



Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–1695)

Juana de Asbaje was born in 1648 in the village of San Miguel de Nepantla, some forty-five miles from Mexico City, as the illegitimate daughter of a Spanish hidalgo and a Mexican woman (her use of her father's name indicates that at some point she was legitimized formally). Her parents moved almost immediately to the village of Amecameca, where the poet spent her childhood. At an early age the future poet showed extraordinary precocity: when she was six, having been taken to school with her elder sister in order to keep her out of her mother's way, she conceived an extraordinary passion for learning which was never thenceforth to leave her. In her *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*, she recounts that, having heard that eating cheese makes one dull of mind, she avoided that food scrupulously. At the age of ten or so she had already composed poems and plays and had also developed a consuming desire to study at the University of Mexico, proposing—presumably to the amusement of her family—that she assume male attire for this purpose.

The University was, of course, out of the question. Nevertheless, to Mexico City she went, her pleas having induced her mother to send her to the house of relatives residing there. She plunged enthusiastically into private study, concentrating especially on mathematics, science, philosophy, theology, and foreign languages (she had already mastered Latin and Greek before leaving Amecameca). At the age of sixteen she was presented at the court of the viceroy of Mexico, where both her learning and her extraordinary beauty endeared her to the vicereine, the Marquesa de Mancera. For three years she remained at court, as lady-in-waiting to the marquesa's daughter.

The pet of the court, Juana was also regarded as something of an oddity (was it worse or better that she was beautiful, one wonders). At

one point, when she was in her early teens, she was interrogated by a group of learned men in a variety of disciplines, and she demonstrated a degree of knowledge that put them all to shame. One cannot help but be reminded of the New Testament account of the child Christ being similarly questioned: Juana, too, was to have her crucifixion. Concerning Juana's life at the viceregal court, there have been the inevitable speculations, none of them leading anywhere. It has been speculated that a Lesbian relationship developed between the vicereine and the brilliant adolescent; there is not a shred of evidence to support the speculation—which fact does not rule out the possibility. There has been speculation that Juana, during this time, experienced one or more passionate and unhappy affairs with one or more men. Again, no evidence—a fact which cannot refute the speculation. Certain it is that the poet Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz knew everything there is to know about sexual passion, and that she demonstrated this knowledge in her lyric poems. There are some who would say that her knowledge could only have been derived from personal experience. They may be wrong: Juana was one of the most intelligent people of her age (or, probably, of any age), and to the unusually intelligent many kinds of knowledge are possible. One cannot know. As usual, Juana eludes us, unlike Louise Labé and Gaspara Stampa, who are quite circumstantial about the bases of their passionate knowledge in actual experience.

In 1667, at the age of nineteen, Juana de Asbaje entered the convent of the Discalced Carmelites in Mexico City. She left as soon as she could, some three months later, presumably for reasons of health. In 1669 she entered the convent of the Hieronymite Order, where she was to remain until her death in 1695. The Carmelites are, of course, an order proverbial for their austerity; such is not the case with the Hieronymites, and, apparently, the young nun found in their midst a clean, well-lighted place—a reasonably comfortable cell equipped with scientific and musical instruments, with the best library in New Spain (her own), and with a steady stream of admiring and talkative visitors. Given the time and place in which she was unfortunate enough to be born, she could not have hoped for more.

Much ink has been squandered on the question of Sor Juana's religious vocation. It seems unnecessary to speculate, given what the poet herself tells us in her *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*:

I became a religious because, although I knew that that estate entailed things very repugnant to my temperament (I speak of the incidentals, not of the essentials), it was, given the total aversion which I felt toward matrimony, the least unsuitable and the most honorable I could choose in respect to the security of my salvation which I wished. . . .¹

In short, the convent was the lesser of the two evils that proposed themselves as the only alternatives for a respectable Mexican woman of the seventeenth century. For a poet living in a society that did not recognize the concept of the *grande dame*, that of the *femme savante*, or that of the *cortigiana onesta*, it was the only possible choice.

Sor Juana was not a mystic. The only basis one can imagine for that claim, one which is often made by students of her work, is the unexamined assumption that a literary nun *must* be a mystic. Sometimes, as in her *Romance* 56 ("En que expresa los efectos del Amor Divino, y propone morir amante, a pesar de todo riesgo"), she has mysticism as her subject, but, like John Donne in many of his *Divine Poems*, she expresses the *desire* for the beatific vision rather than the experience thereof. Neither the nonmystical nature of Sor Juana's temperament nor the nonreligious motivation for her taking the veil should be understood as implying any lack of religious belief. All the available evidence of her life and work suggests that she was a faithful Catholic Christian, firm in her faith and fully correct in her observance of its forms.

Her life as a nun was, indeed, subject to the inconveniences for which she had been prepared—the friendly and loving but superdependent company of her fellow sisters, the partly welcome but partly intrusive visits of worldly people who wanted the brilliance of her conversation or the gift of a love poem appropriate to some particular situation. But there were compensations—above all, the opportunity to study, to learn, to think. Like Donne, Sor Juana was subject to "the worst voluptuousness, which is an hydroptic, immoderate desire of humane learning and languages";² in the convent she could, to some extent, satisfy that desire. More serious obstacles to her true vocation were certain ecclesiastical authorities and her own delicate health. At one point a narrow-minded prelate ordered her to cease her studies: she did as commanded, but, as she writes in the *Respuesta*, ". . . since it was not within my power to cease absolutely, I observed all things that God created, the universal machine serving me in place of books."³ The prelate left office after a few months, but, Sor Juana having fallen ill, she was again forbidden to read, this time by her physicians. Seeing that the lack of books subjected her to still greater mental tension, they were obliged to withdraw the prohibition.⁴

In 1690 she was prevailed upon to write a critique of a somewhat unorthodox sermon published by a Portuguese Jesuit named Antonio Vieyra.⁵ Without her knowledge or consent, her rebuttal was published under the title *Carta atenagórica*; it won her the admiration and praise of learned men not only in Spanish America but also in Spain and Portugal. It also elicited from her friend the bishop of Puebla in Mexico a letter composed under the pseudonym "Sor Filotea de la Cruz," a letter which, though praising Sor Juana for her learning and intelligence, reprimands

her for having wasted so much time on worldly knowledge and profane letters and recommends that she devote her gifts entirely to theological study and the refutation of religious error.

It may all have been a put-up job. It is altogether possible that the bishop himself arranged for the publication of the *Carta atenagórica*, with the intention of using its success to force Juana into placing her genius exclusively at the service of the Church—for its greater glory and her more assured salvation. If this hypothesis is correct, the bishop was acting from motives that were far from mean or malicious. A man of the Church, he was doing his duty as he saw it by adding strength to the defense of the true faith and at the same time contributing to the spiritual welfare of a woman he sincerely admired. Nevertheless, however well-intentioned he may have been, he was responsible for the destruction of one of the finest literary artists of the Baroque, and the modern reader is likely to find it difficult to forgive him.

