

Ausiàs March
Verse translations
of thirty poems

Introduction, text, translation and notes by
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plucking up the temerity to produce another version, this time in verse. The thirty poems in this volume show that temerity at least has not failed me. There was only one possible metre for translating March: the iambic pentameter. Rhyme, of course, obligatory for most of the genres in which March wrote his decasyllabic stanzas, has not been a requirement for the English pentameter since at least as early as Shakespeare; moreover, March himself, like Shakespeare, for his more meditative verse, sometimes had recourse to unrhymed stanzas. There was, besides, an attendant danger, namely that the need to rhyme would inevitably create distortions in meaning, totally avoidable ones for which the effect of rhyme cannot compensate.

The text of March's poems used here is that of my critical edition.² I have introduced several changes of punctuation, and have corrected some printing errors. The Roman numbers of the poems correspond to the order established by Amédée Pagès in his critical edition of 1912-1914.³

The verse translations were all produced between February and September 2005, a short space of time for such an enterprise, and I am very grateful to Stephen Boyd and Dominic Keown who sent me rapid and valuable responses to some of the early drafts, but am especially indebted to Gareth Walters who read all the poems in his capacity as the publisher's reader and made many valuable suggestions, all of which (including one or two complete lines) I have incorporated into the final version.

Many of the prose versions that underlie these translations benefited from the criticism, detailed and characteristically kindly, of Arthur Terry. His posthumous verse translation of Gabriel Ferrater's *Les dones i els dies*—in my opinion, his finest work as a translator—has encouraged me to believe that Catalan poetry can indeed live in English.⁴

R.A., Dobřichovice, Czech Republic, December 2005

² Robert Archer, ed., *Ausiàs March. Obra completa* and *Ausiàs March. Obra completa: Apèndix* (Barcelona: Barcanova, 1997).

³ Amadeu Pagès, ed., *Les obres d'Auzias March*, 2 vols. (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1912-1914).

⁴ Arthur Terry, trans., 2005. *Gabriel Ferrater. Women and Days*, with Introduction by Seamus Heaney (Todmorden: Arc).

Introduction

TO AUSIÀS MARCH ARE attributed 128 poems, totalling some 10,000 lines, produced in the course of thirty years or so in the midst of what seems to have been a demanding period spent consolidating the family fortune and its social position and adapting to the realities of the increasingly mercantile context of life in and around his native Valencia. His work, all in Valencian Catalan, survives in thirteen manuscripts, the earliest of which date back to the second half of the fifteenth century (as well as five editions from the mid sixteenth century). This is a prodigious number of copies for a poet from his period, and the wide variety of the poems included in them (no single source contains all his work) and the range of variant readings between them suggest that there were many more manuscripts than the ones known today. March was thus both hugely productive and widely known during his life and for some time afterwards. That he is not exactly a household name in the hispanic cultural world and beyond is largely due to history and politics: with the fall of the Islamic kingdom of Granada and the discovery of the New World in 1492, Spanish was able not only to confirm its major status in the Peninsula, but also to establish itself in a continent where the demographic developments of the ensuing five centuries would turn it into one of the world's most powerful languages. In the meantime, Catalan remained within its fifteenth-century boundaries and suffered the inevitable external assault and internal assimilation of the neighbouring world language.

At the time March wrote his poems he would have felt that he was using one of the major languages in the world as it was then known. It was one of the official languages of the Crown of Aragon under which the Kingdom

of Valencia fell, in spite of the recent occupation of the throne by a member of the Castilian-speaking Trastamarian dynasty (Alfonso 'the Magnanimous'), and the Crown of Aragon was the major player in the Christian Mediterranean. It was the language of the important city where he was born and which he lived in or near all his life, the language of his own class (the knights) and of the other Christian classes of Valencia. The influence of Castile as a linguistic power still essentially did not extend beyond its peninsular boundaries.

