

## **(<sup>w</sup>)omen out/of Time: Metis, Medea, Mahakali**

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*In memory of my father who was a great devotee of the Mad Mother.*



Medea, the woman, knows that she is going to die unless she calls out to the Other. 'For whoever wants me dead, I can be barbaric'. Faced with panic, one must be able to recreate another world without common measure with the one that is found to be lacking, not just return a mediocre blow for blow. 'Being barbaric'. 'Being Medea'.

Isabelle Stengers, 'Souviens-toi que je suis Médée', 13.



By subverting, mocking, or rejecting conventional norms and opening onto the realm of the forbidden (the realm of 'forbidden things'), 'kaligraphy'—the inscription/incarnation of *Kali*, goddess of destruction—stretches one's consciousness beyond the conventional and socially sanctioned, thereby 'liberat[ing] [it] from the inherited, imposed, and probably inhibiting categories of proper and improper, good and bad, polluted and pure'.

Dan Mellamphy, 'Kaligraphy'.



We are no longer a part of the drama of alienation; we live in the ecstasy of communication. And this ecstasy is obscene. The obscene is what does away with every mirror, every look, every image. The obscene puts an end to every representation.

Jean Baudrillard, 'The Ecstasy of Communication', 150.

‘What if Truth were an Omen?’ I ask (with a nod to Nietzsche<sup>1</sup>—*through a glass, darkly*).

What if Truth were a *Namshub*,<sup>2</sup> a Magic Word/Work, the *nomen* of an *omen*? Such a truth advances here—in this essay—masked as women. Metis, Medea and Mahakali; first, a Pelasgian Titan, the first wife of Zeus and unacknowledged mother of Athena, who was doomed to be swallowed-up whole and usurped by the head of Olympos; second, a foreign priestess of the chthonic Hecate, who (as first told in Apollonius of Rhodes’s *Argonautika* and later immortalized by Euripides and Seneca) helps the Greek Jason retrieve the mythic golden fleece, and who eventually murders her entire family and escapes back to Kolchis; and finally, a fringe Hindu goddess first worshipped by criminals and outcastes, a dark deity clothed in severed heads, who drinks the blood of her victims and resides in the cremation-ground—one who comes to be adopted as an incarnation of *great time* (*mahakala*) or *death itself* in Hindu religion.

All three are women who are *omens* and mothers who are *others*: that is, each is an outsider (foreign, marginal, outcast) with regard to the contexts/constructs of civilization (all three autochthonous in origin, as we shall see, and portending the subversion of propriety), and each brings about the heretical vision of a death and destruction of order and civility, making it impossible to build an alternate politics from and upon them. Rather than serving as a ground—as archetypes, ideal types and/or avatars—of *subjectivity* or of alternative *agency*, these three {w}omen are strictly speaking abysmal *stigmata* or *wounds*: “the puncturing *puncta* that cut into the context qua con-job of culture, revealing the *kha* of *khaos*—that gushing gap, oozing orifice, or terribly terrific tear

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<sup>1</sup> “What if Truth is a woman—what then?” Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘Preface’ to *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (1886).

<sup>2</sup> “In Sumerian myth *Asarludu/Namshub*—the ‘shining’—is ‘the god that illuminates our path’,” [Twitter.com/occultures/status/559157900837670912](https://twitter.com/occultures/status/559157900837670912).

in the fabric of phenomena (phenomenal fabrications) which wounds the world  
'as we know it'. Stable forms find themselves fissured, fractured, fragmented,  
and (via this 'fragmentation', 'fracturing' or 'fission') formidably fluid, bleeding  
beyond their beseeming boundaries."<sup>3</sup>

In the following, I suggest that Metis, Medea and Mahakali are all associated  
with *matrices*, and all embody the matrix of *holes*—or {*w*}*hole-matrix*—that disjunctively  
conjoins<sup>4</sup> a fabric or network of relations. Metis's cunning intelligence (*metis*) is said to involve  
the "interlacing of opposite directions [...] and imprints" producing "an *enigma* in the true sense  
of the word"<sup>5</sup> that constitutes "living bond[s]"/double-binds which "bind" and "secure"  
but *themselves* elude capture.<sup>6</sup> Medea too is said to be endowed with *metis*, the  
cunning technical intelligence that is itself "net-like" and necessitates a knowing how  
(*i.e.* "know-how") to manipulate the matrix of interlaced oppositions.<sup>7</sup> As living magical nets

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<sup>3</sup> Dan Mellamphy, 'Kalligraphy', in *Serial Killing: A Philosophical Anthology*, eds. Edia Connoles & Gary J. Shipley (UK: Schism Press, forthcoming 2015).

<sup>4</sup> cf. Heraclitus, 'Fragment 10' (*sullapsis*: *hola kai ouk hola, sumpheromenon diaferomenon, sunaidon diaidon kai ek panton hen kai ex henos panta*) re: *that which is whole and not whole, drawn-together and drawn-asunder, harmonious and discordant*—his fragment on 'syllapsis' (Heraclitean synthesis), online at [Heraclitusfragments.com/B10/text.html](http://Heraclitusfragments.com/B10/text.html) + [Heraclitusfragments.com/B10/translation.html](http://Heraclitusfragments.com/B10/translation.html).

<sup>5</sup> "It is what the Greeks sometimes call *ainigma* and sometimes *griphos*, for an enigma is twisted together like a basket or a wheel. In one of his dialogues Plutarch writes of the Sphinx twisting together her enigmas or riddles (*ainigmata kai griphous plekousan*), devising the questions which Sophocles describes as *poikila*, shimmering, many-coloured, shifting. The composition of some of the best known riddles reveals the tangle of forms and the shimmering of different colours which give them the disturbing mobility of speech which seems constantly vibrating, never for a moment remaining the same as it was. [...] The answer which allows [Polyeidos] to escape from the *aporia* is the infallible grip with which he catches and binds the shifting and mobile words of the riddle"—Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, 303, 304); for more on this, cf. Dan Mellamphy, 'Between Beckett & Bec: The Metic Hexis and Flusserian Flux of Vampyroteuthis Abductionis', available online at [Academia.edu/4185250](http://Academia.edu/4185250).

<sup>6</sup> Detienne and Vernant, 41, 42.

