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Journal of Black Mountain College Studies

Volume 13: Silence/Presence (Spring 2022)

Article URL: <https://www.blackmountainstudiesjournal.org/covil-loba>

Published online: April 2022

Published by:

Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center

Asheville, North Carolina

<https://www.blackmountaincollege.org>

Editors:

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**Woman and/as Myth in *Loba*:
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Jessica Covil-Manset

This paper takes the "open field" as its object of study. There is much to value in the creative work and explications of those poets who claimed the "open field" as the ideal terrain of modern writing; they embraced contradiction and excess, cultural difference (in theory, at least), and a return to the natural world. At the same time, much of what these poets aimed to do is not what they accomplished. They fell short of their most visionary impulses when they drew back into racial fetishization, patriarchal mindsets, and a love of difference only insofar as it re-entrenched the Other, confirming themselves as Human. However, Diane di Prima, I argue, is both of this formation and apart from it; she offers an opening within an opening. What and who she calls into her field are outcasts elsewhere, and it is precisely that reclaiming of the otherwise lesser-than that this paper hopes to foreground. Through a deep investigation of di Prima's *Loba*, this paper will name and assess an intervention in poetry and poetics that had (and still has) significant implications for the aims/ethics of art, debates in feminism, and the sociopolitical sphere more broadly. It is my hope, moreover, that this paper will go some small distance in remedying what Roseanne Giannini Quinn has called the dearth of critical attention given to di Prima's work, especially when contrasted with male poets of her generation.¹

A Road Map

To begin, I outline the characteristics of "open field" poetry using the logics of those poets who espoused it—namely Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, and Denise Levertov. I firmly situate di Prima within that circle, arguing for *Loba* as a particular, feminist open field that is similar in spirit but markedly different in its content, audience, and sociopolitical implications. With this framework established, I then take up Robert Duncan's concept of "the dance" to describe the tension between the poem as singular/whole and the many, distinct parts that make it up; I draw an analogy to di Prima's poetry and how she imagines "Woman" as a whole—a mythical category made

up of (but not equivalent to) individual, real-life women. Next, I explore open field poetry's formulation of "projective verse" and its embrace of excess. I clarify di Prima's unique intervention, arguing that she pushes the projective past its originally white/Eurocentric and masculinist framework, further embracing "excess" with and through the myth of woman.

Moving deeper into the text, I highlight and describe di Prima's process of mythmaking in more detail, emphasizing the freedom it provides in its ongoingness versus static/permanent characters and definitions. I offer close readings of some poems in *Loba*, outlining the ways in which di Prima provides a counter-narrative to the limited (and masculinist) framings of the loba/woman through her mythmaking and her self-reflexive awareness of the constructedness of myth. I mark an affective duality between representations of the loba that are characterized by pain, woundedness, rage, and anguish on the one hand, and pleasure, triumph, joy, and (re)birth on the other. Moreover, I relate the loba's (or, di Prima's) dual tendencies to current debates in feminism, and the divide between the rhetoric of woundedness versus that of celebration. I close by arguing that di Prima's particular attitude towards mythmaking is most revolutionary in its acknowledgment that Myth both exceeds and falls short of the living. The myths of the loba that di Prima offers are an inspiration: an opening, not a closure. They render the category of "woman," and the whole body of feminism, open-ended—refreshingly (if frustratingly) capacious and ever-evolving.

Open Field Poetics: Toward a Definition

This paper examines *Loba* as an "open field" of a particular kind, situating di Prima in the context of other open field poets while maintaining the specificity of her "field" as not only poetic process, but feminist practice. As this paper will demonstrate, di Prima shares many of the same tenets—echoing their interests in the shout and the dance, in craft and lore, in pain and the sometimes violence of emotion, in contradictions, and in the human in relationship to nature and planets. Moreover, di Prima is invested in difference and in decentering the West as sole Creator (i.e., the arbiter of all existence). But di Prima uses the techniques and inventiveness of the "open field" and brings them to bear on the feminine specifically, opening up to the

many ways it might mean to be and do as women. Moreover, di Prima takes myths beyond their individual limits; the loba as an amalgamated figure seeks not to “represent” women, but to balance a desire for coherence and belonging *around* this identity with the desire to retain our many distinct experiences. As such, the identification which the loba reaches towards is not natural, given, or static, but always in the process of becoming. Di Prima calls attention to this process throughout *Loba*, exposing myths (both borrowed and her own) as made things; this too, is a particular instantiation of a practice common to the “open field,” in which poets regularly call attention to the process of their writing and thus the made-ness of their poems.

To begin, one might wonder how compatible an emphasis on gender is with the project of the “open field,” which in many instances is dedicated to discovering some universal truths, stripping us down to basics in order to relish in our shared humanity. In a world which was overwhelmed with fascist regimes and hatred for “the Other,” this was a radical enterprise. But *Loba* attends to difference not to circumscribe us, nor to solidify positions of power and powerlessness through us-and-them mentalities. Instead, the loba’s female-specificity (its reference to the feminine implicit, marked by the “a” that ends the word) is a beginning, not an endpoint. Gender does not have to be another way of nailing down through strict categorization. In fact, it can involve play, incorporating an array of archetypes and mythological figures so that the loba is not just the other (and always the Other, ontologically) end of the gender binary, but rather, multifaceted and eternally expansive. As such, the loba is not contained in any particular time and space, even though her existence depends on being able to draw from diverse particularities and to respect their specificity even as she, herself, seeks towards transcendence.

Reading *Loba* as a Feminist Open Field

If *Loba* is an open field, as I maintain, then what is it made up of? Di Prima’s version jibes with notions of the field as it is described by Olson, Creeley, and Duncan, but with a feminist spin. In his foundational essay “Projective Verse,” Olson turns our attention to the *objects* of the poem-as-field, emphasizing their importance. He writes: “(We now enter, actually, the large area of the whole poem, into the FIELD, if you like,

where all the syllables and all the lines must be managed in their relations to each other.) It is a matter, finally of OBJECTS, what they are, what they are inside a poem, how they got there, and, once there, how they are to be used.”² Taking this emphasis on objects literally, perhaps, *Loba* includes one poem that is comprised almost entirely of objects—or, more specifically, of names.³ This poem, which begins “Belili Ishtar,” has already been the subject of some recent feminist scholarship. Polina Mackay comments on how these “many female characters...come together, their names making up the lines of the poem with very few words added and no punctuation to separate them. It would seem a deliberate attempt is being made here to unite them all as one being.”⁴ Estíbaliz Encarnación-Pinedo tracks these characters down to their roots, describing them as “goddesses, nymphs, monsters, and other fantastic creatures from world mythologies, religions, folklore, or legends from different origins—Greek, Latin, Egyptian, Sumerian, Navajo, Japanese, Hopi, Irish, Welsh, Celtic, Etruscan, Indian, Hindu, Buddhist, Hebrew, Jewish, Christian, Yoruba, etc.”⁵ But, to take Olson at his word, the poem-as-field is not just about what these objects are or where they came from, but “how they are to be used.” Encarnación-Pinedo (taking a note from Frances Babbage’s *Re-Visioning Myth*) suggests that these mythical figures are used precisely because they are open to revision, since the meaning of myth is not inherent but is, in fact, a product of their *telling*.⁶ Over time, writers can return to old myths and invent new stories out of them, building on what came before but speaking more directly to their present contexts or future-oriented imaginings. Di Prima certainly retells a number of these myths throughout *Loba*. And by listing them here, outright, as objects in a poetic field, di Prima calls attention to their openness and presents them as the materials of her own telling—to be picked up by later generations of writers, perhaps, and thus constituting her own poetic opening.