For Sor Juana took it hard. Her immediate response was an open letter, the great *Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz* (she knew perfectly well who lurked behind the pseudonym). One of the earliest documents of modern feminism, an exemplary piece of forceful argumentative prose, the *Respuesta* is also one of the noblest of all defenses of intellectual freedom. It is also the source of a good deal of what we know of Sor Juana's life. Juana maintains that her general lack of concentration on theological dispute or other kinds of specifically religious writing is to be traced not to any indifference on her part but to humility. She maintains, further, that most of her metrical compositions (she specifically excepts *El sueño*) were written as favors to importunate visitors and that they occupied little of her time or attention. But her principal point is woman's freedom to *learn*, in both sacred and secular fields, and she drives her argument home by pointing out that God Himself has placed in certain women the desire to learn and by citing a vast array of learned women throughout history, scriptural, classical, and contemporaneous. If the document is a defense of intellectual freedom, it is also a defense of reason (though always, be it noted, within the limits of Catholic orthodoxy), and some commentators have seen in it the influence of Descartes.⁶

Having unburdened her mind, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz unburdened her life. She sold all her books, musical instruments, and scientific devices, giving the proceeds to the poor, and subjected herself to a course of rigorous penances. Inevitably, some authorities have posited an experience of spiritual awakening, possibly mystical in nature, as the basis of these actions.⁷ It is more likely that, as Graves suggests,⁸ she chose to deny her intellect rather than to falsify it by directing it exclusively to theology. At any rate, her confessor, Padre Antonio Nuñez

de Miranda, though edified by her behavior, tried unsuccessfully to induce her to moderate it.

In 1695 the plague struck Mexico City. Having dedicated herself to nursing her stricken sisters, Juana caught the infection herself and died. She left behind a statement scrawled with her fingernail dipped in her own blood (she had forsworn the use of pen and ink):

For the love of God and of His Purest Mother, I pray that my beloved sisters, both those now living and those who have gone before, will recommend me to Him—though I have been the worst woman in the world.⁹

A true Baroque artist, she ended in what one can only—perhaps a bit tearfully—classify as hyperbole.

What remains of this great soul and her intellectual passion? Several volumes of poems and plays, of surprising variety and uniform excellence. There are a number of dramatic works, including *autos sacramentales* and *loas* (different types of religious dramas) and *comedias* in the manner of Calderón; there are prose works, including the *Carta atenagórica* and the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*; there are, finally, the lyric works, some of them occasional and complimentary, many of them amorous, many of them—including the ambitious and very difficult *Sueño*—philosophical. Sor Juana handles the general European lyric forms with great virtuosity; she is one of the most accomplished writers of sonnets that Western literature can boast. But she also, like most of the Peninsular poets of the *siglo de oro*, wrote in the indigenous Spanish forms—*romances*, *redondillas*, *silvas*, *liras*, etc.

Sor Juana's greatness as a lyric poet rests on a number of qualities—philosophical profundity and complexity, psychological astuteness (especially with regard to the relation of the sexes), and a superb mastery of the complex of techniques that in part makes up the Baroque style—ornate decoration, paradox and irony, wordplay, conceit, hyperbole, general extravagance of language, dramatic immediacy, and, most of all perhaps, what the seventeenth century called "wit" (Spanish *ingenio*)—which, implying a range of experience from simple playfulness to cosmic perception, might best be defined as the capacity for perceiving the resemblances among the apparently dissimilar. "Range" is an important term in characterizing Sor Juana's poetic work. As a philosophical poet she sometimes deploys the great commonplaces of poetic tradition (as in "Este que ves, engaño colorido" or "Rosa divina que en gentil cultura"); she sometimes contemplates the limitations and contradictions of human knowledge (as in "Acusa la hidropesía de mucha ciencia"); on at least one occasion (*El sueño*) she engages in original epistemological

speculation. As a love poet she displays a range that extends from passionate avowals ("Esta tarde, mi bien, cuando te hablaba") to wryly hard-bitten observations on the ironies of sexual attraction ("Que no me quiere Fabio, al verse amado" and "Feliciano me adora y le aborrezco"). She has satirical power as well, best exemplified perhaps in the delightfully malicious *redondillas* "Hombres necios que acusais," the most biting expression of feminism produced by the seventeenth century.

Gaspara Stampa and Louise Labé are both magnificent poets, but Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz exceeds them in artistic stature. Her strongest affinities are with her somewhat older Spanish contemporary Francisco de Quevedo and, in England, with John Donne and Andrew Marvell. In other words, she is a Metaphysical poet, and she is one of the greatest.

NOTES

1. Quoted in G. Guernelli, *Gaspara Stampa, Louise Labé y Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Tríptico renacentista barroco* (San Juan, Universidad de Puerto Rico Press, 1972), p. 29. My translation.

2. Quoted in H. J. C. Grierson, ed., *The Poems of John Donne*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1912), 2:5.

3. Quoted in R. Graves, *The Crowning Privilege* (London, 1955), p. 172.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Ludwig Pfandl, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: La Décima Musa de Mexico*, trans. from the German by J. A. Ortega y Medina (Mexico City, 1963), pp. 95 ff., attributes her critique to the same "masculinity complex" that he feels explains her artistic activities. Pfandl's misunderstood and misapplied Freudianism is to be rejected.

6. Guernelli, *Gaspara Stampa*, p. 31.

7. See *ibid.* p. 31.

8. Graves, *Crowning Privilege*, p. 173.

9. *Ibid.*

**Procura desmentir los elogios que a un retrato de la poetisa inscribió
la verdad, que llama pasión**

Este que ves, engaño colorido,
que del arte ostentando los primores,
con falsos silogismos de colores
es cauteloso engaño del sentido;

éste, en quien la lisonja ha pretendido
excusar de los años los horrores,
y venciendo del tiempo los rigores
triunfar de la vejez y del olvido,

es un vano artificio del cuidado,
es una flor al viento delicada,
es un resguardo inútil para el hado:
es una necia diligencia errada,
es un afán caduco y, bien mirado,
es cadáver, es polvo, es sombra, es nada.

**Quéjase de la suerte: insinuá su aversión a los vicios, y justifica su
divertimiento a las musas**

En perseguirme, Mundo, ¿qué interesas?
¿En qué te ofendo, cuando sólo intento
poner bellezas en mi entendimiento
y no mi entendimiento en las bellezas?

Yo no estimo tesoros ni riquezas;
y así, siempre me causa más contento
poner riquezas en mi pensamiento
que no mi pensamiento en las riquezas.

Y no estimo hermosura que, vencida,
es despojo civil de las edades,
ni riqueza me agrada fementida,
teniendo por mejor, en mis verdades,

She refutes the praises dedicated to her portrait

This that you see, a highly colored hoax
Which demonstrates the excellence of art,
Upon the senses plays its crafty jokes
With faulty syllogisms on its part.

This, with which flattery tries to evade
The unrelenting horrors of the years
And, conquering the sallies time has made,
To triumph over age and all its cares,

Is just a vain device of apprehension,
Is just a fragile flower in the wind,
Is just a vain defense against our lot,
Is a foolish and impossible intention,
Is labor lost, and, to the thoughtful mind,
Is but a corpse, is dust, is shade, is nought.

**Complaining of fate, she affirms her aversion to vice and defends her
dedication to the Muses**

What so impels you, World, to find your duty
In persecuting me? Do I offend
In seeking to give beauty to my mind
Instead of giving all my mind to beauty?

I have no use for riches without measure;
It gives me far more comfort to collect
Treasure to donate to my intellect
Than to donate my intellect to pleasure.

I cannot deem it beauty which is fated
To be the spoil of time's remorseless strife,
Nor do faithless riches hold appeal for me;
For I hold it better, if the truth be stated,

consumir vanidades de la vida
que consumir la vida en vanidades.

En que da moral censura a una rosa, y en ella a sus semejantes

Rosa divina que en gentil cultura
eres, con tu fragante sutileza,
magisterio purpúreo en la belleza,
enseñanza nevada a la hermosura.

Amago de la humana arquitectura,
ejemplo de la vana gentileza,
en cuyo ser unió naturaleza
la cuna alegre y triste sepultura.