<sup>7</sup> "Right from the start the passage giving praise to the *metis* of the Corinthians and their inventions, *sophismata*, seems inseparable from the myth telling of Athena's discovery of an instrument capable of taming a horse and making it submit to its rider. But this same form of intelligence is then further illustrated by Sisyphus and Medea, the two heroes in Corinthian mythology who are most fully endowed with *metis*. With his artfulness, his gift of the gab, his skill in disguising his promises just as he changes the appearance and colour of the herds which he lures away from his neighbours, Sisyphus, the Death-deceiver, emphasises

that *gain* (rather than lose) their power through the paradoxical contiguity of oppositions (and thus through the eluding and exceeding of definition), all three—Metis, Medea and Mahakali—*bind* and thus *mediate*, but ultimately remain unbound and unmediated *themselves* (and thus *undomesticated* and *barbaric* from the point-of-view of civility and the *civitas*), proceeding by way of oblique rather than linear pathways, by deception, illusion and contagion rather than by way of logic, law and legitimacy.<sup>8</sup> Each has been anthropomorphized (that is, made to represent woman, gender, sexual politics of varying sorts), but each is incorrectly deemed human<sup>9</sup> and should instead be considered inhuman and *over-human*: “If Medea had been avenged, like us simple mortals, she would have paid the price for her act of revenge. She has entered into a contract with humanity and the contract has been broken.”<sup>10</sup> This is one context in which we can understand Medea’s defiant statement that she can be barbaric (*epigram*: Stengers, 13); “being Medea” means being *untameable, unassimilable, un-anthropomorph[ize]able*—that is, being *inhuman* and/or *overhuman*. “[F]our-armed, garlanded with skulls and with disheveled hair, she holds a freshly-cut human head and a bloodied scimitar in her left hand

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the proportion of malice which enters into the intelligence of cunning. As for Medea, the first of a long line of women who are experts in the use of poisons, love-philtres, spell-binding magic, *pharmaka metioenta*, she is there to illustrate the importance of the part played in the technical intelligence, which is the subject of this twofold account, by another, darker, aspect, an element of magic, several features of which we have already noted in connection with Athena”—Detienne and Vernant, 189.

<sup>8</sup> “Nothing can bind [them] but [they] can secure anything. Bonds are the special weapons of *metis*. To weave (*plekein*) and to twist (*strephein*) are key words in the terminology connected with it. [...] *Strophaios* is also the name given by the Greeks to the sophist who knows how to interweave (*sumplekein*) and twist together (*strephein*) speeches (*logoi*) and artifices (*mechanai*)”—Detienne and Vernant, 41.

<sup>9</sup> This is lifted from the final—ending—endnote (note #35) of my essay ‘*Ghost in the Shell-Game: On the Metic Mode of Existence, Inception & Innocence*’ (2014), direct-linked (online) at [TheFunambulist.net/2013/12/04/funambulist-papers-46-ghost-in-the-shell-game-on-the-metic-mode-of-existence-inception-and-innocence-by-nandita-biswas-mellamphy/#35](http://TheFunambulist.net/2013/12/04/funambulist-papers-46-ghost-in-the-shell-game-on-the-metic-mode-of-existence-inception-and-innocence-by-nandita-biswas-mellamphy/#35)—where I refer to Dan Mellamphy’s contribution to the inaugural issue of *Ozone: Journal of Object-Oriented Ontology* (2013), ‘The Sorcerer’s Magic Milieu’ ([Academia.edu/4185540](http://Academia.edu/4185540)), in which he quotes the young Gilles Deleuze who himself quotes the translated Giovanni Malfatti di Montereaggio (*a.k.a.* Johann Malfatti von Montereaggio *a.k.a.* Jean Malfatti de Montereaggio): Jean Malfatti de Montereaggio, *La Mathèse, ou: Anarchie et Hiérarchie de la Science*, trans. Christien Ostrowski (Paris: Éditions du Griffon d’Or, 1946, xii) ... “[doesn’t such a *mathesis*,] however, surpass this ‘living human nature’?—[for] it defines itself as [a] collective and supreme knowledge, [a] universal synthesis, ‘[a] living unity incorrectly deemed human’.”

<sup>10</sup> Isabelle Stengers, *Souviens-toi que je suis Médée* (Paris: Empecheurs Penser en Rond, 1993), 11.

All translations from this text are mine.

while making signs for fearlessness, assurance, and the bestowing of boons with her right hand. Her neck adorned with a garland of severed human heads all dripping blood, a severed head hanging from each of her earlobes, she wears a girdle of severed human hands round her waist [...] and the smile on her lips glistens with blood [...] as her three eyes burn red, glaring like two rising suns.”<sup>11</sup> Mahakali, as such, might be the clearest articulation of a pre-human and overhuman assemblage which is arguably becoming emblematic of an emergent planetary-wide ‘network-centric condition’:<sup>12</sup> she is always *multiple, heterogeneous*, and terrifyingly *in-/over-human*.

So, although all three are personifications and principles of ancient, bygone cultures (*effroyablement anciennes*, in fact<sup>13</sup>), I argue that they are particularly relevant because they conjure and evoke an important aspect of the networked future—particularly, the *chthonic*<sup>14</sup> matrix that is currently manifesting itself, corresponding to what Alexander Galloway calls *not a “hermeneutic” or “iridescent”*<sup>15</sup> but a “furious” mediation:

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<sup>11</sup> David R. Kinsley, *The Sword and the Flute—Kali and Krsna: Dark Visions of the Terrible and the Sublime in Hindu Mythology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Dan Mellamphy and Nandita Biswas Mellamphy, eds., *The Digital Dionysus: Nietzsche and the Network-Centric Condition* (New York: Punctum Press, forthcoming).

<sup>13</sup> *Ancien—effroyablement ancien*, in the words of Maurice Blanchot which Roger Laporte used as the title for his study of the latter (Paris: Éditions Fata Morgana, 1987).

<sup>14</sup> From Greek *khthonios*, ‘in, under, or beneath the earth’, from *khthon*, ‘earth’; pertaining to the Earth; earthy; subterranean) designates, or pertains to, deities or spirits of the underworld, especially in relation to Greek religion. The Greek word *khthon* is one of several for ‘earth’; it typically refers to the interior of the soil rather than to the living surface of the land (as *gaia* or *ge* does) or to the land as territory (*chora*) does—[Etymonline.com/index.php?term=chthonic](http://Etymonline.com/index.php?term=chthonic). The chthonic here is distinguished from the *gaian*, from the Greek *Gaia*, mother of the Titans, personification of ‘earth’ as opposed to heaven, ‘land’ as opposed to sea, ‘land, country, soil’ as collateral form of *ge* (or the Dorian *ga*), meaning ‘earth’, of unknown origin, perhaps pre-Indo-European. The Roman equivalent earth-goddess was Tellus (see tellurian), sometimes used in English, poetically or rhetorically, to designate ‘Earth personified’ or ‘the Earth as a planet’ (cf. [Etymonline.com/index.php?term=gaia](http://Etymonline.com/index.php?term=gaia)).

<sup>15</sup> “Given the convoluted twists and turns of Hermes’s travels, the text is best understood as a problem. Likewise, given the aesthetic gravity of immediate presence in Iris’s bow, the image is best understood as a poem. Thus, whereas hermeneutics engages with the problem of texts, iridescence engages with the poetry of images be they visual or otherwise. Hermeneutics views media (of whatever kind, be it text, image, sound, etc.) as if they were textual problems needing to be solved. Yet iridescence views these same media as if they were

After Hermes and Iris, instead of a return to hermeneutics (the critical narrative) or a return to phenomenology (the iridescent arc), there is a third mode that combines and annihilates the other two. For after Hermes and Iris there is another divine form of pure mediation, the distributed network, which finds incarnation in the incontinent body of what the Greeks called first the Erinyes and later the Eumenides, and the Romans called the Furies. So instead of a problem or a poem, today we must confront a system. A third divinity must join the group: not a man, not a woman, but a pack of animals.<sup>16</sup>

The networked condition that is currently manifesting itself is becoming more and more *furious* (“pack animal”-like), that is, prehistoric, nonhuman/inhuman, heterogeneous and multiple,<sup>17</sup> consequently less and less anthropocentric—*i.e.* humanistically hermeneutic and descriptively dialectical.

