

*The economy of scarcity that I live daily makes difficult and vital the conception of a writing of abundance. Writing, when reduced by the economy of scarcity to an instrument in the service of something other than itself—even when used as a means for ‘revolution’, or a tool for the acquisition of ‘knowledge’—vanishes from thought.*

*Yet the wonder I find is that the powers of writing defy eclipse: are not the physical, emotional, and intellectual famines of life under patriarchy ended, in part, when writing, remembered, brings forth a writing of abundance?*

There was a time before there was a war, before abundance was rendered scarce and the many were dominated by the Same.

I am drawn to this time, to the shores of a writing which is an abundance. Abundance, flowing with the waves and without bounds, is an inexhaustible plentitude.

In a field of wildflowers where never has there been any question but that each is herself, gentle Gaiety, Revelry, Radiance, and Muses with lovely hair offer a welcoming embrace. 'Woman', the word which has betokened the constriction of female existence as womb and wife of man, dissolves in myriad currents: womon, womyn, wimmin.

A time before there was a war, a time of abundance, is an invention. An invention is not plucked out of the air and imposed on reality as if that were a blank slate awaiting definition. Invention approaches that which is there. When I invent a time I come to a time which already comes to me.

I set down my pen, I close this book and writing does not stop. I open this book, I pick up my pen, and writing does not begin. The writing is not a gimmick I manipulate by whim, but an event with its own histories.

Writing is the greeting in which a writing births herself. Writing is the welcoming of that freedom.

Writing is not the mark that would impress itself on random points in empty space. Nor is writing the frame that would captivate language by its pre-formed focus, stasis. The institution of a center, the confinement to the Same, miss the freedom of writing.

Writing *is* in the open rapport of the many. Writings of the past, star writings of the future, traverse again and again the plants, earth, self, with which they are inscribed.

A writing is in company with, and not imposed on, parchment, clay tablet, consciousness. A writing is ancient and contemporary, she discovers herself with others.

The coming to be of a writing as she *is* is a conception by parthenogynesis.

Goddesses are born of writing; goddesses each of whom brings forth a writing. The ancient wisdom of H.D., "blue as the blue-poppy, / blue as the flax in flower," she who knows our fears, remembers, and who does not falter, the meditative knowledge of Elsa Gidlow, a "knowledge standing stark under the sky / feet naked to earth," is each a goddess of writing free from the disguise of authority, bold, and beautiful.

The shore is effervescent: shifting sands, rubble washed by the sea, layers under layers upon layers. There is a transformation of energies in these multiple, shifting, grounds.

Among the tens of thousands of languages, the language I speak is a language situated in writing. Where writing is, worlds in writing and the being of worlds are inseparable.

I emerge with this writing, a nebular I.

The I of authority, disciplinary I that would judge writing from a distance, transparent I for whom writing must be to become legible for everyone even if indecipherable for oneself, loses hold before an I of shifting densities, darkneses, florescence.

Clitoral currents trace shimmering galaxies of visceral desire.

The effulgences of lesbian love and writing celebrate the intensities of mutual delight. It is a matter of significance that clitoral currents are lesbian: warm, billowing, radiant.

Sensual and scriptural configurations are at play when writing is cyprine.\*

Alphabets of wimmin, the many alphabets of each woman, survive: the clay tablets and cuneiform of Nidaba of Sumer,

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\*A secretion of lesbian lovers [from *Cyprus*, birthplace of Aphrodite].

the letters of the three Fates, parthenogynic daughters of the Great Goddess, and of Io, the violet flower, moon that encircles the Mediterranean. How could I have thought the syllables of Sarasvati, signs of Kali, hieroglyphs of Isis, whom Serpot of Syria, Amazon queen, invoked as goddess of the land of womyn, woman's contribution to *the* alphabet?

Alphabets, delightful surfaces, magical signs, cosmic vibrations intertwine, making writing festive.

On the shore, amid rubble washed by the sea, I live. My memory is a beginning, not first, but as always, opening to times spaces Myceneas future and past.

My memory travels with a writing before which the dissolution of patriarchy is a matter of fact.

*The dead live when the moist lotus open along Acheron.*

Lost continents of writing are sites from which I see the horrors and undergo healing.

I forget the claim to reality that is made by the Same when, aware that claim is being made, I move apart from its hold.

Lovers of writing turn the leaves of memories and books, tending, patching, mending.

The mysteries of writing are not a secret to be withheld, but an experience that is brimming with life.

Yet where is the writing when our books are so few, and when so many are banned, lost?

Writing, too, travels with memory. By this power writing preserves herself when memory endures the flames in which a writing is burned. On byways such as these Sappho's lyric poetry survives the destructions of Alexandria by Christians and Moslems.

But at times, a writing is burned, and the more that is written the more quickly it is burned, or suppressed . . . out of date, incomplete, unreal, disquieting. If you are squeamish don't prod the beach rubble, which washes up when what will not assimilate is expelled.

*No longer the captivity of writing!*

On indigenous grounds a writing thrives. Her powers cannot be made to grow on alien terrain.