¡Cuán altiva en tu pompa, presumida,
soberbia, el riesgo de morir desdeñas,
y luego desmayada y encogida
de tu caduco ser das mustias señas,
con que con docta muerte y necia vida,
viviendo engañas y muriendo enseñas!

Escoge antes el morir que exponerse a los ultrajes de la vejez

Miró Celia una rosa que en el prado
ostentaba feliz la pompa vana
y con afeites de carmín y grana
bañaba alegre el rostro delicado;

y dijo:—Goza, sin temor del Hado,
el curso breve de tu edad lozana,
pues no podrá la muerte de mañana
quitarte lo que hubieres hoy gozado;

To waste away the vanity of life
Than to waste away my life in vanity.

She lectures a rose

Rose divine who, with your gentle breeding,
With the fragrant subtlety that you possess,
Are a crimson class in beauty worth our heeding,
A snowy seminar in loveliness;

Portentous image of the human frame,
Example of vain charm that none can save,
Where nature has united in one name
The joyous cradle and the somber grave:

In all your pomp how proudly you disdain,
Haughty one, the danger of your dying;
But later, faint and wrinkled, you impeach
With withered symbols your decrepit being;
From your learned death and foolish life we gain:
Living you deceive, dying you teach.

**She would choose to die rather than expose herself to the outrages
of old age**

Celia gazed on a rose as in the field
It happily displayed its splendor vain
And with cosmetic carmine paint did gild
And bathe its fragile face so dyed in grain;

She said, "Enjoy your life's brief lovely course,
And do not fear the menaces of fate,
For the death that comes tomorrow cannot force
From you today the joys that grace your state.

y aunque llega la muerte presurosa
y tu fragante vida se te aleja,
no sientas el morir tan bella y moza:
mira que la experiencia te aconseja
que es fortuna morirte siendo hermosa
y no ver el ultraje de ser vieja.

"Verde embeleso de la vida humana"

Verde embeleso de la vida humana,
loca Esperanza, frenesí dorado,
sueño de los despiertos intrincado
como de sueños, de tesoros vana;

alma del mundo, senectud lozana,
decrépito verdor imaginado;
el hoy de los dichosos esperado
y de los desdichados el mañana:

sigan tu sombra en busca de tu día
los que, con verdes vidrios por anteojos,
todo lo ven pintado a su deseo;
que yo más cuerdo en la fortuna mía,
tengo en entrambas manos ambos ojos
y solamente lo que toco veo.

En que satisface un recelo con la retórica del llanto

Esta tarde, mi bien, cuando te hablaba,
como en tu rostro y tus acciones vía
que con palabras no te persuadí,
que el corazón me vieses deseaba;

And although death so swiftly will arrive,
And your fragrant life so quickly flee from you,
So fair and young you shall not feel death's hold:
Take counsel while your life and beauty thrive:
Fortune it is to die while gifts become you,
And not to see the outrage of being old."

"Green fascination of our human life"

Green fascination of our human life,
Mad Hope, thou frenzy gilded all with gold,
Dream of the waking, in which we behold
A tissue of dreams with empty treasures rife;

Soul of the world, senility in flower,
Decrepit greenness which our fancies feign,
The desired today the fortune attain,
And for the desperate tomorrow's hour:

Let them thy shade pursue in hope to find
Thy promised day, who green eyeglasses wear,
And see the world with their desire painted;
Let me, more prudent, seek in different kind;
In both my hands my two eyes let me bear,
Only with what I touch my sight acquainted.

The rhetoric of tears

Tonight, my dearest, when I spoke to thee,
I noted in thy bearing and thy face
That words of mine could not thy doubts erase,
Or prove I wanted thee my heart to see;

y Amor, que mis intentos ayudaba,
venció lo que imposible parecía:
pues entre el llanto, que el dolor vertía,
el corazón deshecho destilaba.

Baste ya de rigores, mi bien, baste;
no te atormenten más celos tiranos,
ni el vil recelo tu quietud contraste
con sombras necias, con indicios vanos,
pues ya en líquido humor viste y tocaste
mi corazón deshecho entre tus manos.

Que contiene una fantasía contenta con amor decente

Detente, sombra di mi bien esquivo,
imagen del hechizo que más quiero,
bella ilusión por quien alegre muero,
dulce ficción por quien penosa vivo.

Si al imán de tus gracias, atractivo,
sirve mi pecho de obediente acero.
¿para qué me enamoras lisonjero
si has de burlarme luego fugitivo?

Mas blasonar no puedes, satisfecho,
de que triunfa de mí tu tiranía:
que aunque dejas burlado el lazo estrecho
que tu forma fantástica ceñía,
poco importa burlar brazos y pecho
si te labra prisión mi fantasía.

Then love, which my avowals came to prop,
Conquered, and the impossible occurred:
I fell to weeping tears which sorrow poured,
Which my melting heart distilled in copious drop.

No more reproaches, ah my love, forbear;
Let doubt not hold thee in tormenting bonds,
Nor let vile jealousy thy peace impair
With foolish shades, with vain and useless wounds,
Since thou hast seen and touched a liquid rare—
My molten heart caught up between thy hands.

In which she restrains a fantasy, satisfying it with decent love

Stay, elusive shadow that I cherish,
Image of the enchantment which I love,
Illusion fair for which I gladly perish,
Sweet fiction for whose sake in pain I live.

If my breast responds to your attractive graces
As to the magnet the obedient steel,
Why woo me with your flattering embraces,
To flee me later, mocking my appeal?

But you cannot in satisfaction boast
That your tyranny has triumphed over me:
Even if you escape the noose I fashioned
To bind the form of your evasive ghost,
It matters not to flee my arms impassioned,
If you're imprisoned in my fantasy.

Resuelve la cuestión de cuál sea pesar más molesto en encontradas correspondencias, amar o aborrecer

Que no me quiera Fabio, al verse amado,
es dolor sin igual en mí sentido;
mas que me quiera Silvio, aborrecido,
es menor mal, mas no menos enfado.

¿Qué sufrimiento no estará cansado
si siempre le resuenan al oído
tras las vana arrogancia de un querido
el cansado gemir de un desdeñado?

Si de Silvio me cansa el rendimiento,
a Fabio canso con estar rendida;
si de éste busco el agradecimiento,
a mí me busca el otro agradecida:
por activa y pasiva es mi tormento,
pues padezco en querer y en ser querida.

Continúa el mismo asunto y aun le expresa con más viva elegancia

Feliciano me adora y le aborrezco;
Lisardo me aborrece y yo le adoro;
por quien no me apetece ingrato, lloro,
y al que me llora tierno, no apetezco.

A quien más me desdora, el alma ofrezco;
a quien me ofrece víctimas, desdoro;
desprecio al que enriquece mi decoro,
y al que le hace desprecios, enriquezco.

Si con mi ofensa al uno reconvegno,
me reconviene el otro a mí, ofendido;
y a padecer de todos modos vengo,
pues ambos atormentan mi sentido:

She resolves the question of which is harder to bear, loving or hating

That Fabio, whom I love, declines to love me
Is a grief that has no equal in my brain;
That Silvio, whom I can't bear, still wants to have me
Is not as bad, but still gives me a pain.

Whose patience would not be at length worn out
At having always either one orating:
The one she loves, the vain and haughty lout,
Or the moaning, groaning one she can't help hating?

If I'm bored to tears by Silvio's devotion,
I'm bored to death adoring Fabio;
If I seek to wake the latter man's emotion,
The former man would have my feelings moved:
The active and the passive plague me so;
I hurt both in loving and in being loved.