It has been commonplace—even politically necessary—for feminist theorization since the first wave to ground itself *in* and reproduce the conditions *for* what Baudrillard called “the drama of alienation,” that Primal Scene of Sovereign Power<sup>18</sup> in which a primordial heterogeneity is turned into a difference that can be dualized and disciplined, that is,

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poetic images waiting to be experienced. [...] The culminating moment of hermeneutics is always a type of mystical revelation, a lightning strike. Yet the culminating moment of iridescence is an aurora, a blooming, the glow of a sacred presence.” Alexander Galloway, ‘Love of the Middle’—a version of which was presented at the 2013 *Apps And Affect* conference in London Ontario as ‘*Three Middles: Mediation in Networks*’, [AppsAndAffect.Blogspot.ca/p/program.html](http://AppsAndAffect.Blogspot.ca/p/program.html)—in Alexander Galloway, Eugene Thacker and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 46, 55.

<sup>16</sup> Galloway, 56.

<sup>17</sup> “[The Furies] move through contagion. They are called a “bloody ravening pack” by Aeschylus, and often described as animals or swarms. The Furies are essentially indeterminate in number [...]. If Hermes is a self, and Iris is a life, the Furies are an ecosystem, a swarm, a cloud”, Galloway, 57, 58.

<sup>18</sup> As an encapsulation of the Primal Scene of Sovereign power see for example Christopher Long’s account of the legacy of Metis: “From its very beginnings, patriarchal dominion has always established its authority and won legitimacy by a subversion of the feminine that arises out of an implicit recognition of feminine power. Swallowing Metis, Zeus secures the stable order of his divine rule; sacrificing Iphigenia, Agamemnon asserts his authority as sovereign; denying the Erinyes their vengeance, Athena founds the human community that bears her name. Each of these stories articulates a dimension of the tragic dialectic of patriarchal dominion: a feminine power is subverted in a foundational act of decision designed to establish and consolidate patriarchal authority; this act of subversion then wins legitimacy by repression as it is designated inevitable and identified with the natural order of things”—Christopher Long, ‘*The Daughters of Metis: Patriarchal Dominion and the Politics of the Between*’, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 28:2 (2007), 67. Versions and variations of this basic dialectical scene can be found in various feminist discourses of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

structured dialectically as the *antagonistic* and *agonistic* (i.e. alienating and potentially transformative) relations between two forces, or identities, or parties (e.g. order and chaos, master and slave, self and other, male and female, masculine and feminine, patriarchal and matriarchal, hetero and homo, light and dark, inside and outside, etc., to name just a few of the dualities that have been in play for centuries). Dialectics—the contestation between opponents or opposing elements, adopted largely from the inheritance of the ancient Greeks—has been the governing metaphor and model for human action and communication in all spheres from war, policy, and ethics, to poetics, aesthetics, and informatics. Mythically, this governing metaphor is not just as a description for relations of exchange in which one element encounters/relates to another, but more precisely it is an intellectual mechanism for conceptualizing knowledge as the product of a fundamental *asymmetric* relation of domination and subjugation in which one element, identified as primary, subjugates and incorporates, as well as metabolizes and eliminates, another element which it encounters as a ‘strange externality’. In the *Theogony*, just as order subjugates chaos and patriarchy usurps matriarchy, so the victory of the Olympians over the Titans (the old chthonic pantheon) is enacted in a Primal Scene of subjugation and incorporation that thereafter gets repeated: Zeus swallows his first wife, the Oceanid Metis, thereby initiating the entire *dramatis personae* of the Olympian pantheon. Metis’s incorporation and domestication by Zeus is the mythic source for the subsequent usurpation of the chthonic gods by the new Olympian order; Athena, Hermes, Apollo are all said have inherited *metis* through Zeus’s incorporation of Metis’s powers; and the chthonic Erinyes are also thereafter subjugated and coopted by the goddess Athena—in the name of her father Zeus Pater—and renamed the ‘Eumenides’ or ‘kindly ones’. This is the drama of alienation that is literally meant to put that which is

off-stage (*ob-scena*) onto center-stage, and in so doing justify the gesture of political domestication that founds the Sovereign's power over an Other that is initially encountered as unfamiliar, unknown and external, but becomes familiar, known, and internalized.

The obscenity of Metis is transformed through her subjugation and assimilation by Zeus: the strange externality that was Metis, now incorporated by Zeus, becomes the catalyst for the birth of Athena, and as such, the precondition for the emergence of the quintessential Greek invention, the *polis*.

For so long, this basic dialectical model set the scene for the incorporation and domestication of the obscene, that uncanny other the integration of which founds the scenes and circuits of human communication and exchange. The structure of dialectics, like that of the theatrical scene (as well as of the mirror), sets up a dynamic—the very drama of alienation according to Baudrillard—in which the necessary division and distance between two different but related elements (i.e. subject/object) is posited, reversed, and overcome. The city thus encounters a menacing and ungraspable exteriority, one that makes light of and does not submit to the Laws except on its own terms (cf. Stengers, 16-7).

Has civilization been able to digest the obscenity of Metis, Medea and Mahakali?

This drama of alienation and the politics of dialectical subjugation, incorporation and transformation no longer adequately reflect the [hyper]realities of our current network-centric condition, which as Baudrillard had suggested, depends no longer on a *communicative* and *agonistic* model of dialectics, difference and reconciliation, but rather on a protean, interfacial, and reticulated model of *contiguity* which entails the reversibility between identical things:

The description of this whole intimate universe—projective, imaginary and symbolic—still corresponded to the object’s status as mirror of the subject, and that in turn to the imaginary depths of the mirror and ‘scene’: there is a domestic scene, a scene of interiority, a private space-time (correlative, moreover, to a public space).<sup>19</sup> [...] But today the scene and mirror no longer exist; instead, there is a screen and network. In place of the reflexive transcendence of mirror and scene, there is a nonreflecting surface, an immanent surface where operations unfold- the smooth operational surface of communication. [...] No more fantasies of power, speed and appropriation linked to the object itself, but instead a tactic of potentialities linked to usage: mastery, control and command, an optimization of the play of possibilities offered by the car as vector and vehicle, and no longer as object of psychological sanctuary. [...] [I]t’s all over with speed [...]. Now, however, it is an ecological ideal that installs itself at every level. No more expenditure, consumption, performance, but instead regulation, well-tempered functionality, solidarity among all the elements of the same system, control and global management of an ensemble.<sup>20</sup>

How is it possible to imagine otherness and alterity outside the schema of dialectical difference and resistance, and within the context of the feedback circuit that is structured like a Möbius strip<sup>21</sup>—no longer a scene of events but an ob-scene and heterogeneous medium/mediation in which, instead of agonisms and antagonisms, there are only environmental modulations, tendencies, and thresholds?

Metis, Medea and Mahakali are best considered in light of ob-scenity, the [furious] {w}hole-matrix that both mediates and *subverts* logic, law and civilized channels, including those of the masculine and the patriarchal, but also—of the feminine and the maternal.

As figures that presage not just doom but total *destruction*, these omens are not mediatable

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<sup>19</sup> Jean Baudrillard, ‘The Ecstasy of Communication’ in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Washington: Bay Press, 1983), 145-67.