But while di Prima and her contemporaries of the open field are open to the new, they are simultaneously invested in a return to the inventions of the past; these poets offer not a choice between the past, present, and future, so much as a belief in the meeting and intermingling of different times through the poetic act. For example, in “Human Universe,” Olson writes about the Maya civilization, advocating for a modern-day return to what he sees as their closer communion with nature and greater

concreteness in writing; in fact, he bases his aspirations for open field poetry on the Maya glyphs' propensity to "retain the power of the objects of which they are the images."⁷ Meanwhile, in constructing his idea of "assemblage" in the open field, Duncan quotes Alfred North Whitehead's *The Aims of Education and Other Essays*, describing "assemblage" as a meeting-together of the "saints" of different time periods—a meeting which the future might depend upon, but which can only take place in the present moment.⁸ The present is all that exists because it is the position from which the poem speaks, bringing what it can from other points in times—often, through inherited language. Duncan writes: "The storehouse of human experience in words is resonant too, and we have but to listen to the reverberations of our first thought in the reservoir of communal meanings to strike such depths as touch upon the center of man's nature."⁹ This can readily be applied to di Prima's use of myths in *Loba*. In the same way that words do, myths accrue meaning and depth over time; the reader is the recipient of all these layered meanings, both through the myths as they have known them and through the poet's own contributions.

But as the open field poets remind us, such gathering and layering is no peaceful endeavor, and neither is the poem a strictly harmonious construct. Rather, the field is held together through contradictions and tension, which *Loba* demonstrates both on the level of form (poetics) and on the level of content (gender/women). Olson writes that "every element in an open poem (the syllable, the line, as well as the image, the sound, the sense)...are to be seen as creating the tensions of a poem just as totally as do those other objects create what we know as the world."¹⁰ Creeley builds on this idea of creative (that is, world-building) tension in his essay "A Note on Poetry," further explicating the necessity of tension in the formation of a "whole." He writes:

...Olson's notion of the poem as a field at once clears us from the usual sense of progression, i.e., that we have a line, building forward perhaps to 'climax,' and then relaxing to an 'end.' For example, seeing a poem as a field, a high energy construct, we assume a sense that points to one basic means of coherence: a relevant and actual tension between the divers parts present, to come to (in this sense only) what we call the 'whole.' This

is then clear: a poem will be a thing of parts, in such relation, that the tension created between them will effect an actual coherence in form.¹¹

While Creeley is focusing here on formal elements rather than content, his description can easily be applied to di Prima's bringing-together of various female voices/characters into one poem, or into a larger conception of women/the feminine. "Belili Ishtar" performs this wholeness-through-tension the most apparently, placing its "divers parts" one after the other in a huge block of text, with nothing but a few small spaces between them. Not only are these parts taken from different times, places, and religions, but Encarnación-Pinedo points out that they are "both positive and negative," carrying distinct moral and affective valences.¹² And yet, the text still holds together, and gains in significance through its seemingly self-aware presentation of clashing (even jarring) female archetypes, which come to be understood as "types" of women. In other words, the poem's coherence is in the knowledge it creates as a reflection on the many images of women. These images often contradict each other, certainly, and that is what the poem "means" by bringing them together.

The feminist questions at work in such a poem as "Belili Ishtar" are concerned with who counts as women, and which images get to stand in for what women are; thus, the tension between parts in the construction of the "whole" has just as much to do with gender (or, the category of woman) as with the poetics of the thing. Thus, the open field can be said to make room for feminist practice—and a specifically capacious and inclusive one, at that. Indeed, Encarnación-Pinedo lauds *Loba* for "creating a feminist mapping of multiple representations of women" in what she calls an "expansive and transnational approach."¹³ The cover of *Loba* features a similar quote by Adrienne Rich, who describes the book as "An epic art of language, a great geography of the female imagination." Both of these critics invoke *place*, pointing to the ways in which *Loba*—in drawing from an array of the world's regions and religions—actually paints the category of woman or the feminine as boundless terrain. That is, by crossing national (as well as racial, religious, and economic) borders, di Prima transgresses the boundaries by which womanhood might otherwise be contained. But this sense of boundlessness is not natural or given, but rather, of di Prima's own doing; the critics' uses of the words

“mapping” and “geography” highlight the poet’s work in bringing that terrain to our attention, making it visible, knowable, and existing *in relation to each other*. In her work of gathering and (re)arranging myths, di Prima draws lines between characters/places and acknowledges them as co-present and co-constitutive. Like other open field poets, di Prima works to decenter the West and its ontological monopoly on what Man is¹⁴— but in this case, what Woman is.

Loba demonstrates that geography—*any* geography—is highly charged (indeed, a “high energy construct,” as Creeley would have it) because it is not natural or given: it is all construction, which does not make it any less real or any less germane to people’s lives. There is an inherent dilemma facing the “open field”: indeed, how to draw a field and yet leave it open, if the objects are still to be chosen by someone (the poet) so that other objects are necessarily left out, and if the poet herself can only speak from where she is in the present, no matter how much assembling she invites from “over there” and “back then.” However, di Prima overcomes the dilemma of exclusion-through-gathering by presenting the loba as not only constructed, but in fact always under construction. It defies the limits of “you” or “one” by suspending the conflation. Di Prima makes this caveat explicit in her “Author’s Note,” in which she defers the completion of her work. She writes, “The Work is, like they say, in ‘progress’. The author reserves the right to juggle, re-arrange, cut, osterize, re-cycle parts of the poem in future editions. As the Loba wishes, as the Goddess dictates.”¹⁵ Indeed, the publication of various parts of *Loba* spans from 1973 to 1998, quite an expansive time frame. Di Prima’s note recalls Olson’s approach to his own work, *The Maximus Poems*, which he constantly revised or expanded up until his death in 1970.¹⁶ Without such a caveat, the job of *Loba* would be quite impossible. How can the loba be asserted as “a being who contains the soul and consciousness of all women,”¹⁷ without presuming all that women are or might be?