On the same subject . . . but with more elegance

Feliciano loves me and I abhor him;
I love Lisardo, but he can't abide me;
The indifferent ingrate makes me weep inside me,
And the one who weeps for me . . . I can't endure him.

To the one who slanders me my soul I offer,
While I slander him who trophies to me raises;
I scorn the one who freely sings my praises;
To the one who scorns me . . . all I have I proffer.

If I reproach the one, being offended,
The other one, offended, hurls reproaches;
And there's no way my sorrows can be mended,
Since both torment with different approaches:

aquéste, con pedir lo que no tengo;
y aquél, con no tener lo que le pido.

Que da medio para amor sin mucha pena

Yo no puedo tenerte ni dejarte,
ni sé por qué, al dejarte o al tenerte,
se encuentra un no sé qué para quererte
y muchos sí sé qué para olvidarte.

Pues ni quieres dejarme ni enmendarte,
yo templaré mi corazón de suerte
que la mitad se incline a aborrecerte
aunque la otra mitad se incline a amarte.

Si ello es fuerza querernos, haya modo,
que es morir el estar siempre riñendo:
no se hable más en celo y en sospecha,
y quien da la mitad, no quiera el todo;
y cuando me las estás allá haciendo,
sabe que estoy haciendo la deshecha.

**Acusa la hidropesía de mucha ciencia, que teme inútil aun para saber
y nociva para vivir**

Finjamos que soy feliz,
triste Pensamiento, un rato;
quizá podréis persuadirme,
aunque yo sé lo contrario:

que pues sólo en la aprehensión
dicen que estriban los daños,

What I haven't got one man's always commanding;
And the other hasn't got what I'm demanding.

A method of loving

I cannot either keep you or reject you,
Nor know I why, should I depart or stay,
I-know-not-what my heart to love doth sway,
Though I-do-know-what doth urge me to forget you.

Since you will neither leave me nor amend,
I shall reform my heart in such a fashion
That half of it shall hate you with a passion
And half of it shall still to love you bend.

Let's find a way, if love must us control;
in constant quarreling we both do die:
Let's speak no more in jealousy or doubt.
Who give but half should not desire the whole;
And when you do, deceiving, elsewhere lie,
Be sure that what I do you'll ne'er find out.

She condemns the hydrosy of excessive knowledge

Let us pretend, for a little bit,
That I am happy, sad Reflection;
Although I know the opposite,
Perhaps you can change my thought's direction:

For they say that all the harms we know
Come to us from our apprehension;

si os imagináis dichoso
no seréis tan desdichado.

Sírvame él entendimiento
alguna vez de descanso,
y no siempre esté el ingenio
con el provecho encontrado.

Todo el mundo es opiniones
de pareceres tan varios,
que lo que el uno que es negro,
el otro prueba que es blanco.

A unos sirve de atractivo
lo que otro concibe enfado;
y lo que éste por alivio,
aquél tiene por trabajo.

El que está triste, censura
al alegre de liviano;
y el que está alegre, se burla
de ver al triste penando.

Los dos Filósofos Griegos
bien esta verdad probaron:
pues lo que en el uno risa,
causaba en el otro llanto.

Célebre su oposición
ha sido por siglos tantos,
sin que cuál acertó, esté
hasta agora averiguado;

antes, en sus dos banderas
el mundo todo alistado,
conforme el humor le dicta,
sigue cada cual el bando.

Uno dice que de risa
sólo es digno el mundo vario;

If you pretend you're happy, though,
Your sorrow won't claim such attention.

Let my intelligence sustain
For once, and serve to comfort me;
Let not my ever-searching brain
Oppose my own felicity.

The world's appearances deceive;
Opinions clash like day and night:
One man will something black perceive,
Another man will prove it white.

Some feel a powerful attraction
To what repels another one;
And what one person finds distraction
Another views as work to be done.

The sober man extends his censure
To the jolly one, as light of mind;
While the jolly one a laugh will venture
To see the sad one sorrows find.

The two philosophers of Greece¹
Provide convincing demonstration:
What caused in one a laugh's release
Provoked in the other lamentation.

Famous has been their opposition
Throughout so many centuries,
But neither philosopher's position
Has proved itself: no one agrees.

Quite otherwise, under two banners
The entire world itself enlists;
According to one's mood and manners
One chooses sides and then persists.

One says that all this world so various
Is worthy but of laughs and jeers;

1. Democritus and Heraclitus.

y otro, que sus infortunios
son sólo para llorados.

Para todo se halla prueba
y razón en que fundarlo;
y no hay razón para nada,
de haber razón para tanto.

Todos son iguales jueces;
y siendo iguales y varios
no hay quien pueda decidir
cuál es lo más acertado.

Pues, si no hay quien lo sentencie,
¿por qué pensáis, vos, errado,
que os cometió Dios a vos
la decisión de los casos?

¿O por qué, contra vos mismo
severamente inhumano,
entre lo amargo y lo dulce,
quereis elegir lo amargo?

Si es mío mi entendimiento
¿por qué siempre he de encontrarlo
tan torpe para el alivio,
tan agudo para el daño?

El discurso es un acero
que sirve por ambos cabos;
de dar muerte, por la punta;
por el pomo, de resguardo.

Si vos, sabiendo el peligro,
queréis por la punta usarlo,
¿qué culpa tiene el acero
del mal uso de la mano?

No es saber, saber hacer
discursos sutiles, vanos;
que el saber consiste sólo
en elegir lo más sano.

Another that its griefs nefarious
Give just occasion for our tears.

For everything a proof you'll find
And reason upon which it's founded;
Reason to nothing is assigned,
If on reason so many things are grounded.

As judges, all men count as peers,
Each one a different view affirming;
And no one qualified appears
To say who's right: there's no confirming.

Then, if there is no judge appointed
To settle matters, why assume
That you have been by God anointed
To pass on every question's doom?

Or why, against yourself severe,
To the point of being inhumane,
When bitter and sweet together appear,
Must you the bitter choice maintain?

If my intellect to me belongs,
Why do I find it so perverse:
So sluggish to relieve my wrongs,
So keen to make my troubles worse?

Reason is a sharpened steel;
Both ends are useful in a strife:
The point is ready death to deal;
The pommel guards its owner's life.

If you, of danger still aware,
Insist on holding it by the blade,
What guilt does the hapless sword incur
For the awkwardness the hand's displayed?

To know is not to formulate
A vain and subtle disquisition;
To know is to ameliorate,
By choosing wisely, one's condition.

Especular las desdichas
y examinar los presagios,
sólo sirve de que el mal
crezca con anticiparlo.

En los trabajos futuros,
la atención, sutilizando,
más formidable que el riesgo
suele fingir lo amargo.

¡Qué feliz es la ignorancia
del que, indoctamente sabio,
halla de lo que padece,
en lo que ignora, sagrado!

No siempre suben seguros
vuelos del ingenio osados,
que buscan trono en el fuego
y hallan sepulcro en el llanto.

También es vicio el saber:
que si no se va atajando,
cuando menos se conoce
es más nocivo el estrago;

y si el vuelo no le abaten,
en sutilezas cebado,
por cuidar de lo curioso
olvida lo necesario.

Si culta mano no impide
crecer al árbol copado,
quita la substancia al fruto
la locura de los ramos.

Si andar a nave ligera
no estorba lastre pesado,
sirve el vuelo de que sea
el precipicio más alto.

En amenidad inútil,
¿qué importa al florido campo,

To speculate on one's misfortune,
And signs and presages to scan,
Serves only evil to importune
And sorrow by design to plan.

Subtly to direct attention
To the heavy trials the future brings
Is to give a perilous extension
To the threat that lies in common things.