<sup>20</sup> Baudrillard, 146.

<sup>21</sup> “There is no topology more beautiful than the Möbius strip to designate the contiguity of the close and the distant, of interior and exterior, of object and subject, of the computer screen and the mental screen of our brain intertwined with each other in the same spiral. In the same way, information and communication always feed back in a kind of incestuous convolution”—Jean Baudrillard, ‘The Vanishing Point of Communication’ in *Jean Baudrillard : Fatal Theories*, eds. David Clarke, Marcus Doel, William Merrin & Richard Smith (New York: Routledge, 2009), 21.

by *logos* or Olympian logic (the principle of Order); all three are portents of dark and occluded, autochthonous and underground forces; and all three make use of many temporalities, weaving ways in-and-out of various timeframes (*kairos*, *kronos*, *aion*), eventually subverting and destroying any stable framework, framed world, or categorical identity through the cunning and magical manipulation of the very *logic* and *grammar* of that order, using and abusing identity by way of sorcery (autochthonous and elemental but occulted powers), witchcraft<sup>22</sup> (the occult arts/sciences). These women who are others, inhuman and invincible, derive their omnipotence from subverting and flaunting the strictures of consistency and constancy, paternity and maternity, marriage and motherhood, literally spilling blood in order to bleed these institutions dry. Their occult powers are directly linked to metamorphosis and illusion, and accessed through magical linguistic manipulations.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, each is not only associated with the magical forces of speech, manipulation of *logos*/logic, riddles and enigmas, but also with the power of mutation: each is *herself* the manifestation and concretization of (and catalyst for) the *enigma*, the *riddle*, the *puzzle* and *piège*.<sup>24</sup> Like the magical forces of language that they summon to help their allies and subdue their enemies, Metis, Medea and Mahakali are *traps* (called “*strephomena*, as are the puzzles set by

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<sup>22</sup> cf. Dan Mellamphy’s contribution to the inaugural issue of *Ozone: Journal of Object-Oriented Ontology* (2013), ‘The Sorcerer’s Magic Milieu’, available online at [Academia.edu/4185540](http://Academia.edu/4185540).

<sup>23</sup> Metis is said to be “multiple (*pantoie*), manycoloured (*poikile*), shifting (*aiole*)” —Detienne and Vernant, 20. “Medea is said to have cast the *glamour*: spells that ‘fetter the eyes’ —inclusive of [1] magical incantations that bind and unbind ‘curse-tablets’ (*katadesmoi*), [2] knowledge of ‘nonstandard forms of speech’ such as the *voces mysticae*, [3] the ability to decipher ‘unrecognizable symbols’ or *charakteres*, as well as [4] abilities to move or change physical objects and processes, to change and mix-up ‘physical order and appearance’ — indeed, the word *grimoire*, a secret book of witchcraft and spells containing obscure language or illegible writing, is derived from *grammaire*, of which the word *glamour* is also a derivative” —Amy Wygant, *Medea, Magic, and Modernity in France* (Hampshire: Ashgate Press, 2007), 16. ... Here I should mention an upcoming anthology on “the glamour” edited by my dear friend and CTM/Center-for-Transformative-Media director Ed Keller entitled *Dark Glamour: Occult Accelerationism*, to be published with Punctum Books, New York (in a sense, the present essay is an essay in and on dark/*Kali*-esque glamour/*Kaligraphy*). Also see note #47, below.

<sup>24</sup> [En.Wiktionary.org/wiki/pi%C3%A8ge](http://En.Wiktionary.org/wiki/pi%C3%A8ge)—*lure, ruse, snare* and/or *trap* (*piège* is also a *pitfall*, a portal to an *abyss*).

the gods of *metis*") and *nets* ("which the Greeks call *griphoi* [...], the name given to some types of fishing-nets").<sup>25</sup> As omens that are also enigmas, Metis, Medea and Mahakali act like *namshubs*:<sup>26</sup> spells (destructive codes/code-words/code-works) that contaminate and destroy *logos* itself—not archetypes of communication *per se* but monstrous aberrations that are harbingers of total logical and semantic breakdown. All three enact what they describe: they are catalysts for and mechanisms of total informational apocalypse (what Scott Bakker calls "the semantic apocalypse" and Neal Stephenson in *Snow Crash* the "infocalypse"<sup>27</sup>) wherein language ceases to be hermeneutically "communicative" and instead becomes "oracular"<sup>28</sup> (where "language changes into an oracle" in the words of Michel Leiris as quoted in Mellamphy 2015; or again, what Galloway would call "iridescent" or "immanent" [ex]communication), and then finally *infuriated, contagious, viral*.<sup>29</sup>

The challenge, then, is to conceptualize Metis, Medea and Mahakali from the perspective of *networks*—or more precisely, {w}hole-*matrices*—rather than

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<sup>25</sup> "Through her name, Clytaemnestra is connected with *metis*. In her description of the net which she will use to trap Agamemnon and bind him in *aporia* (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1382), moreover, she also activates the association of *metis* with fishing. This illustrates the complexity and adaptability of the notion of *metis* to different contexts" —Evelien Bracke, *Of Metis and Magic: The Conceptual Transformation of Circe and Medea in Ancient Greek Poetry* (Mayneuth: PhD dissertation/unpublished manuscript, 2009), 64-5.

<sup>26</sup> "Namshub is a word from Sumerian," writes Neal Stephenson in his novel *Snow Crash*: "A *nam-shub* is a speech with magical force. The closest English equivalent would be 'incantation', but this has a number of incorrect connotations." [...] "The *nam-shub* of Enki is both a story and an incantation" —"A self-fulfilling fiction" — Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash* (New York: Random House, 2003), 211.

<sup>27</sup> Scott Bakker, 'The Semantic Apocalypse', *SpeculativeHeresy.wordpress.com/2008/11/26/the-semantic-apocalypse*; Neal Stephenson, 'The Infocalypse' in *Snow Crash* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 69, 111, 205, 218.

<sup>28</sup> This magical omniscience is not Olympian—it is not the insight of Zeus's second wife Themis ("patron to the oracles of the earth") for example—but that of Metis, "daughter of Okeanos and Tethys", oracle of the waters. "The divining words of Themis express the necessity, the irrevocability of divine decrees which men can do nothing to avoid. When Metis is consulted as an oracle she speaks of the future from the point of view of a trial between men and gods, seeing it as a subtle and dangerous game where nothing is fixed in advance, in which those consulting the gods must know how to time their questions opportunely, accepting or rejecting the oracle and even turning into their own advantage an answer given by the god in favour of their adversary" — Detienne and Vernant, 127.