The Open Field and Feminism: The “Dance” Between the Whole and Its Parts

Both *Loba* and the history of feminism(s) demonstrate that even when plurality among women is emphasized and valued, there is still a desire for some felt singularity, some form of wholeness. Similarly, as much as a book of poems might claim itself to be unfinished, that book is opened and closed in our hands, and we might even feel relief

at reaching “the end.” This is where the “dance” of the open field becomes useful, as a complement to the idea of assemblage; it accounts for the ways in which such different parts, once assembled, weave together and reach towards something like a whole, in all its tensions. Duncan seems to contradict himself when he writes: “Our gods are many as our times are many, they are the cast and events of one play. There is only this one time; there is only this one god.”¹⁸ But he is addressing the very dilemma that the loba embodies, as “*the Goddess*” even as she is made up of so many goddesses (both mythic and real-life women). The dance becomes a way to balance the singular and the plural, and to make the contradictions of the many work towards the One.

For Duncan, the dance is all about “the exchange of opposites, the indwelling of one in the other.”¹⁹ The dance requires a letting-go of control, actually giving way to “demonic disorder” over the self-righteous containment known as “Reason.”²⁰ Duncan makes clear that this is a dangerous and chaotic endeavor, entailing “a real threat of upset and things not keeping their place.”²¹ But as Duncan sees it, God is all things, including violence and destruction. Indeed, Duncan borrows from Heraclitus, who relates God to fire and uses this image to explain God’s many manifestations: “God is day, night, winter, summer, war, peace, satiety, hunger, and undergoes alteration in the way that fire, when it is mixed with spices is named according to the scent of each of them.”²²

Elements of this chaotic dance (and its relation to fire) can certainly be seen in di Prima’s “The Loba Dances,” in which the loba “raises / in flames / the / city” through her dancing.²³ The (re)construction of the city—and the “new / creation myth” that it brings—is enabled through its *destruction*, since the loba only raises it by burning it to the ground; indeed, the word “raises” conjures up its homonym, “razes,” to give a two-sided image of the loba and of what it means to create. This vision of the city rebuilt from “the ashes” recalls the myth of the phoenix, whose rebirthing is but one stage in an endless cycle of dying and being born again. Furthermore, this implication of being “born again,” along with the explicit images of the city and fire, are strikingly resonant with Duncan’s comments on religion in “Pages from a Notebook,” in which he writes: “At times I would rather be burnd or physically tortured for my disinterest in or disavowal of salvation than to be subjected to Xtian argument. ‘It is not my intention to enter the city of man’s

salvation.”²⁴ Here, Duncan is resisting the idea of one god reigning supreme; and while this might seem to contradict his declaration that “there is only this one god” in the creation of a poem, we have already touched upon god-as-fire being “mixed with spices” and thereby given plurality (multiple instantiations) while maintaining its overall singularity/unity. However, I want to suggest that Duncan embraces god-as-fire not just for its “dynamic unity,” but because he erotically and masochistically embraces its violence, its pain. And I do not use “masochistically” in a derogative way; indeed, if “dance and poetry emerge as ways of knowing” for Duncan,²⁵ then the dance *with fire* grounds a renewed sense of *feeling* that is generative in its painfulness. This might shed light on di Prima’s sense of reverence in “The Loba Dances,” apparently reveling in the loba as a sexily monstrous goddess who is “mistress / of many” and whose “breath / itself / is carnage.”²⁶ In fire, pain, and sex, feeling trumps Reason and is taken to a place of excess. If the role of the Christian God is to contain this danger through the promise of salvation, the god-as-fire (and the open field poem it creates) is all that inundates, bleeds through, and bubbles over.

Embracing Excess Through “Projective” Verse: Formulations & Limitations

For the open field poets, excess by another name is “projective,” and it is what connects the poet to his own carnal and primordial self and then to nature outside of him; for di Prima in particular, the selves and the nature involved are boldly feminine, and so her take on the “projective” might have somewhat different aims and assumptions. But, taking the “projective” back to its genealogical beginnings in the open field, it is clearly accompanied by a particular formulation of the universe which is worth exploring. In his essay “Human Universe,” Olson invokes the binary of Nature vs. Reason, advocating for a return to universe not as “discourse,” as the West has made it, but as in “the only two universes which count...that of himself, as organism, and that of his environment, the earth and planets.”²⁷ In a sense, Olson is arguing for overcoming our unique socializations or the differences of culture/race/nation/religion/gender that separate us as human beings. Levertov later takes up the question of gender more explicitly in “Genre and Gender vs. Serving an Art,” calling for the poet’s “transcendence of any inessential factor—including gender” so that poetry is seen for its aesthetic

qualities, and not just as a vehicle for (gender-specific) subject matter.²⁸ At the same time, however, Levertov acknowledges that a woman's experiences might inflect and inform the content of her poetry; and in "Some Affinities of Content," which is published nine years later, she confesses that "the older I grow the more I find myself concerned with content, and drawn towards poems that articulate some of my own interests."²⁹ Even so, the content that Levertov grows in affinity towards is about nature and "a quest for or encounter with God," and not so much about gender explicitly.³⁰ Indeed, for Olson, Duncan, and Levertov alike, the aim of open field poets is to "project" their work past themselves and towards the other. Nature is seen as a way of doing this because it is imagined as more chaotic, free-flowing, and wild, altogether less interested in the categorizations and containments that Reason demands. Moreover, Olson writes that nature is at the very core of the human—in breath, in sound, in language—and has already "given him size, projective size."³¹

However, an invocation of Nature over the bounds of Reason does not necessarily cleanse the poet of their socialization or "free" the project of its cultural baggage; therefore, I do not agree that the theme/analytic of nature is necessarily more "projective" than that of gender, especially as di Prima invokes it. To take one example: Olson takes an interest in the Maya because he believes them to be closer to nature; and in fact, he uses his encounters with Maya descendants to demonstrate his own desire to get back to flesh-and-blood senses, to have more free-flowing (i.e., excessive) contact between people, and to overcome the boundaries we have come to know in society. However, instead of overcoming these differences, he seems to underscore them, making ontological claims about "us" in the U.S. and "them" as our static counterparts. What Olson does not admit is that he actually relishes difference *per se*—that he is intrigued by and attracted to it. As he jostles against them (those "others" he has constructed) on the bus, he makes their difference something exotic/erotic. He writes: "The admission these people give me and one another is direct, and the individual who peers out from that flesh is precisely himself, is a curious wandering animal like me—it is so very beautiful how animal human eyes are when the flesh is not worn so close it chokes, how human and individuated the look comes out of a human eye when the house of it is not exaggerated."³² His point is that we are all human in that

we are all animal, and that our commonality can be more easily seen if we can take a look at each other up close. This entails a couple of things: first, that one “house” (i.e., a person’s body) is “not exaggerated” by being closed-off to those around it, isolating itself and guarding its personal space; and, that we not be so distracted by the things that are put on by society, like clothing, race, or gender, which likewise exaggerate the “house” of a person and diminish their natural humanity/soul. Olson undoubtedly thinks he is complimenting the Maya descendants by claiming that they are closer to the state of nature and less guarded/differentiated with each other. However, he performs the same logic as the colonizer, who believes himself farther along in the stages of civilization: less animal, more Reason. While the people he writes about exist, with him, in the present, he acts as if he would need to go back in time to be like them.