How blessed is the ignorance
Of him, in lack of learning wise,
To whom not knowing kindly grants
Refuge from what his lot implies!

The flights attempted by the mind
Don't always find a safe ascent,
For they seek a throne in fire but find
A sepulchre in sad lament.

Knowledge is a vice as well:
If you don't give it firm instruction,
It will, just when you least can tell,
Inflict a terrible destruction.

And if you don't restrain its flight,
It will, fed full with niceties,
On curiosities alight,
Ignoring the necessities.

If a well-trained hand neglects to prune
The growth of the overweening tree,
The substance of the fruit will soon
To the madly growing branches flee.

If on a ship that is too light
A heavy ballast is not laid,
The very swiftness of its flight
Will to a sharper ruin lead.

What profit to the flowering field,
In useless beauty bright and gay,

si no halla fruto el Otoño,
que ostente flores el Mayo?

¿De qué le sirve al ingenio
el producir muchos partos,
si a la multitud se sigue
el malogro de abortarlos?

Y a esta desdicha por fuerza
ha de seguirse el fracaso
de quedar el que produce,
si no muerto, lastimado.

El ingenio es como el fuego:
que, con la materia ingrato,
tanto la consume más
cuanto él se ostenta más claro.

Es de su propio Señor
tan rebelado vasallo,
que convierte en sus ofensas
las armas de su resguardo.

Este pésimo ejercicio,
este duro afán pesado,
a los hijos de los hombres
dio Dios para ejercitarlos.

¿Qué loca ambición nos lleva
de nosotros olvidados?
Si es para vivir tan poco,
¿de qué sirve saber tanto?

¿Oh, si como hay de saber,
hubiera algún seminario
o escuela donde a ignorar
se enseñaran los trabajos!

¡Qué felizmente viviera
el que, flojamente cauto,
burlara las amenazas
del influjo de los astros!

If in Autumn it no fruit will yield,
To be showing off its flowers in May?

What profit to the intellect
To be so fertile in conception,
If the numerous progeny are wrecked,
Aborted quite from their inception?

And it follows of necessity
That she whom this misfortune hounded
Remains, after calamity,
If not quite dead, most badly wounded.

The intellect is like a fire:
Implacably opposed to matter,
The more it eats it up entire,
It shows itself just that much brighter.

It proves a vassal in such revolt
Against its due and proper lord
That it turns to an offensive bolt
The arms that should defense afford.

God gave unto the sons of men
This worst of all activities,
This harsh and heavy weight, that then
It might train their proclivities.

What mad ambition transports us so,
Forgetful of our proper weal?
If our days of life so swiftly go,
Why has knowledge such appeal?

If only there were a seminary,
Where, instead of learning how to learn,
One could bend one's efforts to be wary
Of knowledge, and could ignorance earn!

How happily might one then live,
Negligently being careful,
Making fun of the stars above,
Whose influence seems to be so fearful!

Aprendamos a ignorar,
Pensamiento, pues hallamos
que cuanto añado al discurso,
tanto le usurpo a los años.

Let's strive then ignorance to gain,
My Intellect, since it appears
That whatever is added to the brain
Is promptly subtracted from one's years.

**Arguye de inconsecuentes el gusto y la censura de los hombres que en
las mujeres acusan lo que causan**

Hombres necios que acusáis
a la mujer sin razón,
sin ver que sois la ocasión
de lo mismo que culpáis:

si con ansia sin igual
solicitáis su desdén,
¿por qué queréis que obren bien
si las incitáis al mal?

Combatis su resistencia
y luego, con gravedad,
decís que fue liviandad
lo que hizo la diligencia.

Parecer quiere el denuedo
de vuestro parecer loco,
al niño que pone el coco
y luego le tiene miedo.

Queréis, con presunción necia,
hallar a la que buscáis,
para pretendida, Thais,
y en la posesión, Lucrecia.

¿Qué humor puede ser más raro
que el que, falto de consejo,
él mismo empaña el espejo,
y siente que no esté claro?

Con el favor y el desdén
tenéis condición igual,

**In which she condemns the inconsistency of men, who blame women
for what they themselves have caused**

Stupid men, fond of abusing
All women, without any shame,
Not seeing you're the ones to blame
For the very faults that you're accusing:

If, with a single-minded will,
You seek her well-deserved disdain,
Why do you want her to remain
Good, while inciting her to ill?

You strive to conquer her resistance,
Then with a solemn treachery
Attribute to her lechery
What was only done through your persistence.

Your mad position seems to fit
That of a child who draws a spook
And, when he dares to take a look,
Finds that he's afraid of it.

Showing presumptuous indiscretion,
You want to find her you're pursuing
To be Thais while you are wooing
And Lucretia when she's in possession.

What quirky humor could be more queer
Than his who, from all reason banned,
Smudges a mirror with his hand,
Then whines because it isn't clear?

If favor or disdain we tell,
You give us the same reception, madly—

quejándoos, si os tratan mal,
burlándoos, si os quieren bien.

Opinión, ninguna gana;
pues la que más se recata,
si no os admite, es ingrata,
y si os admite, es liviana.

Siempre tan necios andáis
que, con desigual nivel,
a una culpáis por cruël
y a otra por fácil culpáis.

¿Pues cómo ha de estar templada
la que vuestro amor pretende,
si la que es ingrata, ofende,
y la que es fácil, enfada?

Mas, entre el enfado y pena
que vuestro gusto refiere,
bien haya la que no os quiere
y quejáos en hora buena.

Dan vuestras amantes penas
a sus libertades alas,
y después de hacerlas malas
las queréis hallar muy buenas.

¿Cuál mayor culpa ha tenido
en una pasión, errada:
la que cae de rogada,
o el que ruega de caído?

¿O cuál es más de culpar,
aunque cualquiera mal haga:
la que peca por la paga,
o el que paga por pecar?

Pues ¿para qué os espantáis
de la culpa que tenéis?
Queredlas cual las hacéis
o hacedlas cual las buscáis.

Complaining when we treat you badly,
And sneering when we treat you well.

No female reputation's sure:
The most cautious woman in the town
Is an ingrate if she turns you down;
If she gives in to you she's a whore.

In stupidity you're all the same,
Each one an inconsistent fool;
You blame one girl for being cruel,
While the yielding one you also blame.

Your expectation is truly curious,
Of the woman who would seek your love;
The one who's ungrateful you reprove,
And the one who's available makes you furious.

But whatever the rage, whatever the plaints
That your capricious minds may fashion,
Lucky is one who feels no passion;
Just go somewhere else with your complaints.

Your amorous blandishments give wing
To a lady's libertine inclination,
But having seduced her in sinful fashion,
You want her to be a most virtuous thing.

In the errant passion two may loll in,
Whose fault would you describe as baser:
Hers who falls because you chase her,
Or his who chases because he's fallen?

Or who the greater guilt does win,
Whatever shameful pact is made:
She who sins because she's paid,
Or he who pays so he may sin?

But why do you pretend to be
Surprised at your sins, when you've displayed them?
Wish women to be what you have made them,
Or make them what you'd like to see.

Dejad de solicitar,
y después, con más razón,
acusaréis, la afición
de la que os fuere a rogar.

Bien con muchas armas fundo
que lidia vuestra arrogancia,
pues en promesa e instancia
juntáis diablo, carne y mundo.

Que expresan sentimientos de ausente

Amado dueño mío,
escucha un rato mis cansadas quejas,
pues del viento las fío,
que breve las conduzca a tus orejas,
si no se desvanece el triste acento
como mis esperanzas en el viento.