<sup>29</sup> Galloway, 57.

from that of dialectics (with its agonistic political model corresponding to what Galloway describes within the context of the Hermeneutic and Iridescent models of communication and mediation). In their most *ominous* sense (literally as ‘omen’ rather than as ‘type[s]’), let us think of Metis, Medea and Mahakali as ① deployments within a magical (*i.e.* contagious and technical) environment and ② *architects of contingency* or ‘tensegrity’ to use a term coined by Buckminster Fuller<sup>30</sup> (*i.e.* networked *hole matrices*) who/which themselves function as mechanisms that introduce incalculability and novelty into a system. The obscenity (that is Metis, Medea and Mahakali) always risks exposing the susceptibility of human relations to the fury of Contingency which engenders the very thing that the social order struggles to contain and exclude. The obscenity functions, as such, like a catalyst for “phase transition, like that between liquid and crystal, a change of identity.”<sup>31</sup>

To illustrate my point, take Metis for example. From a hermeneutical and dialectical viewpoint (which, to bring back Baudrillard, revolves around the drama of alienation and

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<sup>30</sup> Take for instance Fuller’s explanation of the dynamic principles of the geodesic dome or what he calls Geodesic Tensegrity, discontinuous-compression, continuous-tension structures which are networked hole-matrices in the way I have here tried to explore: “If we make microscopic inspection of a pneumatic balloon, we will find that the balloon skin is full of holes between its molecular chains, with a secondary and far smaller space continuity of ‘all holes’ or ‘continuous space’ between the remotely-islanded energetic components of each molecule’s respective atomic nuclear constellations. All these humanly invisible balloon ‘holes’ are too small for molecules of gas to escape through. Because the balloons skin is full of holes, it is really a subvisible spherical netting, rather than a ‘flexibly solid film’, within which the gaseous element molecules are crowded into lesser volume than required by their respective energetic, ecological domains, like fish within a seiner’s net. The resultants of forces of all these net-frustrated molecular actions is angularly outward of the balloon’s geometrical center—each surface molecule of the interior group of pressured gas has a vectorial action and reaction pattern identical to a spherical chord. In such enclosure of pressured gas, random sizes of molecules, each too large for the spherical molecular netting’s hold impinge randomly upon the interior webbing of the spherically tensioned net. There are, therefore, more outwardly pressing molecules and more inwardly restraining net components than are necessary to the structurally resultant balloon pattern integrity. However, in the geodesic, tensional integrity, spherical nets the islands of interior compressional chordal struts impinge in discrete order at the exact vertexes of the enclosing finite tensional network. My independent satellite or moon structures are then the most economical, frequency modulated, dynamic balances between outward-bound resultants of force and inward-bound resultants of force. The exterior tensional net is a finite system successfully binding the otherwise randomly entropic infinity of outbound, self-disassociative forces”—R. Buckminster Fuller, ‘Tensegrity’ (1961), [RWGrayProjects.com/rbfnotes/fpapers/tensegrity/tenseg01.html](http://RWGrayProjects.com/rbfnotes/fpapers/tensegrity/tenseg01.html) (also see §700 of his *Synergetics: Explorations in the Geometry of Thinking*, online at [RWGrayprojects.com/synergetics/print/pc.pdf](http://RWGrayprojects.com/synergetics/print/pc.pdf)).

<sup>31</sup> Stengers, 14.

transformation) the story of Metis is a narrative about patriarchy, gender inequality, feminine power and experientiality. Metis, the epitome of cunning wisdom (*metis*), described in the *Theogony* as “she who knows most of all the gods and humans,”<sup>32</sup> is represented as the subjugated female/subjugated femininity/subjugated foreignness and interpreted as being a strange externality that must be incorporated in order to constitute Zeus’s sovereignty.<sup>33</sup> Only by absorbing her magic “down into his belly”<sup>34</sup> does Zeus succeed in containing her: the masculine absorbs and domesticates the feminine. Zeus deploys *metis* (ruse or cunning intelligence) to consume Metis: he tricks her into turning herself into a fly and then swallows her, but she is already with child. This child, Athena, who later comes out of Zeus’s head, will attest that she was begotten by no mother but only a father.<sup>35</sup> Undigested, Metis is poison (ominous, unstable and wreaking havoc); but once digested, Zeus tries to not only civilize and politicize her magical force, but once domesticated, also gives it royal status as permanent and universal.<sup>36</sup> And so, cosmic order and sovereign power take root only by incorporating/domesticating/transforming Metis/*metis*, she/*that* who/*which* would destroy all order and all politics: the new Olympian order begins with the progeny of Zeus and Themis. Themis, not Metis, is the fertile ground from which springs the stable,

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<sup>32</sup> Long, 68.

<sup>33</sup> See footnote 18.

<sup>34</sup> Long, 69.

<sup>35</sup> “There is no mother anywhere who gave me birth, and, but for marriage, I am always for the male with all my heart, and strongly on my father’s side. So, in a case where the wife has killed her husband, lord of the house, her death shall not mean most to me”—Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, Lines 736-740 (*The Classical Greek Reader*, eds. Kenneth John Atchity, Rosemary McKenna, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, 106).

<sup>36</sup> “Not content to unite himself to Metis by his first marriage, Zeus made himself metic by swallowing her. It was a wise precaution: once she had conceived Athena, Metis would—if Zeus had not forestalled her—have given birth to a son stronger than his father, who would have dethroned him just as he himself had overthrown his own father. Henceforth, however, there can be no metis possible without Zeus or directed against him”—Detienne and Vernant, 13-14.

continuous and regulated world of the Olympian gods. The hermeneutic and dialectical are thus revealed to also be *hierarchical*:

[Themis's] role is to indicate what is forbidden, what frontiers must not be crossed and the hierarchy that must be respected for each individual to be kept forever within the limits of his own domain and status. Metis, on the other hand, intervenes at moments when the divine world seems to be still in movement or when the balance of the powers which operate within it appears to be momentarily upset. [...] The cunning of Metis constitutes a threat to any established order; her intelligence operates in the realm of what is shifting and unexpected in order the better to reverse situations and overturn hierarchies which appear unassailable.<sup>37</sup>

Thus dialectics cannot fully digest Metis because she cannot be fully domesticated by hierarchies (even reversed and transformed ones). Instead of being hierarchical, metic intelligence is distributed and duplicitous (the French word *duplice* connotes both duplicity and duplication *qua* multiplicity): in this case, Metis is both poison—the threat to any established order as the quote above suggests—as well as possible cure (*pharmakon*) that leads to the establishment of Olympian hierarchical order. While Metis, the *pharmakon*, can be incorporated by Zeus, she cannot be allowed to contaminate order, and so must be excluded and held at bay.

Indeed, as Sarah Kofman suggested in her study of cunning intelligence, the entire foundation of Western thought from Plato onward has been firmly anchored to this Olympian sovereign principle which is constituted by the exclusion of cunning intelligence (*metis*), “that which proceeds by way of twists and turns”.<sup>38</sup> Kofman also highlights the connection that Plato made in *The Symposium*—following the Orphic tradition—between Metis and Eros,

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<sup>37</sup> Detienne and Vernant, 107, 108.