And yet March's use of Catalan is more surprising than it might first appear, since all his predecessors in the poetic tradition in which he wrote used a linguistic mish-mash of Catalan and Provençal, which was deemed essential both for the transmission of concepts inherent to the tradition, and because of the need to find rhymes (the Provençal-Catalan tradition had an arsenal of these, neatly catalogued by one of March's uncles). March took the decisive step into a language which was recognisably Catalan, and, more specifically, Valencian Catalan. It is a rather bitter irony that nearly six hundred years later, with 350 million or so speakers of Spanish and, at best, some ten million using the various forms of Catalan, his work now belongs to a literature labelled as that of a 'minority' language in relative demographic terms. Doubly ironic, since he almost certainly never had as many readers in his lifetime, or during the vogue his work enjoyed in the mid sixteenth century, as he has now. But by then – the ironies multiply – the poetic language he had forged had become largely unrecognisable to Valencians themselves as essentially the same one as they spoke in the street (commentators of the time referred to his poetic language as 'lemosín', assuming that it was some form of Provençal). All these factors have conspired, and conspire still, in spite of the revival of interest in March since he was championed by Romantic critics in the mid nineteenth century, to turn his work into, at best, a still relatively unfrequented corner of studies on the literature of Spain and the Middle Ages.

The claim is made here that March's work continues to be something to which we can relate as living poetry rather than as merely an object of philological interest, and we can explore the reasons why this might be so a little later. But we first need to ask what March was trying to do, in the context in which he lived, when he wrote all this verse. The court was situated across the Mediterranean in Naples, for much of March's productive life; Alfonso left the Peninsula in 1432, never to return. March certainly had many dealings with Alfonso's abandoned Queen at various points in his

life, and there are also two versions of a poem addressed to Alfonso, asking for the gift of a falcon (March had been his head falconer for some years), as well as a poem written for the influential court figure of Antoni Tallander, but there is no evidence he was in Naples himself or that, if he had been, he had had there a role of any importance. March, like other literary figures in Valencia, writes, if not quite on the margins of Empire, then not from its cultural centre either. Besides which, the king's taste was for verse that lent itself for performance, with or without music, the kind that would help produce a brilliant courtly milieu along Italian Renaissance lines. But March's peculiar mode of writing could have little place in Alfonso's court (it is not known if any of his poems were meant for performance). Clearly, though, he had in Valencia an appreciative audience: he addresses his readers at several points, and he refers at one point to not being understood by some. No one can write as much as he did in that period without an audience; the Romantic concept of the lonely artist who writes for himself has no place in fifteenth-century Valencia. By the 1440s he is clearly recognized as a major poet. The Marqués de Santillana, a poet of considerable talent himself, refers to him in a famous account of contemporary poetry in the Peninsula, as 'a great poet' ('gran trovador'), and March is also one of a number of troubadours and later poets whose work is quoted in a long misogynous piece by Francesc Ferrer, written between 1448 and 1449 (he quotes from March's poem XLII, an attack on a lady and her merchant lover).⁵

In much the same way as his predecessors, March's guiding objective poetically was to write what the literary theorists of the old school called the *novell dictat* or 'new poem' – one which was recognizably part of the tradition that all readers knew, and yet was fresh and different. In a way that the theorists of his uncle's generation would not have approved, there is already a fundamental freshness in the use of a language that no longer relied, except very sporadically, on the poetic *koïné*. It is reasonable to assume that his early efforts in verse would have been written in Provençal-Catalan like those of his brilliant contemporary Jordi de Sant Jordi (alongside whom he fought for Alfonso), but if they were, nothing has survived. The important thing is that, from the start, March's extant work lurches off the dwindling path of Provençal-Catalan and onto a new road of its own construction, using it to work out fresh ways of developing the traditional.

⁵ Francisco López Estrada, ed., *Las poéticas castellanas de la Edad Media* (Madrid: Taurus, 1984), p. 58; *Francesc Ferrer: Obra completa*, ed. Jaume Auferil (Barcelona: Barcino, 1989), pp. 93, 231-232.

Whether March also had a conscious political motive for moving over almost completely to Catalan, we can only guess. Certainly the resurgence of Castilian (but also of Italian) in the Neapolitan court may have made the use of the old Provençal-Catalan idiolect seem redundant in a way it had not been until the crown passed to the Trastámaras; he may have felt isolated enough from where he wrote in Valencia without the linguistic isolation that writing in the old poetic language would possibly have meant, and to continue to use it may also have seemed politically imprudent. Catalan was at least an official language. Then, too, the inroads that Italian had made as a literary language, in masterpieces that were increasingly well known from the end of the fourteenth century onwards, already pointed to the legitimacy of using the spoken language as a basis for literary production.⁶

Other major differences introduced by March into the practice of poetry are ones of thematic perspective. In particular, in what we can term the 'love poetry', which makes up the bulk of his work, the emphasis shifts, much further than the tradition had usually allowed, away from discussion of unrequited passion and towards an introspective analysis of the kind of love the poet feels: physical, physical-spiritual, or spiritual. All this is worked out with reference to Scholastic psychology, sometimes in a fragmented way, but occasionally in a much more discursive form (for instance, in much of the long poem XCII). The lady in the love poems functions as the sign for 'woman', with all the misogynous medieval charge that this carries (see poem XLII), and is the source of a closely analysed perplexity. No *donne angelicate* here; March's one poem of praise for a woman (XXIII) – surely one of the great poems of its kind – lauds the fact that the lady is not a virgin, but rather the mother of noble progeny, beautiful in form but with an even more beautiful brain.