Óyeme con los ojos,
ya que están tan distantes los oídos,
y de ausentes enojos
en ecos, de mi pluma mis gemidos;
y ya que ti no llega mi voz ruda,
óyeme sordo, pues me quejo muda.

Si del campo te agradas,
goza de sus frescuras venturosas,
sin que aquestas cansadas
lágrimas te detengan, enfadosas;
que en él verás, si atento te entretienes,
ejemplos de mis males y mis bienes.

Si al arroyo parlero
ves, galán de las flores en el prado,
que, amante y lisonjero,
a cuantas mira intima su cuidado,
en su corriente mi dolor te avisa
que a costa de mi llanto tiene risa.

Stop your own solicitations,
And then you may possess the right
To accuse a girl of being light
When she comes to you with unchaste persuasions.

Your arrogance fights on every level,
I note, with strong and well-aimed batteries,
For with ceaseless promises and flatteries
You unite the world, the flesh, the devil.

She expresses the feeling of an absent lover

My dear belovèd lord,
Give ear a moment to my sad laments,
As the wind bears them abroad
To take them swiftly to your ears from hence,
Unless the sorrowing tones that I do send
Are, like my hopes, dispersèd by the wind.

Hear me with your eyes,
Since your ears remain so distant from my ken;
Hear my distant sighs
Whose sobbing echoes issue through my pen;
And since my rough voice cannot you attain,
Hear me deafly, while mutely I complain.

If by the field you're pleased,
Enjoy the happy freshness of its being;
Let not these tears unmeasured
Disturb you in enjoying it, for, seeing,
You'll note, if you're attentive to its shows,
Examples of my blisses and my woes.

If the babbling stream you see,
True lover of the field and of the flowers,
Spend amorous flattery,
To all it views imparting its sad cares,
In its current you may recognize my sorrow,
And at my tears' expense may laughter borrow.

Si ves que triste llora
su esperanza marchita, en ramo verde,
tórtola gemidora,
en él y en ella mi dolor te acuerde,
que imitan, con verdor y con lamento,
él mi esperanza y ella mi tormento.

Si la flor delicada,
si la peña, que altiva no consiente
del tiempo ser hollada,
ambas me imitan, aunque variamente,
ya con fragilidad, ya con dureza,
mi dicha aquella y ésta mi firmeza.

Si ves el ciervo herido
que baja por el monte, acelerado,
buscando, dolorido,
alivio al mal en un arroyo helado,
y sediento al cristal se precipita,
no en el alivio, en el dolor me imita.

Si la liebre encogida
huye medrosa de los galgos fieros,
y por salvar la vida
no deja estampa de los pies ligeros,
tal mi esperanza, en dudas y recelos,
se ve acosada de villanos celos.

Si ves el cielo claro,
tal es la sencillez del alma mía;
y si, de luz avaro,
de tinieblas se emboza el claro día,
es con su obscuridad y su inclemencia,
imagen de mi vida en esta ausencia.

Así que, Fabio amado,
saber puedes mis males sin costarte
la noticia cuidado,
pues puedes de los campos informarte;
y pues yo a todo mi dolor ajusto,
saber mi pena sin dejar tu gusto.

Mas ¿cuándo, ¡ay gloria mía!,
mereceré gozar tu luz serena?

If you see the turtle-dove
On a green branch his withered hope bewailing,
In groans that still must move,
May branch and dove my sorrow unavailing
Recall to you: green branch and sad lament
At once my hope and torment represent.

If you see the fragile flower,
Or the crag that proudly scorns to be the prey
Of time's relentless hour,
Observe the different ways they me portray
In frailness one denotes my happiness;
In hardness the other my firmness does express.

If you see the wounded stag
Who hastens, suffering, longing for relief,
Down the mountainside,
In search of some icy brook to soothe his grief,
And thirsting into the crystal dives amain,
He imitates me, not in relief, in pain.

If the timid rabbit flees
In terror from the savage hounds pursuing,
And to save his life betrays
No print of where his agile feet are going,
Just so my hopes perceive themselves to be
Traced down by doubts and ugly jealousy.

If you see the brilliant sky,
Even such is my simplicity of soul;
And if the cloudy day,
Miser of light, is wrapped in shady pall,
In its darkness and its rigor you may read
The image of the lonely life I lead.

Thus, Fabio, my love
You may learn without distress about my pains,
And they need not remove
Your pleasures, since these fields will give you signs;
Since to everything therein I match my sorrow,
You can know my grief but need not let it harrow.

But when, my glory, say
Will I deserve to taste your light serene?

¿Cuándo llegará el día
que pongas dulce fin a tanta pena?
¿Cuándo veré tus ojos, dulce encanto,
y de los míos quitarás el llanto?

¿Cuándo tu voz sonora
herirá mis oídos, delicada,
y el alma que te adora,
de inundación de gozos anegada,
a recibirte con amante prisa
saldrá a los ojos desatada en risa?

¿Cuándo tu luz hermosa
revestirá de gloria mis sentidos?
¿Y cuándo yo, dichosa,
mis suspiros daré por bien perdidos,
teniendo en poco el precio de mi llanto,
que tanto ha de penar quien goza tanto?

¿Cuándo de tu apacible
rostro alegre veré el semblante afable,
y aquel bien indecible
a toda humana pluma inexplicable,
que mal se ceñirá a lo definido
lo que no cabe en todo lo sentido?

Ven pues, mi prenda amada:
que ya fallece mi cansada vida
de esta ausencia pesada;
ven, pues: que mientras tarda tu venida,
aunque me cueste su verdor enojos,
regaré mi esperanza con mis ojos.

Sueño (selección)

Piramidal, funesta, de la tierra
nacida sombra, al Cielo encaminaba
de vanos obeliscos punta altiva,

And when will dawn the day
That will make a sweet conclusion to my pain?
When, sweet enchanter, will your eyes appear,
And when, from mine, will you remove the tear?

When will your sounding voice
Strike my ears with a delicious pain,
And when will, drowned in joys,
The soul that loves you find its bliss again,
And in loving haste, the sight of you to capture,
Will it fill my eyes dissolved in laughing rapture?

When will your light so fair
Clothe in glory all my startled senses?
And when shall I declare
That all the sighs I've spent are fair expenses,
Holding at little price my tears, for such
One has to pay if one will joy so much?

When shall I see again
The pleasing features of your happy face,
And feel the joy no pen
Is capable of uttering with grace?
For poorly would the definite contain
That which exceeds the compass of the brain.

Come then, beloved treasure:
My weary life already starts to fade
In this absence without measure;
Come then, for while your arrival is delayed,
Although its greenness costs me many sighs,
My hope I'll go on watering with my eyes.

The dream (selection)

Pyramidal, funereal, earth-born,
A shadow toward the sky itself directed,
With the proud point of its vain obelisk

escalar pretendiendo las Estrellas;
 si bien sus luces bellas
 —exentas siempre, siempre rutilantes—
 la tenebrosa guerra
 que con negros vapores le intimaba
 la pavorosa sombra fugitiva
 burlaban tan distantes,
 que su atezado ceño
 al superior convexo aun no llegaba
 del orbe de la Diosa
 que tres veces hermosa
 con tres hermosos rostros ser ostenta,
 quedando sólo dueño
 del aire que empañaba
 con el aliento denso que exhalaba;
 y en la quietud contenta
 de imperio silencioso,
 sumisas sólo voces consentía
 de las nocturnas aves,
 tan oscuras, tan graves,
 que aun el silencio no se interrumpía.