<sup>38</sup> “Plato, in the name of Truth, would relegate this entire conceptual idea to darkness, and condemn its ways of understanding and practical modalities; in particular, he would denounce its oblique, vague and uncertain processes, opposing them to the one, exact and rigorous science, the philosophical episteme, contemplative by nature” —Sarah Kofman, *Comment s’en sortir?* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1983), 13-14 [all translations mine].

whose coupling produced a son, Poros. *Poros* (the root of the English ‘porous’) can be translated as passage or pathway, but it can also be translated as expedient, or a way out (the correlative term *aporia* being translated as ‘obstacle’). Metis, as cunning intelligence, is thus linked to *multiplicity, incalculability and the subversion of any limit or hierarchy*:

The family tie between Poros and Metis is an undissolvable link between the path, the pathway, the forging forward, resourcefulness, guile, expediency, *techne*, light and limit (*peiras*). [...] To say that *poros* is a pathway across a liquid expanse is to underline that it is never drawn in advance, always erasable, always to be redrawn in a novel way. We are talking about *poros* when it is about opening up a way where there does not exist or cannot exist any way, properly speaking; when it is about crossing over an uncrossable, unknown, hostile, [and] unlimited world, *apeiron*, that is impossible to cross from one end to the other; the marine abyss, *pontos*, it is *aporia* itself, *aporon* because it is *apeiron*: the sea is the unending reign of pure movement, the most mobile space, the most changing, the most polymorphous, where all heretofore paths that have been drawn erase themselves, transforming all navigation into an ever novel, dangerous and uncertain exploration.<sup>39</sup>

Detienne and Vernant also link *metis* with the ruses of the sea, especially to the cunning tactics of the octopus and fish.<sup>40</sup> *Metis* is fluid, mobile, ever-masked, and polymorphous; *metis* can bind elements but also can escape a bond by transforming itself. *Metis*’s subversive power or sorcery lies in its capacity to bind and beguile—that is, to manipulate and transform appearances in order to confront a reality the “polymorphic powers [of which] render it almost impossible to seize.”<sup>41</sup>

Medea is like Metis, multiplicitous and duplicitous, both poison and cure.

Medea—sorceress, killer and healer—is also associated with this form of magic and

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<sup>39</sup> Kofman, 16, 17.

<sup>40</sup> “Shifting speech” or *poikiloi logoi*—the technical weapon of the sophist and the politician—is “many coiled” or *periplokai*: the twisted “logos of the octopus” which ensnares or and traps its prey, as “strings of words which unfold like the coils of the snake, speeches which enmesh their enemies like the supple arms of the octopus”—Detienne and Vernant, 39. for more on this, cf. Dan Mellamphy, ‘Between Beckett & Bec: The Metic Hexis and Flusserian Flux of Vampyroteuthis Abductionis’, available online at [Academia.edu/4185250](http://Academia.edu/4185250).

<sup>41</sup> Detienne and Vernant, 5.

metic knowledge.<sup>42</sup> Medea is an outsider, a foreigner from Asia Minor, and although Greek women were also associated with magic, the most powerful of the mages were said to be non-Greeks<sup>43</sup> living on the fringe of society.<sup>44</sup> Although Hesiod portrays Medea as possessor of *metis*,<sup>45</sup> it is Ovid who describes Medea as “the *barbara venefica*, ‘barbarian witch’, insinuating that Medea practices love-magic and has cast a spell on Jason.”<sup>46</sup> Medea is said to cast the “glamour,”<sup>47</sup> a spell which deceives the eyes, connoting magical beguilement. Glamour, like *metis*, is an “absolute weapon”<sup>48</sup> that is the sorceress’s device for counterfeiting nature (which from the sixteenth century onwards comes to be associated with cosmetics, face-painting, and techniques of subverting appearances): “appearance is now fashioned along the lines of a power that is truly and correctly, if indefinably called ‘magical’.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Bracke, 15. “In the earliest Archaic texts, though Circe and Medea were deities to some extent associated with what would be construed as ‘magic’ in the Classical period (i.e. *thelgein*), they were primarily represented as goddesses and strongly connected with the entire semantic field of *metis* rather than merely with *thelgein*. A combination of factors, however, led to the decrease of their association with *metis* in favour of an increasing connection with magical terminology in post-Hesiodic Archaic and Classical texts—Bracke, 69.

<sup>43</sup> “[T]he image of Persians and other Eastern peoples as Others or ‘barbarians’ flourished in, for example, Athenian drama. Stratton argues that “magic discourse ... emerged at this time part and parcel of the new discourse of barbarism. *Mageia*—the religion of Athens’s enemy, Persia—now also acquired associations with various characteristics and practices that Athenians regarded as un-Greek and barbaric”—Bracke, 54, 25.

<sup>44</sup> Bracke, 25.

<sup>45</sup> Bracke, 115.

<sup>46</sup> Bracke, 28. “Medea’s name, whose origin lies in the Indo-European root *med-*, is related to words meaning both ‘I intend’ or ‘I plan’ or ‘I contrive’ and ‘plans’ or ‘schemes’—deriving from *metis*, or cunning intelligence, but which also has a homonym referring to male genitalia; indeed Medea’s name can be translated as ‘cunning female’ or ‘contriver’, even interpreted as an alternative for *metis*, rendering Medea yet another emanation from this category”—Bracke, 73-74.

<sup>47</sup> “In German, its first meaning is still ‘*der Zauber; das Blendwerk*’ (‘magic; a binding, dazzling, or deceiving’). The word was originally Scottish. Like *grimoire*, it was a corrupt form of ‘grammar’ or ‘grammarye’, meaning learning in general and occult learning in particular. [...] When the notorious late fifteenth century witch-hunting manual the *Malleus maleficarum* came to be translated into English by Montague Summers in 1928, ‘glamour’ suggested itself as a gloss on the original’s ‘prestigia,’ defined in part I, question IX—‘Whether Witches may work some Prestidigitory Illusions so that the Male Organ appears to be entirely removed and separate from the Body’—‘A glamour is nothing but a certain delusion of the senses, and especially of the eyes. And for this reason it is also called a prestige, from *prestringo*, since the sight of the eyes is so fettered that things seem to be other than they are. [...] The devil can cast a glamour over the senses of man. Wherefore there is no difficulty in his concealing the virile member by some prestige or glamour’.”

—Wygant, 18, 19.

<sup>48</sup> Detienne and Vernant, 13.

<sup>49</sup> Wygant, 25.

Medea, daughter of the Kolchian king Aetes (who was himself begot of Sun and Ocean) and niece of Circe, is priestess of the cult of the Golden Fleece, a magical object upon which the political power of the entire kingdom rests, when she meets Jason, a Greek who, with help of Medea's sorcerous powers, takes the golden fleece in order to advance his own claim to the throne of his birthplace, Iolcus. Although historical accounts of Medea vary widely from earliest mentions in the mythic *Argonautika* to the later Baroque period,<sup>50</sup> she is depicted as practicing both guile and beguilement, *metis* and magic, involving murder and rejuvenation. At each step Medea's cunning magic helps Jason and her get out of untenable situations.<sup>51</sup> Medea is outsider, deceiver, murderer, jealous and jilted wife, and killer of her own children; but Medea also possesses Metis's *techne pantoie* or "art of many facets,"<sup>52</sup> and due to her metic and pharmacological powers, by the sixteenth century, her technical powers come to be associated with the health and medical arts, as well as with alchemy.<sup>53</sup> Guile and beguilement, *metis* and magic—these are the *technical* sources

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<sup>50</sup> "[T]here was by no means homogeneity even in the earliest poetic representations of Medea: she is given different husbands, characteristics, and functions, and is placed in different cities depending on the individual authors' agenda."—Bracke, 118.