In all his poems March strove to achieve novel variations on the conventions of the tradition by using the full gamut of devices which its poets had employed for centuries and which its theorists had formulated in their rhetorical manuals. A careful reading of all March's poems reveals that no two are alike: each answers in its own way the need to produce something different within the still fairly tight boundaries of convention. March particularly favoured the use of the extended simile. His work abounds in simile images (nearly all of which are applied to the poet him-

self) that are drawn from the realities of medieval life, though often through the mediation of literature (the physician and his patient, the ship at sea, the page at court, a mother and her child, the hermit) or from bestiaries or the Bible (the turtle-dove, apocryphal accounts of St Paul, or even Christ); he strings them together and constructs almost entire poems from them (see poems I and II, for instance), and in one piece (LXVIII) he attempts a prolonged negative simile followed by a positive one ('I am not like A, but am like B').⁷ Another frequent rhetorical device is the extended allegory which includes the use of personifications (a good example is poem XI). Hyperbole abounds, but is transmuted into many forms: take, for instance, poem XLVI where the return to the addressed lady is transformed into a projected voyage of apocalyptic dimensions, or the whole discourse on 'sadness' as a way of life in poem XXXIX. A more spectacular innovation is seen in poem XXXII: a poem on a purely moral-philosophical theme, which develops Aristotelian ideas on the good, ends disconcertingly with a traditional address to a lady in which the poet pleads for her mercy; the reader is left to make sense of the juxtaposition of two apparently disparate discourses. But many of March's developments of the *novell dictat* can only be appreciated in the context of his output as a whole, and these take far more subtle forms than the bold rhetorical devices mentioned. It is in this area that the aesthetic gap between March's contemporary readers and ourselves begins to yawn wider.

And yet it was the same impetus to forge something new with each fresh *dictat* that led to the creation of poems that are almost immediately accessible to us. These poems constitute, in effect, new genres, in so far as they are without clear generic antecedents. Half the space in this selection is given over to these poems, precisely because they are so original, as well as so powerful. Six of them (XCII-XCVII, known since the sixteenth century as the *cants de mort*) concern grief over the death of a woman who is clearly identified as the poet's wife: she is referred to in the first of them (XCII, 180) as his 'wife-beloved' (*muller aimia*), a striking composite phrase combining the term for a spouse and the traditional Provençal word for the beloved lady addressed in love poems, while the final lines of the same composition refer to the reunion on Judgement Day of poet and woman as 'one flesh', a concept of biblical origin fundamental to the sacrament of mar-

⁷For a study of March's use of comparisons, see Robert Archer, *The Pervasive Image. The Role of Analogy in the Poetry of Ausiàs March*, Purdue University Monographs in Romance Languages, no. 17 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1985).

⁶Di Girolamo & Micó, pp. 15-16.

riage.⁸ A poet in the tradition in which March was nurtured was generically restricted for an occasion of this kind to the *planh* (the Latin *planctus*), a composition in which there would be praise for the deceased, and an invitation to join the poet in his grief. There is none of this in March's six poems: no praise of any kind. In the Italian tradition, which March also knew, there was also the model of Petrarch's sonnets, *In morte di madonna Laura*; here March differs even more, since, very far from assuming that the lady has gone to Heaven, he expresses the fear at several points that she is in purgatory or worse. The nature of the fear itself is unconventional; March dreads her damnation since, as he sees it, it necessarily implies his own; indeed, in one poem, he expresses his belief that he could be held responsible for the sins that have damned her.