Con tardo vuelo y canto, del oído
 mal, y aun peor del ánimo admitido,
 la avergonzada Nyctimene acecha
 de las sagradas puertas los resquicios,
 o de las claraboyas eminentes
 los huecos más propicios
 que capaz a su intento le abren brecha,
 y sacrílega llega a los lucientes
 faroles sacros de perenne llama
 que extingue, si no infama,
 en licor claro la materia crasa
 consumiendo, que el árbol de Minerva
 de su fruto, de prensas agravado,
 congojoso sudó y rindió forzado.

Y aquellas que su casa
 campo vieron volver, sus telas hierba,
 a la deidad de Baco inobedientes
 —ya no historias contando diferentes,
 en forma sí afrentosa transformadas—
 segunda forman niebla,

Aspiring to climb up to the stars;
 But their light so beautiful
 —Always clear and always sparkling—
 Did mock the twilit war
 By the fearsome fleeting shadow just declared,
 So that its blackened frown
 Did not reach to the convex upper surface
 Of the sphere-enthronèd Goddess
 Who shows herself thrice lovely
 With the three lovely faces she displays;
 And thus was left the master
 Of nothing but the air,
 Which it tarnished with the dense breath it exhaled;
 And, contented with the quiet
 Of its ever-silent empire,
 Permitted only the soft submissive voices
 Of the feathered race nocturnal,
 So dark, so grave, so heavy,
 That scarcely was the silence interrupted.

With sluggish flight and song, scarcely accepted
 By the ear, even less accepted by the soul,
 Shameful Nyctimene¹ does lurk as spy
 At the chinks of sacred doors or at the hollows
 Propitious of the skylights,
 Opening sufficient breach to suit her,
 And, sacrilegious, the sacred, gleaming lamps
 Of perpetual flame she reaches and puts out,
 If not even defiles,
 Consuming the fat substance of the liquor
 So clear, which that tree sacred to Minerva²
 In anguish sweated and yielded of its fruit
 Under force borne down beneath the weight of presses.

And those maidens who beheld
 Their house transformed to field, to grass their garments,
 They being to god Bacchus disobedient
 —No longer telling differing accounts,
 Turned now to shapes so ignominious—
 They form a second mist,

1. The owl. / 2. The olive.

ser vistas aun temiendo en la tiniebla,
 aves sin pluma aladas:
 aquellas tres oficiosas, digo,
 atrevidas Hermanas,
 que el tremendo castigo
 de desnudas les dió pardas membranas
 alas tan mal dispuestas
 que escarnio son aun de las más funestas:
 éstas, con el parlero
 ministro de Plutón un tiempo, ahora
 supersticioso indicio al agorero,
 solos la no canora
 componían capilla pavorosa,
 máximas, negras, longas entonando,
 y pausas más que voces, esperando
 a la torpe mensura perezosa
 de mayor proporción tal vez, que el viento
 con flemático echaba movimiento,
 de tan tardo compás, tan detenido,
 queen medio se quedó tal vez dormido.

Este, pues, triste són intercadente
 de la asombrada turba temerosa,
 menos a la atención solicitaba
 que al sueño persuadía;
 antes sí, lentamente,
 su obtusa consonancia espaciosa
 al sosiego inducía
 y al reposo los miembros convidaba
 —el silencio intimando a los vivientes,
 uno y otro sellando labio obscuro
 con indicante dedo,
 Harpócrates, la noche, silencioso;
 a cuyo, aunque no duro,
 si bien imperioso
 precepto, todos fueron obedientes—

El viento sosegado, el can dormido,
 éste yace, aquél quedo
 los átomos no mueve,
 con el susurro hacer temiendo leve,
 aunque poco; sacrílego ruído,
 violador del silencio sosegado.
 El mar, no ya alterado,

Still fearing to be seen amid night's shades,
 Birds wingèd but unplumed:
 I mean those three officious daring sisters,³
 Whom the punishment tremendous
 Gave for wings dark-webbèd naked membranes,
 So ill-arranged that they
 Derision rouse amid the most ghastly birds:
 They, together with
 The minister of Pluto, once loquacious,⁴
 Now an ill omen grown for the fortune-teller,
 Made up among themselves
 The frightful choir so unmelodious,
 Their minims, crotchets, quavers still intoning,
 And in pauses more than tones sometimes awaiting
 The heavy lazy measure which the wind,
 In proportion far grander chose to mark
 With movement so phlegmatic and prolonged
 That in between it sometimes fell asleep.

Thus, then, interposing a sad sound
 Amid the timorous astonished throng,
 It less demanded of itself attention
 Than it to sleep induced;
 On the contrary, quite slowly,
 A thick and spacious harmony imposed
 Calm quiet peace,
 And Harpocrates, the night, did every member
 Invite, with warning finger, to repose
 —Announcing silence to all living things,
 And each and every lip with darkness sealing;
 And to this precept clear,
 Not hard, althought imperious,
 All things at large at once became obedient.

The pacified wind, the sleeping dog—the latter
 Lies still; the former, silent
 Does not disturb the atoms,
 Fearing lest the slightest rustle make
 Though slight, disturbing sacrilegious sound,
 Of slumbrous silence senseless violator.
 The sea, not yet transformed,

3. The three daughters of Minyas. / 4. Ascalaphus, the loquacious servant of Hades.

ni aun la instable mecía
cerúlea cuna donde el Sol dormía;
y los dormidos, siempre mudos, peces,
en los lechos lamosos
de sus oscuros senos cavernosos,
mudos eran dos veces;
Y entre ellos, la engañosa encantadora
Alcione, a los que antes
en peces transformó, simples amantes,
transformada también, vengaba ahora.

En los del monte senos escondidos,
cóncavos de pañascos mal formados
—de su aspereza menos defendidos
que de su obscuridad asegurados—
cuya mansión sombría
ser puede noche en la mitad del día,
incógnita aún al cierto
montaraz pie del cazador experto
—depuesta la fiereza
de unos, y de otros el temor depuesto—
yacía el vulgo bruto,
a la Naturaleza
el de su potestad pagando impuesto,
universal tributo;
y el Rey, que vigilancias afectaba,
aun con abiertos ojos no velaba.

El de sus mismos perros acosado,
monarca en otro tiempo esclarecido,
tímido ya venado,
con vigilante oído,
del sosegado ambiente
al menor perceptible movimiento
que los átomos muda,
la oreja alterna aguda
y el leve rumor siente
que aun lo altera dormido.
Y en la quietud del nido,
que de brozas y lodo instable hamaca
formó en la más opaca
parte del árbol, duerme recogida
la leve turba, descansando el viento
del que le corta, alado movimiento.

Rocked not the unstable cradle,
Cerulean refuge where the sun was sleeping;
And the sleeping, ever-silent fish,
Within the slimy beds
Of their dark and cavernous recesséd lairs,
Were couchéd doubly mute;
And among them the enchantress so deceitful,
Halcyon, who now took vengeance,
Herself transformed, upon the simple lovers
Whom she before had metamorphosed to fishes.

Within the caverns by the mountain hidden,
Hollows ill-formed by grim and rocky crags
—Less, one might say, by their ruggedness defended
Than by their safe obscurity assured—
Whose dwelling shady night
Appears, even in the middle of the day,
Unknown even to the foot
Assured and savage of the skillful hunter
—Setting aside the fierceness
Of some, and of others the fear setting aside—
Here couched the mob of beasts,
To Nature tribute paying,
The universal impost due its power;
And the King,⁵ who every diligence asserted,
Even with open eyes did not keep watch.