Regardless of his stated intentions, Olson’s poetics perpetuate the logic of white supremacy through the fetishization of racial difference; similarly, while Olson would like to dismiss gender as superfluous to an understanding of the human, his “imaginative” framework reinforces patriarchal norms. Returning to our earlier quotation, it is clear that Olson imagines the human as a man—not only because he uses the pronoun “him” in what should be a gender-inclusive statement, but also because the emphatic preoccupation with “size, projective size” carries a clear phallic signification. Even as Olson resists Reason (traditionally associated with the masculine) in favor of Nature (traditionally feminine), he nevertheless occupies a masculinist position by invoking man as the default for “human” and for the type of poet he envisions. This is an obvious limitation to his version of “projective” verse. Conversely, di Prima’s use of the projective turns this framework on its head by occupying a feminine voice and character, through pronouns and the icon of the loba, and by prioritizing subject matter marked as “woman’s realm.”

Loba’s Own Limits

As discussed above, the intention of “open field” poets was to expand the field of poetry; and despite this ideal, the project certainly had its limitations, especially with regard to gender and race. My paper argues that di Prima offered a generative and necessary revision, particularly through her rethinking of Woman and women’s place in

poetry. However, I would be remiss to represent di Prima or her book *Loba* as a cure-all for the shortcomings of poetry, which often mirror the injustices and exclusions found in society, even when the poets themselves hope to reach beyond. *Loba* certainly does not deal much with race, and when it does, the mention is offhand and potentially fetishizing. Indeed, while feminists have increasingly recognized the need to confront issues of gender and race together, in theory and in practice, di Prima's book lacks direct engagement with and explication of this project. Di Prima is undoubtedly aware of race and of the ties between ideas of Western supremacy and those of patriarchy—and she clearly sees the overthrow of the latter as being caught up with that of the former. This rings in the lines “See the young, black, naked woman riding / a dead white man....”³³ Not only is “man” contrasted with and overtaken by “woman,” but “black” is shown conquering “white.” The depiction offers a double reversal, taking aim at white supremacy and male dominance in tandem. And yet, Di Prima's lack of appropriate contextualization and her position as a white woman makes this an uncomfortable scene; though she seems to imagine herself armed against the white man and thus aligned with the Black woman, the history of relations between Black and white women in America is heavily fraught, with a number of Black feminists denouncing the racism and classism they encountered in feminist circles dominated by white, middle-class women. This has been documented in field-forming works such as the “Combahee River Collective Statement,” the anthology *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave*, Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought*, bell hooks' *Ain't I a Woman*, Angela Davis' *Women, Race, and Class*, and Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider*—to name just a few texts. And while biographical information might help to establish di Prima as a person in community with Blackwriters/thinkers and the project of Blackliberation,³⁴ there is no information or voice in *Loba* to establish di Prima's perspective or activities regarding race relations, and there are no reflections on her identity and how that might impact the reception of her words.

As it is, the one line in the book directly referencing Blackwomen as such is made to shock, and perhaps shocks for more reasons than were intended. As a white woman myself, writing in the twenty-first century, I read the description of the “black, naked woman” and wonder what the significance of “naked” is, especially as it is

juxtaposed with “black.” Given the history of sexualization and objectification of Blackwomen in America and beyond, it gives me pause. Of course, “naked” could be meant to simply accentuate the adjective “young”—contrasting the “dead white man” with the Blackwoman’s naked youth. This implication is problematic in its own right, since it presents Blackwomen merely as signifiers of something white men allegedly lack and probably desire (i.e., life, energy, freshness). In this case, the onus is placed on Blackwomen to provide a correction to the world of white men; it holds them responsible for rejuvenating society and culture. The narrative is not so different from Olson’s fetishization of the Maya, described above, and that should likewise give any reader pause.

With this limitation established, the focus of this paper is on what *Loba* contributes to poetry and feminist thinking/writing, with the caveat that feminism should always and already be thinking through the lens of race. Read with a critical (yet open, generous) mind in the present day, *Loba* may be used for the purposes of overturning seemingly given hierarchies and (hopefully) transgressing the boundaries of not just gender, but also race, nation, and religion—thus expanding the limits of imagination.

More on Gender: Woman as (W)Hole

Di Prima’s intervention as a woman poet, writing poetry about “woman” and for women, is radical not because the idea of woman would be absent from the open field otherwise; in fact, the philosophy and poetics of the open field are built around the concept of woman, if only as a metaphor for “opening.” I have been using the word “opening” throughout this paper to mean imagination, expansiveness, capaciousness—and this of course is the meaning that registers most explicitly in the open field poets’ descriptions of their vision. However, I would be remiss to not acknowledge the apparent sexual, and gendered, connotations of the word, especially as it is used by mostly male poets who often seem to assume poets are themselves and other men. Moreover, the politics of gender are not divorced from, but actually tied to, the politics of race/culture in these imaginings. I have argued that Olson performs the same logic as the colonizer in reference to the Maya people; I add that this logic, in all times and places, has carried gendered signification, and that signification tracks in the poetry of

the open field. The land (in this case, the “field”) is gendered feminine, and the colonizer (the poet) is male. As the heteronormative narrative goes, the male poet revels in having found an “opening”: his lover, his Muse, the thing that inspires his poetry and makes it more expansive.