The concern with the impact of events on himself is a continuation into this context of what can be found in most of his love poems. But in the six poems on grief this I-centredness takes two further forms. In the first place, the lady's death opens up an avenue that for the poet of the love poems had always seemed inaccessible: that of loving with the spirit alone, at last freed of the body. Many lines are devoted to analysing the new possibilities of spiritual love; in the first poem (XCII) in particular March constructs a theory of love justifying his belief in these possibilities. The second form of introspective discourse concerns the experience of bereavement itself. March, well aware of the Stoico-Christian proscription of prolonged mourning for the dead, nevertheless presents a fragmentary study of grief. There are striking parallels with the experience that C. S. Lewis describes in his own account of personal loss in *A Grief Observed*: the sense of absence and longing, the way in which objects and times of the day bring the loved one to mind, the feeling of guilt experienced by the bereaved.⁹

Misgivings about the fate of his soul are central to the other generically original poem included in this volume (poem CV, known, also since the sixteenth century, as the *cant espiritual*). Here in twenty-eight stanzas of

⁸The order of the *cants de mort* in the most reliable sources is actually XCII-XCV, XCVII, XCVI, but here we follow tradition in keeping the order established by Amédée Pagès in his critical edition of 1912-1914. The wife to which the poems refer is almost certainly Joana Escorna, to whom March was married from 1443 until her death in 1453 or 1454, although the evidence is purely circumstantial; but the theory cannot be discounted that the reference is to his first wife, Isabel Martorell (she died in 1439 after less than a year of marriage); or, indeed, it may be that some of the the six poems refer to one wife and some to the other, and that their collection together in the manuscript sources and early editions is for reasons of obvious thematic similarity rather than chronology.

⁹Originally published in 1961 under the pseudonym of N. W. Clerk and republished under his own name in 1964 (London: Faber).

unrhymed verse March achieves and maintains an emotional pitch quite unmatched by anything in the Iberian Peninsula before the second half of the sixteenth century. The poem, essentially a prayer, addressed entirely to God, swings dramatically between the extremes of despair and hope as March considers the implications of the doctrines of predestination, free will, grace, divine will, and omniscience that had concerned not only late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century preachers in the Crown of Aragon like Francesc Eiximenis and St Vincent Ferrer, but also a number of Castilian poets in the early fifteenth century.¹⁰ March depicts himself wrestling with the tangle of ideas which writers of theological treatises on the subject themselves saw as ultimately unresolvable by man (ideas which still raise difficulties for twenty-first-century thinking Christians). If God is omniscient, then he must know the destiny of each man's soul; if he knows, from his eternal present, that some are destined to be damned, why did He create them in the first place and then allow them to use their free will to commit the sins which would justify their damnation? March clearly struggles to accept the Church's position, which was that God never wills the damnation of any soul, but passively permits some to condemn themselves, while actively extending grace to others. The poem is exceptional in many ways, not least the frankness with which March confronts head-on his lack of love for God, and in the end does not hold out much hope that he will attain this virtue of charity necessary for salvation. Striking too is its dramatic form: March does not write a poetic report of his struggle, but seems rather to act out as immediate event the twists and turns of a mental process, frequently lurching suddenly to a different viewpoint, while offering no explanation of why the change has taken place.

It is not difficult for a twenty-first-century reader to relate to so powerful a poem on the question of the afterlife, nor to those on grief: human emotions and anxieties still bridge miraculously the chronological gap between a fifteenth-century Valencian knight and ourselves. But what of the other pieces? Why and how, as is claimed here, do some of them still live as poetry, arising as they do from long-abandoned formulations of literary love relationships that can have little bearing on the way we live our lives or even the way we love?

We might attempt the beginnings of an answer by focusing on March's use of two rhetorical devices – conceit and metaphor – in poem XXVIII.

¹⁰For a discussion of this, see Robert Archer, 'Ausiàs March and the *Buena* Debate on Predestination', *Medium Aevum*, 62 (1993), 35-50.

This starts with a passage of description of the external world that is most untypical of March (he normally refers to the world outside the poetic 'I' through the medium of the extended simile); only after this descriptive passage does he introduce the figure of the poet, at which point the poem turns inwards:

XXVIII

Lo jorn ha por de perdre sa claror
 quan ve la nit que espandeix ses tenebres.
 Pocs animals no cloen les palpebres
 4 e los malalts creixen de llur dolor;
 los malfactors volgren tot l'any duràs
 perquè llurs mals haguessen cobriment;
 mas jo, qui visc menys de par en turment
 8 e sens mal fer, volgra que tost passàs.