He who by his own dogs was hunted down,⁶
In other times a much-renownèd monarch,
And now a timid stag,
Of the hushed atmosphere
Each slightest movement that might be perceived
Which alters any atoms
He notes with sharpened ear
And hears the lightest rustle
Which disturbs him even in the depths of sleep.
And in the quiet nest,
Unstable hammock formed of mud and brushwood
In the most opaque recesses
Of the tree, there sleeps tight-huddled
The feathered throng; and now the wind is resting
From the wingéd movements that were wont to cut it.

5. The lion. / 6. Actaeon.

De Júpiter el ave generosa
—como al fin Reina—, por no darse entera
al descanso, que vicio considera
si de preciso pasa, cuidadosa
de no incurrir de omisa en el exceso,
a un solo pie librada fía el peso,
y en otro guarda el cálculo pequeño
—despertador reloj del leve sueño—,
porque, si necesario fué admitido,
no pueda dilatarse continuado,
antes interrumpido
del regio sea pastoral cuidado.
¡Oh de la Majestad pensión gravosa,
que aun el menor descuido no perdona!
Causa, quizá, que ha hecho misteriosa,
circular, denotando, la corona,
en círculo dorado,
que el afán es no menos continuado.

El sueño todo, en fin, lo poseía:
todo, en fin, el silencio lo ocupaba:
aun el ladrón dormía;
aun el amante no se desvelaba.

El conticinio casi ya pasando
iba, y la sombra dimidiaba, cuando
de las diurnas tareas fatigados
—y no sólo oprimidos
del afán ponderoso
del corporal trabajo, mas cansados
del deleite también (que también cansa
objeto continuado a los sentidos
aun siendo deleitoso:
que la Naturaleza siempre alterna
ya una, ya otra balanza,
distribuyendo varios ejercicios,
ya al ocio, ya al trabajo destinados,
en el fiel infiel con que gobierna
la aparatosa máquina del mundo)—
así, pues, de profundo
sueño dulce los miembros ocupados,
quedaron los sentidos

The magnanimous bird to Jupiter devoted⁷
—a queen, after all—disdains to give herself
To rest entire, a vice, as she considers,
If at all exceed the requisite;
Concerned lest she incur neglect's excess,
She entrusts her balanced weight to one foot only
And in the other holds a little pebble
—An alarm clock to disturb her so light slumber—
So that, necessity being permitted,
It may not extend itself beyond all measure,
But rather be interrupted
By the burden of her regal pastoral cares.
O heavy weight of Majesty's concern,
Which does not pardon the slightest carelessness!
The mysterious cause perhaps that makes the crown
Circular in shape, to all denoting,
In its golden circle closed,
That royal solicitude is no less endless.

Sleep then at length all things possessed completely;
All things at length then silence dominated:
Even the thief was sleeping;
Even the lover did not lie awake.

The dead of night had almost passed away,
And the shade itself divided, when, fatigued
By the tasks of life quotidian—not only
Oppressed by the weighty care
Of body's work, but tired
By pleasure also (for also can one tire
Of any object subject to the senses,
Even when it gives pleasure:
For Nature always alternates, now one,
Now the other balancing,
In turn distributing diverse pursuits,
To leisure some, to labor others destined,
In the faithful faithlessness with which she governs
The extravagant machinery of the world)—
Thus, then, fully seized
All members by profound and sweetest sleep,
The senses did remain,
If not deprived at least suspended from

7. The eagle.

del que ejercicio tienen ordinario
—trabajo, en fin pero trabajo amado,
si hay amable trabajo—,
si privados no, al menos suspendidos,
y cediendo al retrato del contrario
de la vida, que—lentamente armado—
cobarde embiste y vence perezoso
con armas soñolientas,
desde el cayado humilde al cetro altivo,
sin que haya distintivo
que el sayal de la púrpura discierna:
pues su nivel, en todo poderoso,
gradúa por exentas
a ningunas personas,
desde la de a quien tres forman coronas
soberana tiara,
hasta la que pajiza vive choza;
desde la que el Danubio undoso dora,
a la que junco humilde, humilde mora;
y con siempre igual vara
(como, en efecto, imagen poderosa
de la muerte) Morfeo
el sayal mide igual con el brocado.

El alma, pues, suspensa
del exterior gobierno—en que ocupada
en material empleo,
o bien o mal da el día por gastado—
solamente dispensa
remota, si del todo separada
no, a los de muerte temporal opresos
lánguidos miembros, sosegados huesos,
los gajes del calor vegetativo,
el cuerpo siendo, en sosegada calma,
un cadáver con alma,
muerto a la vida y a la muerte vivo,
de lo segundo dando tardas señas
el del reloj humano
vital volante que, si no con mano,
con arterial concierto, unas pequeñas
muestras, pulsando, manifiesta lento
de su bien regulado movimiento.

Esta, pues, miembro rey y centro vivo
de espíritus vitales,

The ordinary activity they have
—Work, to be sure, but work that is beloved,
If work beloved can be—
And, yielding to the likeness of the opposite
Of life, which—weaponed stealthily—approaches,
As a coward assaults and conquers as a sluggard,
With soporific arms,
All things from the humble crook to the haughty scepter,
Without making distinction
Between the sackcloth and the purple robe:
For his leveling tool, with power over all,
Will figure no exemptions
For anything that lives,
From her for whom three crowns unite to form
A sovereign tiara
To her who dwells within a hut of straw,
From her who is by the wavy Danube gilded
To her who, humble reed, as humble dwells;
And with always equal measure
(As, in effect, the true and potent image
Of Death), thus Morpheus
Lays equal gauge on sackcloth and brocade.

The soul, thus being suspended
From exterior control—in which employed
In material designs
For good or ill it has the day consumed—
Remote, though not entirely separated,
Unto the languid members,
The tranquil bones, by temporary death
Oppressed, the wage of vegetative heat
Doth grant, the quiet body meanwhile being
A cadaver with a soul,
Dead unto life and unto death alive,
Of the second fact bestowing sluggish signals
The vital flywheel of the human watch,
Which not with manual gesture
But with arterial harmony betrays
Small signs, pulsating, and so manifests
The regulated movement of its being.

This, then, the member royal, the living center
Of the vital spirits all,

con su asociado respirante fuelle
—pulmón, que imán del viento es atractivo,
que en movimientos nunca desiguales
o comprimiendo ya, o ya dilatando
el musculoso, claro arcaduz blando,
hace que en él resuelle
el que lo circunscribe fresco ambiente
que impele ya caliente,
y él venga su expulsión haciendo activo
pequeños robos al calor nativo,
algún tiempo llorados,
nunca recuperados,
si ahora no sentidos de su dueño,
que, repetido, no hay robo pequeño—;
éstos, pues, de mayor, como ya digo,
excepción, uno y otro fiel testigo,
la vida aseguraban,
mientras con mudas voces impugnaban
la información, callados, los sentidos
—con no replicar sólo defendidos—,
y la lengua que, torpe, enmudecía,
con no poder hablar los desmentía. . . .

With its associate, the heaving bellows
—The lung, which is the loadstone to the wind
Attractive, which in ever-equal movements
Now contracting, now expanding, the fine vessel
Both muscular and pliant, brings about
That in it may respire
The circumambient freshness that surrounds it
And quickens it with warmth;
And in its breathing action it commits
Petty thefts upon its native heat,
One day to be lamented,
Never to be recovered,
If not yet apperceived by the possessor:
Indeed, repeated, no theft can be petty—
These, thus, as I've said, proved great exceptions,
Each one as faithful witness testifying
Assured continuing life,
While the senses with mute voices contradicted
In their silence the very information given
—Prevented only in their not replying—
And the tongue which—heavy, forced into silence—
Being of speech deprived, gave them the lie. . . .