This is perhaps most obvious looking at the broad expanse of Robert Creeley’s poetry, which is rife with the image of holes. Often, the hole carries existential anguish, registering an absence or a sense of emptiness; however, the hole also (and often simultaneously) tends to refer to a woman. His poem, “The Hole,” is an easy example.³⁵ But it rings true even in one of his most famous poems, “The Language,” which is perhaps not supposed to be about woman at all, but is. He writes:

I heard words
and words full

of holes
aching. Speech
is a mouth.³⁶

Creeley is speaking about language, perhaps, and making a salient point about the inability to say something—even (or especially) through the medium that allows us to say anything at all. However, his poem is not just about language; he is speaking of his lover, and of his inability to “Locate / I love you” in her “teeth and / eyes.” The hole is the absence of affirmed love, of the words “I love you” when the speaker of the poem so wishes them to be there. Because the poet envisions a hole, and then attaches it to a woman who is object of his poem, “she” is not really there at all. She is a hole, just as the hole and/or “opening” always refers, on some level, to her.

As a result, the poem is stages removed from any woman as an autonomous being, as agent of herself and her parts. Of course, the reduction of woman to her anatomy (and her anatomy as it is described by a man, at that) is a long-standing tradition in poetry—most famously called out in William Shakespeare’s poem that begins “My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun” (which some know as “Sonnet 130”), in which the poet

subverts the then-popular Petrarchan blazon.³⁷ However, in Creeley's poem, woman is not even so much a "part," per se, since the (w)hole of her is an absence.

Di Prima's intervention, then, not only in open field poetry specifically but in poetry more broadly, is essentially in representing woman as something more than a hole. Di Prima grants agency and autonomy to women over poetic material that would otherwise refer to them only (or mostly) in sexually objectifying ways. Di Prima, through her being and through her poetics, allows woman to be not muse or metaphor, but poet. She amends and projects past the "projective" as it was originally imagined by taking woman as a whole.

Under Construction: Freeing the Human/Woman Through Radical Mythmaking

Undoubtedly, di Prima's project has much in common with both Olson's and Creeley's, but hers departs in crucial ways. First, she might be said to draw from Olson's interest in "the animal" in her own configuration of the loba, the she-wolf that is goddess of her poem. Moreover, so much of *Loba* is populated with images of "the earth and planets," the second of the two universes that Olson is concerned with. (I take "planets" here to stand in for all things astral/astrological in *Loba*, the sun, moon, and stars included.) Finally, as has already been implied, her use of fire can be seen as "projective"—not just because it is excessive (projecting past limits), but also because it is a natural element. However, even with all these apparent resonances, there is an important difference: di Prima is playing with myths, making them speak to real-life women, whereas Olson seems to be doing the reverse, representing real-life people in a way that mythologizes them. As a result, di Prima's approach to the "projective" in *Loba* is more expansive than the narrative Olson offers by way of definition, since it actually explodes the categories that Western Man has constructed himself upon, rather than reinforcing them.

While di Prima pulls from nature in her images, she does not naturalize the things that she borrows from or creates, and that includes the constructs of gender/womanhood; in fact, as I have previously explained, di Prima regularly points to the constructedness that *is* representation and/or mythmaking. Part 4 of *Loba* also demonstrates this self-reflexivity, beginning with an epigraph which states: "I have come

to know myself and have gathered myself from everywhere.”³⁸ The quote is attributed to the “Gospel of Eve,” emphasizing her knowledge not of “good and evil,” as the Biblical story would have it, but of her own being; moreover, such knowledge actually attends her own self-creation, so that she knows herself precisely as a made thing³⁹—not entirely new, but derived from what had already existed. Eve, the myth we all know, *knows* she is mythic. But before Part 4 concludes with the “LOBA AS EVE” poem, it features four poems back-to-back that highlight the loba in all its mythic proportions, as that which is made to be so large that it exceeds/evades even our capturing of it. In “Some Lies about the Loba,” the speaker offers a litany of what amounts to rumors/hearsay, some claims directly contradicting each other, as with the li(n)e “that she is black, that she is white.”⁴⁰ But these are not lies in the sense that they are false; for it is a lie “that there is anything to say of her / which is not truth”—meaning that anything said about her *is* truth, or that nothing said about her is *not* truth. Perhaps “lies” are simply “fictions,” not so much “made up” in a moralistic sense, but “made” in that they are constructed or given a narrative through storytelling. By acknowledging the loba as fictitious, then, the poem actually opens up her possibilities to infinity, or to the limitlessness of our imagination, since “there is [not] anything about her / which cannot be said.”⁴¹

The following poem, “FOUR POETS SPEAK OF HER,” takes similar fictions about the loba and places them in quotations, humorously offsetting these with the speaker’s own voice at the end, ostensibly asking what kind of booze those four poets must have been drunk on when they said all that.⁴² The poets have represented/lied about the loba to the point of “nodding out,” exhausting themselves but not exhausting all there is to say about their favored object of conversation. In the next poem, “A PAINTING OF THE LOBA,” our goddess figure is once again guessed-at, glimpsed through unsure eyes and not quite decipherable. The speaker, acting as reader of some found depiction of the loba, asks: “Is it vampire as we know it? Werewolf / as in the Slavic hills?”⁴³ The speaker is unsure, but brings us (the readers) in as fellow gazers and audience members when she writes: “I guess she sings, I guess her hunting song / is what we’re listening to.” The speaker invites us to be confused right along with her, only making conjectures as to what we are gathering. And so we become the liars and

mythmakers, constructing the loba out of what we do not know but creating a new “knowledge” out of it. Finally, in “DREAM: The Loba Reveals Herself,” the loba-as-myth turns back on us, “the hunted turning hunter” and quite literally refusing capture.⁴⁴ As if calling upon a Muse, the speaker first summons the loba through “the awesome thunder & drum of her / Name, the LOBA MANTRA.” But the poet seems to fear the source of her inspiration, the myth(s) she has been tracking and conjuring up, since she retreats from the loba when she finally appears before her. Indeed, writing can be a terrifying process. The speaker seems to think that her subject will devour her, or else chew her up and spit her out. But the poet might imagine her subject as, simultaneously, her reader; we are told that the loba “came to hunt,” and Duncan refers to readers as “our hunters.”⁴⁵ Perhaps the poet is unsure how her own portrayal of the loba will live up to all that has previously been told; perhaps it is these earlier configurations of the loba that hunt/haunt her. But when she turns to face the loba, she sees her as someone quite different from the werewolf or vampire she has heard of. She calls her a “kind watchdog I cd / leave the children with. / Mother & sister. / Myself.”⁴⁶ The conclusion of this poem reflects another version of “excess,” revealing that the loba is always “something more” than all that has been previously said.