<sup>51</sup> For example, when, in order to help Jason successfully steal the Golden Fleece, Medea tricks her brother (who is in hot pursuit) by pretending to surrender while Jason ambushes and kills him. Then she has the body cut up into pieces and scattered one by one in the sea to delay their pursuers (for she knows that by ancient law, the body must be collected for proper religious burial). When Jason and Medea return to Iolcus to claim the throne from the usurper Pelias (Jason's uncle), Medea infiltrates the city by disguising herself as an old woman (that is, she ingests a potion that renders her aged and unrecognizable). She then proceeds to convince Pelias that she can restore his youthful vigour and then actually persuades Pelias's daughters that they must dismember their father before he can be rejuvenated. Medea, herself, took no part in the murder of the king of Iolcus. Later, when Jason and Medea must flee from Iolcus to Corinth, Medea successfully concocts pharmaka and schemes to get revenge on those who have slighted her, like her hosts, the royal family of Corinth (whom she has poisoned and burned alive) and her own children.

<sup>52</sup> Detienne and Vernant, 18.

<sup>53</sup> "Taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book VII, the 'Rejuvenation of Aeson', [...] was a powerful theme in sixteenth and seventeenth century visual art, and was believed to transcribe the struggle of medicine against age, the etymologies which were believed to be related to the names of Medea and her father in law Aeson"—Wygant, 37. Medea represents a 'new convergence between rational understanding and occult forces' that enabled the project of rebirth"—Wygant, 42-43. Medea, operator of the great alchemical work, "is at once the alchemist, effecting Aeson's death and his rebirth, and the figure of the alchemical process. Eighteenth century commentators are explicit about this. Pernety's *Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique* observes that 'la Toison d'or conquise est la poudre

for Medea's {s}witchcraft and of her 'so{u}rcery':<sup>54</sup> the word 'techne', associated with Hephaestus's bonds, is given the sense of trick or trap and often can be found alongside the word *apate*, or 'deception'; the consequence of *techne* being ruse—"something that is not what it appears to be."<sup>55</sup> Medea and Metis both use technical tools such as incantations and potions, as well as shifting words and logic (*poikiloi logoi*), but in so doing, they also make themselves instruments of *metis*—that is, catalysts and mechanisms for contingency, ambiguity and the heterogeneous operations that bring about incalculable modulations within any feedback system of rules and results. Using so{u}rcery and {s}witchcraft, they make themselves into heretical forces that subvert hierarchies, be they spatial or temporal. Weaving appearances with shimmering words, they are both masters *and* servants of time: on the one hand, their magical *metis* depends on mastering temporal 'know-how',<sup>56</sup> which is also a 'knowing when'—that is, the technical mastery to *switch between* and *weave in and out of* different schemas of time (including *kronoi* or sequential

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de projection, et la médecine universelle, de laquelle Médée fit usage pour rajeunir Eson, pere de Jason son amant' ('The golden fleece, once conquered, is the transforming substance and the universal medicine that Medea used to rejuvenate Aeson, the father of Jason, her lover'). [...] In the *Aureum vellus, oder Gölndenes Vliess*, Medea's rejuvenation of Aeson is cited as a clear example of her alchemy, and at the same time, she is identified with the moon, an element internal to the alchemical work: 'Kurz, man hat in Opere Philosophico auch so eine Medeam, welche von den Weisen ihre Luna genennt wird' ('In sum, there is also in the alchemical work a Medea, which the alchemists call their moon'). Medea's figuration as a chemical had by this time a certain history. René Alleau described an inscription on a marble plaque, dated 1680, in the square Victor-Emmanuel in Rome, left over from the destruction of the villa of the marquis Palombara. It reads [...] 'Pushing open the door of the villa, Jason discovers and conquers the precious fleece of Medea', the first letters of which in the Latin spell *vitriolum*, vitriol: the secret shining crystalline body that symbolizes the philosopher's crude matter. The inscription is described as well in a manual of practical alchemy by Eugène Canseliet, one of the best-known of the 20th century French alchemists"—Wygant, 46.

<sup>54</sup> Terms taken from Dan Mellamphy's contribution to the inaugural issue of *Ozone: Journal of Object-Oriented Ontology* (2013), 'The Sorcerer's Magic Milieu', available online at [Academia.edu/4185540](http://Academia.edu/4185540).

<sup>55</sup> Janet M. Atwill, *Rhetoric Reclaimed* (Ithaca; Cornell University Press, 2009), 52-53.

<sup>56</sup> "Over more than ten centuries the same, extremely simple model expresses skills, know-how and activities as diverse as weaving, navigation and medicine. From Homer to Oppian practical and cunning intelligence, in all its forms, is a permanent feature of the Greek world. Its domain is a veritable empire and the man of prudence, of *metis*, can assume ten different identities at once. He is embodied in all the principal types of men who go to make up Greek society, ranging from the charioteer to the politician and including the fisherman, the blacksmith, the orator, the weaver, the pilot, the hunter, the sophist, the carpenter and the strategus"—Detienne and Vernant, 307-308.

progressive temporalities; *kairoi*,<sup>57</sup> or propitious moments; and *aionas*, in the sense of whole lifetimes, entire generations, or existent eternities<sup>58</sup>) in order to ‘light a path’ or ‘forge a way’ out of an untenable situation—and on the other hand, they make themselves servants of and conduits for temporal weaving and switching, the mixing<sup>59</sup> of different times and temporalities for the purposes of guile and beguilement.

Perhaps the most obscene of all three {<sup>w</sup>}*hole-matrices* is Mahakali—‘Great Kali’, mistress of death and destruction—herself the mask of ‘Great Time’ (‘Maha-Kala’) and one of the most maligned of all the figures of the Hindu pantheon, the latter in no small part due to her extreme appearance and behaviour which goes beyond the normal limits of propriety and civility. Like her consort Shiva, she is the omen of horrifying terror (*ghora*). Feral and uncontrollable, she is untameable, even demonic: “she is dark as a great cloud [...]. Her tongue is poised as if to lick. She has fearful teeth, sunken eyes, and is smiling. She wears a necklace of snakes, the half-moon rests on her forehead, she has matted hair, and is engaged in licking a corpse. [...] She has two hands and has corpses for ear ornaments.”<sup>60</sup> Mahakali, while bloodthirsty and destructive, is also considered in this role (and not in her more beneficent and gentler incarnations) as the [chaotic] guardian of the cosmos, her destructive and uncontrollable powers being the very necessary precondition for renewal and regeneration. She is heterogeneous

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<sup>57</sup> “According to some Hippocratic treatises every disease can be cured, if you hit upon the right moment (*kairos*) to apply your remedies. Detienne and Vernant describe the significance of *kairos* in the art of navigation: [...] *Kairos*, associated with Zeus *Ouros* who represents opportunity, stands for the propitious moment with the good pilot must seize, having foreseen from afar the opportunity which will arise for him to exercise his *techné*”—Atwill, 58.

<sup>58</sup> “from Late Latin *aeon*, from Greek *aion*, ‘age, vital force; a period of existence, a lifetime, a generation; a long space of time’, in plural, ‘eternity’, from PIE root *\*aiw-*, ‘vital force, life, long life, eternity’ (cognates: Sanskrit *ayu*, ‘life’, Avestan *ayu*, ‘age’, Latin *aevum*, ‘space of time, eternity’, Gothic *aiws*, ‘age, eternity’, Old Norse *ævi*, ‘lifetime’, German *ewig*, ‘everlasting’, Old English as ‘ever, always’);

*Etymonline.com/index.php?term=eon*.

