexually abused me.

20       circ  
          leci  
          rle  
  
          o  
          moon  
  
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          a e a e a e a e a e  
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eyeyeye  
From “Beam 5: The Voices,” *Ark* by Ronald Johnson  
21 From *The Laugh of Medusa* by Helen Cixous

At father's house in the bathroom alone.  
With the cream and the wound, his shame of ruined.

Daughter, *Go put your thing.*

Repeat.

Mother desire.

Is the abjection of illegible wounds opening the one the other to say.

Sigh.

I understand that this dissertation must be thorough and consistent, airtight.  
"Woman's otherness reabsorbed and reduced by masculine discourse and practice."

I understand that this dissertation must be thorough and consistent.

"She is wise and touches what is in motion."

Articulate.

Rehearse.

This isn't about women.

Who becomes, frustrated with the demons.

This isn't about women, but imagination.

Chthonic touch, eye, see.

The wounding leading to masturbation.

"Imagination harbors the desire of the object to unlimited repetition...

Rehearses the desire repeatedly in preparation.

Of the final performance.

Narrative shifts discover variation."<sup>22</sup>

Goddess.

Warrior.

Mother.

Durga.

Became frustrated with the demons.

She became frustrated with the demons.

Frustrated with the demons she slayed and they repeated.

Themselves out of their own blood.

She spilling.

Rehearsing her warrior desire on the battlefield.  
Her mother desire.  
Her mother.  
She became.  
Her frustrated.  
Mother and the meter bore.

From her forehead her frustration repeated bore.  
Kali black born.  
Onto the battlefield of repeating demons.

Have you heard about the rampage.  
She wrote across the land.  
Strokes in flame and laughter.

Emaciated daughter-hunger.  
*Enemy* is an excuse.  
For abjection.

Needs no excusing.  
To be born on the battlefield isn't a wisdom.  
To be abducted, raped, cast-off isn't.

Wise, touching what's in motion.  
A different kind of war.

In her disorientation, ours.  
Repeating rearrangement.  
That earth abjected from heaven is impossible—paradise, a thetic break—only her tongue falls.

Out as she steps on Shiva's chest.  
“...a victim of constantly shifting positions, with every one of those positions stunned[.]  
By bewilderment—

Is it here, is it here, is it there?”<sup>23</sup>  
She asks with the cream, bit lip.  
I bite mine, applying and evoking myself offering myself.

Not wisdom, but bewilderment.  
That the wound is t/here sighing.  
Signing that the wound is t/here.

And between, the synapses, of desire and imagination, pleasure-destruction.  
 “For in fact feminine pleasure signifies the greatest threat of all to masculine discourse.”<sup>24</sup>

Put me in the bathroom to apply myself.  
 If kept in the closet I will.  
 A radical project.

To pre-position one a victim.  
 Is to offer them colonization.  
 To abject their ghosting from them.

Bewildering what’s in motion.  
 Mother desire.  
 Is not about women.

Kali, from behind Durga’s eyes.  
 Begins to require daylight.  
 To attempt oneself in antithetic discourse, demons.

To *get* her.  
 To be healed with the Mother/Daughter/Holy ghOsting.

That the Father/Son/Holy ghost is a bandage—the wound made to wear this performance—  
 Under which the wound is shame silent (un-signed/un-sighed) and rotting.

*Go put your thing.*

I will.  
 Open her.  
 Paradise of fallen tongue.

Chthonic colony re-fuses us to the gaping thetic, to otherness.  
 Thetis, sea nymph, goddess of water.  
 Set as the sea.

How to write of theory when the body.  
 When desire.

Of an indwelling again and again, rearranged.

Our desire is the myth of this contact.  
 Mother eyeing the wound, daughter evoking its haunting, harvest.

Is my thesis.

What is simultaneously urgent in the body and its hidden miseries.  
And languages now differently again.

Chthonic pleasure, bewilderment.

Of the arborescent; Shiva on his back, too.

Awaiting the weight of syllable sound syllable sound syllable sound thesis.

The faucet pours into my hand that wears this water like the wound of a ghost.

In my palm.

the one the other.

Thetis: the failed mother

Derived from *tithenai*, meaning “to set, place.”

Also forms “thesis,” and “thetic.”

Meaning.

To place as water, to set as the sea.

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