The Loba, Re-presented

In the four consecutive poems discussed above (“Some Lies About the Loba” through “DREAM: The Loba Reveals Herself”), the loba is re-presented to the reader as a figure that has often been mistreated and maligned; in other poems, this mistreatment is directly or indirectly connected to the violence that human woman has been subjected to, both ontologically and physically/materially. For example, in “And will you hunt the Loba?” the speaker calls us to “Look” and see that the loba “lies on her back in the sand like a human woman.”⁴⁷ This comes after a series of gruesome images of violence, all framed as questions for those who might hunt the loba. As the speaker cries “After her!” we see that the comparison between the loba and woman serves not to create sympathy for the former, but to actually incite violence against her—as if building off “the fact” of woman as the natural and necessary recipient of such violence, thereby justifying the loba’s slaughter. But the speaker’s tone is important: referring to the

potential hunters as “Fools” in the second line, she establishes that her suggestions of violence are not given with sincerity, but rather, hurled in accusation and as challenge. The loba triumphs in the end, as the hunter’s horse “turns to tumbleweed” in the chase, and “once again it is written / NOLI ME TANGERE in jewels / across the sky.”⁴⁸ A sense of justice/righteousness is evoked through the Latin, which means “Touch me not” and is taken from a Biblical verse: “Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”⁴⁹ Calling upon the power of Scripture, the poem nonetheless flips it on its head, switching gender roles and defying patriarchy. In its original context, “Noli me tangere” is spoken by Christ when he finds Mary Magdalene weeping at his empty tomb; in preparation for his ascension to the “Father,” he insists on distancing himself from Mary by not letting her touch him, all the while calling her “Woman.” Di Prima’s poem calls out the gender dynamic staged in the verse, taking the words “Noli me tangere” away from the man (and his Holy Father) and repurposing them in defense of a female goddess. Indeed, don’t the words ring out more righteously when they are wielded against bloodthirsty hunters, instead of a woman who means no harm, who is simply grieving a man she has loved and lost? The poetic twist pushes back against Biblical framings that would critique or diminish women for displaying “excessive” emotions.

In *Loba*, it is “the fact” of gender, of womanhood, that di Prima speaks out of—not because it is natural, but because it is written into all our operations, into our human relationships and spiritual knowledges; instead of abdicating the female/feminine, di Prima makes of it her “open field.” In that field, seeming binaries like pain and ecstasy, life and death, grief and celebration coexist, much as they do in the lives of women. This resonates with Duncan’s idea of embracing contradictions through the “dance.” Moreover, it calls up Levertov’s essay “Poetry, Prophecy, Survival,” in which she holds that “A poetry of anguish, a poetry of anger, of rage...can be truly a high poetry,” but also advocates for “a poetry of praise” as something that is necessary for survival.⁵⁰ In di Prima’s, “LOBA IN CHILDBED,” the modes of anguish and praise are woven together into a single poem. Descriptions of the pangs of labor gather in intensity, reaching their

climax at the moment of delivery, a time of utter desperation for the loba. Di Prima writes:

Only
shrill mantra scream, arch
mudra of tossing pain
torture of watching spirit, measured
in pulse beat from wires tied
to heart of her cunt, center
of her womb. Have the oceanic
presences deserted her?⁵¹

Indeed, if Olson calls the poet to get back to the senses, the “shout,” and away from the abstract and discursive, then the loba’s scream is an excellent example of this.⁵² Is there anything more primordial than a “natural” childbirth? Di Prima weds the shout to womanhood, making it bubble up from the “heart of her cunt” and thereby situating the feminine inside the open field. Moreover, she borrows again from Christian texts; the question that ends the stanza recalls Christ’s suffering upon the cross, when he calls out to his/the Father in despair and agony: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”⁵³ The loba’s physical pain carries fear alongside it, as she finds herself inside this “Dark cave. Dark forces countering / magic w/ magic.”⁵⁴ The magic of childbirth contends with that of death. Even the poem’s conclusion suspends our definite knowledge of whether or not the child has been born alive: “Was he limp, did he stir / w/ life, did she hear / his soft breath in her ear?” A sense of worry and impending grief at the possibility of a “limp” body is mixed with a sense of overwhelming joy and relief at the mention of his breath. Indeed, the reader’s breath seems to hinge on the child’s, as we wait to exhale at this hesitant revelation of new life. It is the violence of labor, the intensified reality of life and death, that finally gives way to awe and delivers us unto praise. Levertov writes, “To sing awe—to breathe out praise and celebration—is as fundamental an impulse as to lament.”⁵⁵

The Loba in Pain

“LOBA IN CHILDBED” and its emphasis on pain—on pain mixed with pleasure, specifically—holds a certain resonance with the work of Fred Moten, Elaine Scarry, and Susan Sontag, in their readings of pained bodies that give way to (someone else’s) pleasure. It is worth bringing their contributions to bear on *Loba*, to ascertain whether di Prima is performing what these scholars urge us to critique. Sontag’s *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003) questions the utility and the ethics of circulating images depicting people in pain, arguing that it provokes voyeuristic pleasure in viewers more than it promotes either sympathy or material change. Scarry’s *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1987) is a protest against torture and analyzes the vocabularies produced through (and inhibited by) suffering; one cannot truly express pain, or make anything of/through it, but is in fact unmade by it. Finally, Moten’s *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (2003) looks at pain in relation to Black expression and performance; in his first chapter, “Resistance of the Object: Aunt Hester’s Scream,” he uses the concept of subjectification as a double entendre, arguing that the Black subject has traditionally been formed at the scene of a Black body subjected to suffering.

All three books point to the problematics of representing a body in pain, especially the body of another—or the body deemed “Other” from a white, masculinist framework. They are relevant to “LOBA IN CHILDBED” in that this poem perhaps risks producing a “wrong” sort of pleasure in its depiction of the loba in pain, especially since the loba is representative, to a certain extent, of “woman” writ large, and women are so often presented in objectifying and violent ways. Indeed, Catharine MacKinnon has provocatively argued for woman as a symbol of suffering, tied to the condition of being hurt/violated so habitually that it reaches an almost ontological level; she writes: “To be *rapable*, a position which is social, not biological, defines what a woman is.”⁵⁶ Is di Prima’s representation, then, problematic? Pornographic, even?

Keeping these scholars’ arguments in mind, I propose that di Prima’s subject position, as well as both her relation to and treatment of the concept of “woman,” go a long way in inflecting the poem with something other than gross pleasure at the sight of

a woman in pain. Because the poet/speaker identifies so strongly with the loba and with womanhood throughout the book, this scene does not read as voyeuristic even though it is rendered in the third person. It might be deemed “pornographic” given its attention to and use of the word “cunt” and the fact that the loba’s pain gives way to pleasure; however, I am not interested, as MacKinnon is, in making generalizable moral judgments of pornography (or of masochism, for that matter). That is to say, whether or not the poem is pornographic, it does not represent/appropriate pain in a way that dehumanizes, exploits, or inoculates us to others’ suffering.