<sup>59</sup> “Mètic *métissage*” (Dan Mellamphy, *Academia.edu/4184544*).

<sup>60</sup> Kinsley, 81.

and multiple: she transforms, splits, or multiplies herself and “tears into her enemies with awful glee [...]. She is the distillation of the furious, raw, savage power and lust of the frenzied warrior, and as such she is truly a terrible being, feared by her enemies, to be sure, but a threat to the overall stability of the world itself.”<sup>61</sup>

Although she eventually transcends her origins and comes to be adopted as an extreme manifestation of the ‘great goddess’ in the Hindu pantheon, Mahakali, like Metis and Medea, is most often depicted as having indigenous, or non-Aryan origins associated with tribes relegated to the margins of Indian society, a tribal goddess worshipped by hunters and thieves<sup>62</sup> said to live in cremation grounds (scorning all categories of civilization), and having early associations to the demoness Nirrti, personification of death, destruction and sorrow in the Vedic literature.<sup>63</sup> Later, Kali enters the Hindu pantheon as the terrifying incarnation of the great goddess-warrior, Durga, literally coming out of Durga’s head as she steps onto the battlefield.<sup>64</sup> The brutality and blood-thirstiness of Kali is surpassed only by her jocular contempt for life, which makes her a truly invincible force. Like the metic *namshub* that bedazzles

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<sup>61</sup> David R. Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 144.

<sup>62</sup> “The term Thug—*Thuggee*—is derived from Hindi word ठग, or *thag*, which means ‘thief’. Related words are the verb *thugna*, ‘to deceive’, from Sanskrit स्थग *sthaga*, ‘cunning, sly, fraudulent’, from स्थगद् *sthagati*, ‘he conceals’. This term for a particular kind of murder and robbery of travellers is popular in South Asia and particularly in India. [...] The Thuggee trace their origin to the [mythical] battle of Kali against Raktabija; however, their foundation-myth departs from Brahminical versions of the Puranas. The Thuggee consider themselves to be children of Kali, created out of her sweat” (quoted in Mellamphy 2015, footnote 20); also see [En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thuggee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thuggee).

<sup>63</sup> Kinsley: 1975, 84-85, 87-8.

<sup>64</sup> As Kinsley notes, “the first demon heroes sent forth to battle her are Canda and Munda. When they approach Durga with drawn swords and bent bows, she becomes furious, her face becoming dark as ink. Suddenly there springs forth from her brow the terrible goddess Kali, armed with sword and noose. [...] She fills the four quarters with her terrifying roar and leaps eagerly into the fray. She flings demons into her mouth and crushes them in her jaws. [...] Laughing and howling loudly, she approaches Canda and Munda, grasps them by the hair, and in one furious instant decapitates them both with her mighty sword. Returning to Durga with two heads, she laughs jokingly and presents them to the Goddess as a gift” —Kinsley: 1975, 91.

but also lights the way out, Kali “blazes like a million rising suns” even in the deepest darkness (Kinsley: 1997, 23). The *namshub* of the great Kali (*Maha-Kali*) breaks all convention (in Greek, *nomos*) and all limitation (*peiras*), burning them away in the cremation fires, “the cremation-ground [being] the place where the five elements—the *pancha mahabhuta*—are dissolved” (Kinsley: 1997, 88). Mahakali both dwells in the obscene place of phenomenal dissolution and is herself a force of this primordial chaos. As this primordial cosmic force of dissolution, the omen of great time (*Maha-Kala*) and harbinger of the end of time (*Kali-Yuga*, the age of destruction corresponding to the Greek age of iron), Mahakali is also known as Mistress of Time, and called the ‘Mad Mother’<sup>65</sup> to her disciples, a mother who is freed from all worldly attachment (*especially* to her children). The weaving that is order (the Greek *kosmos*) “comes to an end in Kali’s wild, unbound, flowing hair.”<sup>66</sup> She is the force “who wears all things down”; “she consumes all things. Her appetite is unquenchable, and she is utterly indiscriminating. All things and all beings must yield to relentless, pitiless grinding down by the Mistress of Time.”<sup>67</sup> Like the great alchemical Fire that both destroys and transforms, as well as illuminates the path of the adept, the *namshub* of Mahakali<sup>68</sup> involves a great *pyrotechne*: “setting fire to—and/or upon—existents, Kali reveals the existence beyond it, in all its paradoxical conflation, conflagration, contradiction, embracing both its aporia and its porosity: its absolute and absolutely aggressive ambiguity.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> From the *Gospel of Ramakrishna*: “Crazy is my Father, crazy my Mother—and I, their son, am crazy too! Shyama [the dark one, meaning Kali] is my Mother’s name. My Father strikes His cheeks and makes a hollow sound: *Ba-ba-bom! Ba-ba-bom!* And my Mother, drunk and reeling, falls across my Father’s body! Shyama’s streaming tresses hang in vast disorder; bees are swarming numberless about Her crimson Lotus feet. Listen, as She dances, how Her Ankles ring!”—Kinsley: 1975, 136.

<sup>66</sup> David R. Kinsley, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine: The Ten Mahavidyas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, 84).

<sup>67</sup> Kinsley: 1975, 140.

<sup>68</sup> a.k.a. ‘Kaligraphy’ (Mellamphy, 2015).

<sup>69</sup> Mellamphy, 2015.

There is no escape from the web of Great Time (*Maha-Kala*), a Time which comes before and goes beyond the human, the geological, and even the astrological; a Time which both dissolves and holds together all conceptions of time. No alternate politics, agencies, identities can be forged from this source because it is, rather, the progenitor of all things:

At the dissolution of things, it is Kala [Time] Who will devour all, and by reason of this He is called Mahakala [an epithet of Siva], and since You devourest Mahakala Himself, it is You who are the Supreme Primordial Kalika. Because You devour Kala, You are Kali, the original form of all things, and because You are the Origin of and devour all things You are called the Adya [primordial] Kali. Resuming after Dissolution Your own form, dark and formless, You alone remain as One ineffable and inconceivable. Though having a form, yet are You formless; though Yourself without beginning, multiform by the power of Maya [illusion], You are the Beginning of all, Creatrix, Protectress, and Destructress that You are.<sup>70</sup>

Metis, Medea and Mahakali are the architects of this paradoxicality and themselves aporetic architectures that ultimately do not respect or uphold any of the arguments that historically make up feminist critique. And though each has been used in countless ways to revalue just that—an alternative feminism, an alternate politics—I have argued that all are {<sup>w</sup>}*hole-matrices* and obscenities that cannot be completely incorporated within a hermeneutic and dialectical schema (without somehow missing the ‘point’—the *punctum* and the *hole-matrix*—that each veritably *is*). Each is an exception to the norm and rule of the *polis*, but each is also the master and the servant of contingent, contiguous, paradoxical networks; as such, each is especially suited for thinking about and through the paradoxes of the Age of Destruction (the Fourth Age qua *Kali-Yuga*), which will intensify and contiguously culminate in our present-and-forthcoming era of digital matrices.