With a magic eye, tooth, and Gorgon face, the three Fates find at each season a writing: twigs scattered by the wind, drifting sands, the flight of birds.

But if this writing in her freedom were to meet the limit once, and once again, the eye of mastery that would seize her in its grasp, the sickle that would cut her off from perception, divination, rebirth, the craneskin bag that would contain her, the mask that would frighten away her friends, if she were to encounter Hermes, hermeneut who thinks stones are mute, he who would bring her from unintelligibility to intelligibility—according to whom?—she might forget life, were not she tenacious.

The lie: that Hermes has the alphabet. That by cunning theft Hermes stole writing from the three Fates. That he was given the gift of writing by the three Fates. That he is the origin of writing and language.

Writing is not one and writing cannot be possessed. The three Fates did not give writing to Hermes, nor did Agluaros give Hermes her daughter, Herse, moon goddess of the morning dew.

I remember the attempts made by force, over time, to break the power of memory; to instill the belief that writing must be captive.

I remember the teaching that writing is a writing of servitude, porno-graphy, a writing that affirms its submission to the Same, that writing must comply when the chain of command of a grammar where the subject governs verb and thereby possesses object comes to power. I remember the attempts to inculcate the lesson that I, if I am to write, must also be captive.

Hermes, communications technology satellite, circles the earth, while wild mares frolic on the shore.

The attempt to use writing counting cattle and counting wimmin, counting what cannot be counted, is at the origins of scarcity and civilization.

Civilization would turn writing against herself.

The history of writing in the West, as set forth in vase painting, 600 b.c.—300 a.d., in mainland Greece, the Black sea, Anatolia, and Europe, depicts a history in which men, but never wimmin, write. That history attests to the fact that wimmin who write, and all wimmin caring for pleasure and freedom, live in ways that escape representation by civilization.



A writing of six hundred ideographs circulates solely among womyn in Jiangyong County, Hunan province, 960 a.d. to the present. The womyn, barred from school and confined to the home, write. While weaving, the womyn read the writing to each other.

Young womyn form families of sworn sisters and write of these sisterhoods in womyn characters. They continue to communicate in the writing after marriage. They burn their writings so that in the next life they can enjoy them. The womyn believe that the script came to Hu Xiuying during her loneliness at the imperial palace.

Wimmin often have no option between non-literacy and literacy: sixty-two percent of the non-literate people in the world are wimmin, the gap between the percentage of wimmin and men who are non-literate is increasing.

Wimmin who are literate often are obliged to a literacy that would confirm the legitimacy of civilization.

*In memory*

Two womyn teachers in Afghanistan, 1984, are raped, mutilated, and burned on a fire of school books. The womyn taught reading and writing and did not wear veils.

Over five thousand years ago, in Sumer, a region of southern Babylonia, Nidaba appears with clay tablets and cuneiform, prior to any of the male gods who attempt to replace her. Yet by 1880-1550 b.c., wimmin in Sippar, a city in northern Babylonia, write in the *gagûm*: a locked house inside the walled temple dedicated to the sun god, Sāmaš. The wimmin who write are *nadītu*, the barren ones: without children and without property.

Iltani, who composes her last text when she is more than seventy, Inaan-amamu, Amat-Mamu, a scribe for at least forty years, and Awāt-Aja, are among the *nadītu* who write the lives of the one hundred to two hundred wimmin who reside, at the same time, in the locked house.

The *nadītu* often live to be old, for they do not die in childbirth, which shortened the lives of many womyn. They offer each other mutual support. Within the confines of the locked house, they enjoy a degree of personal freedom exceptional for womyn at that time.

At birth the womyn are marked, given names to show they are destined for the locked house. They are sent to the *gagûm* so that, upon their death, their share of the paternal estate will be inherited by their brothers. Under an administrative staff comprised exclusively of men, the *nadîtu* keep records of sales and profits from the land.

At the center of the city womyn write, provided that womyn and writing are walled in.

Cloaked, wimmin with writing walk in the heart of the city. Axiothea, in the fourth century b.c., leaves home and travels to Athens where, disguised as a man, she becomes a student. Hypatia, 375-415 a.d., casts a cloak around herself and appears in Alexandria, where she teaches and writes mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, and mechanics. Hypatia is killed when men tear off her cloak and mutilate her body because she is a woman, because she will not convert to Christianity, because she will not leave the city with her teaching and writing.

Wimmin with writing walk in the city by assuming the appearance of men, and at the will of men.

Why do I write?

I leave the blue springs and blazing sun, the tropics, pink azaleas and palms, to live in the city with a lesbian writing. At my job, I circulate among languages, none of them my own, and when I write I am told, "not philosophy," "poetry," "... using language as it was not intended."

I partake in migrations not sought, but taken on, to be to myself a writing companion and for economic sustenance, to make real a world that enlivens my senses, to be with friends. I live with the excitement of beauty in the open, a writing of cultures of womyn on the lost coast, llamas, red hummingbirds, wild berries, sea gulls, when I am told, "not the ideal woman we had in our minds."

And now, on the frontier, a bare winter after years of sea and sun, why is this winter so cold?

*Is it possible to write without moon, sun, stars, the warmth of wimmin?*