We have also to consider the contextualization of the poem in a sea of other poems, where the loba is situated in myriad conditions not reducible to childbirth or pain. Indeed, an attention to the loba’s “opening” would strike quite differently in the hands of another open field poet such as Olson or Creeley, belonging as it would in a sea of other poems where women figure mostly as holes. I argue that the loba, on the other hand, is a multi-valenced character, giving expression to the many conditions of woman and her agency/dignity within them.

***Loba’s* Dual Impulses (Pain vs. Pleasure), and Its Implications for Feminism**

As much as womanhood can be rooted in pain, di Prima balances the urge to scream or to raise/raze the city in flames with a parallel desire for “rebirth,” to see the loba joyful and triumphant. This has as much to do with a “rewriting” of myth as it does with the rhetoric of political action: should feminism invest itself in a record of wrongs against women, or should its energies go towards imagining something different in its place? Both Levertov and di Prima seem to get at this difficult question, though di Prima does so more explicitly and with a more intense grounding of gender. Much like “And will you hunt the Loba?,” di Prima’s “LOBA, TO APOLLO, AT THE FOUNTAIN OF HEALING” enumerates horrific scenes of violence, phrasing many of them again as questions; but this time, the questions are not hypothetical/conditional (i.e., “*would* you”), but rather, asking for a confirmation of events that have already taken place. The loba asks “did I not burn?” and “was I not sold & sold & my daughters broken?”⁵⁷ Interestingly, the loba has begun the poem by boldly claiming: “now dervish I slough off / pain, which is my claim to / commonality of woman.” And yet, she has “remembered /

since childhood” experiences of great pain, and she seems to want Apollo to admit or own up to them. In bitterness and heartbreak, she asks him:

can you laugh, father
can you deny
mouthfuls of blackened blood
I spit out
 each morning
to sing?⁵⁸

It seems that it is still not possible to just sing without acknowledging what all she is triumphing over. The indented line underscores the dailiness of it: the fact that she must wake up each morning and spit all over again, before she can think of singing. Further emphasizing this cyclicity on the level of form, di Prima repeats the first stanza. But because of what has directly come before, it seems impossible to take the loba at her word; the reader suspects that the claim to slough off pain is just another prayer the loba says to herself, willing herself to move on. The loba believes she must trade her rage “to be born / in uniqueness,” but she cannot seem to perform the act of forgetting that she is calling for.⁵⁹ What, then, of feminism born of rage? Can it still allow for uniqueness, for imagination? Can it serve as fertile ground for something future-oriented?

Answering this question in its more generalized form, not directly in relation to feminism, Levertov writes: “Affliction is more apt to suffocate the imagination than to stimulate it. The action of imagination, if unsmothered, is to lift the crushed mind out from under the weight of affliction.”⁶⁰ She advocates for the sharing of personal experiences and sorrows only insofar as they serve “a *creative* function, producing new forms and transforming existing ones” and only insofar as they become “autonomous objects available to others, and capable of transforming *them*.”⁶¹ Imagination almost comes to mean “healing,” which is precisely what the loba, in the poem just discussed, was supposedly seeking at the fountain. In that instance, the loba did not seem to find what she was looking for. Similarly, as much as Levertov invokes praise as a method of survival, several of her “To Stay Alive” poems come into conflict with her desires for

peace and healing. She says as much in her preface to that collection, speaking of her community activism: “The personal response that moves from the identification of my lost sister, as a worker for human rights, with the pacifists ‘going limp’ as they are dragged to the paddywagon in Times Square in 1966, to the understanding by 1970 that ‘there comes a time when only anger / is love,’ is one shared by many of us....”⁶² While the creation of something new is at the heart of her work, Levertov is sometimes induced not only to acknowledge the injustices done, but also to register a sense of communal rage. This project is not so different from di Prima’s. Indeed, when Levertov pays her respects to the monks who set their bodies on fire to register “the burned bodies / of other people’s children” in war, this is not so different from the loba who raises/razes the city in flames.⁶³ Perhaps it is not so much the tone of the poem (or the politics) that determines its feasibility or merit, but whether it serves a greater purpose, and whether it is able to register its anguish alongside praise, towards imagination.

The Limits of Myth; and, Simultaneously, Mythmaking as Inexhaustive

In true open-field fashion, Levertov is interested in “the whole” of humanity, and how her work can project past herself and speak to/with that whole. She maintains that her work, in gathering the experiences of a number of people, “transcends the peculiar details of each life, though it can only be expressed in and through such details.”⁶⁴ This “transcendent” quality is called up in di Prima’s *Loba*, not just in that it transcends the individual woman and moves towards the larger concept or community of women, but also because it points towards that which is always left over in any representation of woman—that excess which this paper has already called the “projective” of the open field. In “POINT OF RIPENING: Lughnasa,” di Prima responds to a quote (made an epigraph here) by Carl Jung: “What Myth are you living?” Jung is known for developing a theory in psychology around a conception of “archetypes,” which he understood as underlying all human experience and behavior, finding varied expressions/images through different cultures and individual consciousnesses.⁶⁵ The archetypes, then, are seemingly open-ended, finding endless expression in the particularities of place, time, and person. They are intended as grounds for imagination, not as its upper limit. And yet, the speaker of di Prima’s poem seems to be calling out a lack of potential,

responding in the first two lines: “There is no myth / for what I am living now.”⁶⁶ If we take capitalization seriously, however, a distinction might be drawn between “Myth” as expansive potential, connecting all of humanity, and “myth” as an already given form—indeed, one of the “twelve common archetypes” that have come to stand in for Jungian psychology. For di Prima, these given forms would be the preconceived notions about what “woman” is, as well as the female figures which have come to dominate art and literature but which are not necessarily relatable for all women. This is not just a statement about various media’s lack of positive female role models; it is an acknowledgment that even if the quality and quantity of representations were to increase, no amount of representation could exhaust all women’s beings.

Indeed, without doing too much biographical work, we might take the speaker of “POINT OF RIPENING” to be di Prima herself, noting the absence of a “myth / for this older, ample woman.”⁶⁷ Having dedicated a book to exploring the Myth of woman, di Prima admits that her own life does not find its carbon copy in any myth that she has found. This could be seen as a “lack” in mythology or cultural production as it exists; but, taken another way, it could be meant to suggest that any individual life will exceed the capacity of myth to perfectly capture it, just as the loba herself avoids capture. The threat of any myth is that it will be conflated with the whole, though it be a single representation. Di Prima’s loba thus walks a tightrope, resisting this conflation: it attempts to be of mythic proportions (or mythically “projective”) so that it can be any- and everything; and yet, it also tries to incorporate the specific and quotidian, as they apply to the lives of real women. I would argue that the loba is not something to look to, but to look towards. Duncan writes: “Our engagement with knowing, with craft and lore, our demand for truth is not to reach a conclusion but to keep our exposure to what we do not know, to confront our wish and our need beyond habit and capability, beyond what we can take for granted, at the borderline, the light finger-tip or thought-tip where impulse and novelty spring.”⁶⁸ The loba opens up the possibility for us—wherever, whenever, and however we are—to point to our own lives and argue for “Some myth that encompasses that.”⁶⁹ Knowing that it will never be complete, never perfect, the loba becomes a way of thinking “woman” without collapsing back on what has already been

written/said or on women as we presently know them. Indeed, *Loba* allows women to be excessive, “projective” past the limits of whatever we *could* know. *She* is an open field.

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2. Charles Olson, “Projective Verse,” in *Selected Writings*, ed. Robert Creeley (New York: New Directions, 1966), 20.
3. Diane Di Prima, “Belili Ishtar...,” in *Loba* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 54
4. Polina Mackay, “Politics of Feminist Revision in di Prima's *Loba*,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 18, no. 5 (2016): 2, doi: 10.7771/1481-4374.2977.
5. Estíbaliz Encarnación-Pinedo, “Intertextuality in Diane di Prima's *Loba*: Religious Discourse and Feminism,” *Humanities* 7, no. 4 (2018): 3, doi: 10.3390/h7040132.
6. Encarnación-Pinedo, 3.
7. Charles Olson, “Human Universe,” in *Selected Writings*, ed. Robert Creeley (New York: New Directions, 1966), 58.
8. Robert Duncan, “Towards an Open Universe,” in *A Selected Prose*, ed. Robert J. Bertholf (New York: New Directions, 1995), 12.
9. Duncan, 7.
10. Charles Olson, “Projective Verse,” 20.
11. Robert Creeley, “A Note on Poetry,” in *A Quick Graph: Collected Notes & Essays*, ed. Donald Allen, (San Francisco: Four Seasons Foundation, 1970), 25.
12. Encarnación-Pinedo, “Intertextuality in Diane di Prima's *Loba*,” 3.
13. Encarnación-Pinedo, 3.
14. Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257-337.
15. Di Prima, *Loba*, xiii.
16. “The Maximus Poems,” Poets.org, accessed August 20, 2020, <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/book/maximus-poems>.
17. Mackay, “Politics of Feminist Revision in di Prima's *Loba*,” 2.
18. Duncan, “Towards an Open Universe,” 9.
19. Duncan, 6.
20. Robert Duncan, “Ideas of the Meaning of Form,” in *A Selected Prose*, ed. Robert J. Bertholf (New York: New Directions, 1995), 35.
21. Duncan, 35.
22. Duncan, “Towards an Open Universe,” 6.
23. Diane di Prima, “The *Loba* Dances,” in *Loba* (New York, Penguin Books, 1998), 18.
24. Robert Duncan, “Pages from a Notebook,” in *A Selected Prose*, ed. Robert J. Bertholf (New York: New Directions, 1995), 16.
25. Duncan, “Towards an Open Universe,” 6.
26. Di Prima, “The *Loba* Dances,” 18-19.
27. Charles Olson, “Human Universe,” 54.
28. Denise Levertov, “Genre and Gender v. Serving an Art” in *New & Selected Essays* (New York: New Directions, 1992), 103.
29. Denise Levertov, “Some Affinities of Content,” in *New & Selected Essays* (New York: New Directions, 1992), 2.

30. Levertov, 5, 11.
31. Olson, "Projective Verse," 25.
32. Olson, "Human Universe," 57.
33. Di Prima, *Loba*, 14.
34. For example, Diane di Prima had not only personal, but creative and collaborative, relationships with both Audre Lorde and Amiri Baraka (then LeRoi Jones). Roseanne Giannini Quinn discusses the importance of this detail in her article "'The Willingness to Speak': Diane di Prima and Italian American Feminist Body Politics."
35. Robert Creeley, "The Hole," in *Selected Poems, 1945-2005* (Berkeley: University of California, 2008), 107-109.
36. Robert Creeley, "The Language," in *Selected Poems, 1945-2005* (Berkeley: University of California, 2008), 91-92.
37. "Glossary of Poetic Terms: Blazon," *Poetry Foundation*, 2000, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/blazon>.
38. Di Prima, *Loba*, 57.
39. Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, Persephone Press, 1982. This work is not in direct conversation with *Loba*, but has in common a feminist assertion of self-knowledge and self-creation. Lorde coined the term "biomythography" in describing this work, signifying the creative admixture of personal (auto)biography and myth, with an eye to collective history as well.
40. Diane di Prima, "Some Lies about the Loba," in *Loba* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 62.
41. Di Prima, 62.
42. Diane di Prima, "FOUR POETS SPEAK OF HER," in *Loba* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 64.
43. Diane di Prima, "A PAINTING OF THE LOBA," in *Loba* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 65.
44. Diane di Prima, "DREAM: The Loba Reveals Herself," in *Loba* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 67.
45. Duncan, "Pages from a Notebook," 13.
46. Di Prima, "DREAM: The Loba Reveals Herself," 68.
47. Diane di Prima, "And will you hunt the Loba?," in *Loba* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 29.
48. Di Prima, 29.
49. Jn 20:17 (KJV)
50. Denise Levertov, "Poetry, Prophecy, Survival," in *Poems 1968-1972* (New York: New Directions, 1987), 143-144.
51. Diane di Prima, "LOBA IN CHILDBED," in *Loba* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 32.
52. Olson, "Human Universe," 57.
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54. Di Prima, "LOBA IN CHILDBED," 31.
55. Levertov, "Poetry, Prophecy, Survival," 144.
56. Catharine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence," *Signs*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1983): 651.
57. Diane di Prima, "LOBA, TO APOLLO, AT THE FOUNTAIN OF HEALING," in *Loba* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 147.
58. Di Prima, 147.
59. Di Prima, 148.
60. Levertov, "Poetry, Prophecy, Survival," 145.
61. Levertov, 146.
62. Denise Levertov, "Author's Preface, 1971," in *Poems 1968-1972* (New York: New Directions, 1987), 106.
63. Denise Levertov, "Prologue: An Interim," in *Poems 1968-1972* (New York: New Directions, 1987), 135.

64. Levertov, "Author's Preface, 1971," 107.
65. "Jungian archetypes," *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, last modified June 15, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jungian_archetypes.
66. Diane di Prima, "POINT OF RIPENING: Lughnasa," *Loba* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 305.
67. Di Prima, "POINT OF RIPENING: Lughnasa," 305.
68. Duncan, "Towards an Open Universe," 12.
69. Di Prima, "POINT OF RIPENING: Lughnasa," 307.

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