E d'altra part faç pus que si matàs
 mil hòmens justs menys d'alguna mercé,
 car tots mos ginys jo solt per trair-me.
 12 E no cuideu que l'jorn me n'excusàs,
 ans, en la nit treball rompent ma pensa
 perquè en lo jorn lo traïment cometa.
 Por de morir o de fer vida estreta
 16 no·m tol esforç per donar-me ofensa.

Tornada

Plena de seny, mon enteniment pensa
 com aptament lo llaç d'amor se meta.
 Sens aturar, pas tenint via dreita.
 20 Vaig a la fi si mercé no·m defensa.

*Day sees with terror how its last light fades
 and night comes, spreading darkness in its path.
 Wide-eyed, small creatures dare not welcome sleep;
 4 the sick and weak endure redoubled pain.*

*Now evil men come out to do their worst:
 cloaked by the dark, they'd have it last all year.
 Not I: of me need none fear harm, tormented
 8 like no other: I long for night to pass.*

*And yet, if I had murdered a thousand
 guiltless men I could do no worse: each night
 I set my wits to plot my betrayal.
 12 And don't suppose the dawn will bring respite:
 all night I'm busy wrenching from my mind
 how best to shape the next day's perfidy.
 What fear holds death or else the prison cell
 16 in one who's traitor to his very self?*

Envoi

*Beauteous Wisdom, there's none to blame but me
 if Love has placed his noose around my neck.
 The road runs straight, and I don't drag my steps.
 20 The end's in sight: will pity send reprieve?*

The dynamics of the poem hinge on the rhetorical device of the 'conceit' in which the poet shows how two apparently irreconcilable terms are linked in a way we had not perceived previously, but which is now revealed to us as their irreconcilability is worked out and resolved in the second stanza. The whole point of the poem lies in this revelation. What March seems to be saying on the surface of things could be formulated as a trite paradox: 'the meek do the most harm', a counter-rational statement of the kind 'A is X'. But what gives these lines their power is that this counter-rational statement is then resolved through the explanation of line 11 ('I set my wits to plot my betrayal') and through the subsequent expansion in the rest of the second stanza of this line's untranslatable punning metaphor *solt arginys* ('to set the traps' / 'use all my wits'). Here the conceit has a heuristic function: we are not merely *told* this important truth; we are led to it through a *process* of revelation. This poem, even though it is constructed with the conventions of the courtly love lyric, operates as much more than a statement about the sufferings of unrequited love. The poem turns out to be a metaphoric description of the self-destructive urges that afflict all but the most blessed personalities. In this, of course, the meaning of the poem moves on a level that lies above (or below) its literary con-

text. Part of its power lies in the way the revelation is made through the rhetorical device of the conceit, drawing on a series of metaphors that make immediate the inherent truth of the situation without having to call up any of the jaded aphorisms such as 'man is his own worst enemy' with which the same truth is often observed (and immediately forgotten).

Metaphor is the other aspect of this poem that needs to be discussed. It is a rhetorical device that permeates March's work in an obvious way, one of the many to which he had recourse in his efforts to produce more and still more *novells dictats*. But for a certain school of modern thought (the cognitivist approach to metaphor), metaphor underlies not only poetry, but also much of the way we think about the world and conceptualize it. Many of those metaphors, only half-glimpsed by us most of the time, coincide with many of the ones that are explicitly used by March.

The basic theory, developed by George Lakoff and collaborators, posits the essential metaphoricity of much of the way we perceive our own world and our existence in it.¹¹ This arguably does not extend as far as the theory claims, as several critical voices have pointed out, but it does expose the extent to which our cognition of the world, the way we perceive it and understand it, relies on a number of basic and irreplaceable conceptual metaphors such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LOVE IS A JOURNEY, OR IDEAS ARE FOOD; from these conceptual metaphors metaphorical linguistic expressions are derived such as 'keep right on to the end of the road', 'the long and winding road that leads to your door', or a statement like 'all his book has in it are raw facts, half-baked ideas and diluted theories.' Lakoff and collaborators identified scores of such conceptual metaphors underlying metaphorical linguistic expressions or even concepts which we would not normally think of as metaphors at all (and here they may simply be mistaken). But it is precisely the existence of such conceptual metaphors across time, and the need of human beings to revert to them by means of countless metaphorical linguistic expressions, that perhaps begins to explain the role of metaphor in earlier literature as the means by which we can access a poetic 'world' even where all the other referents may seem alienating.

That is, the immediacy of meaning in March's poem XXIII is possible because we continue to share with March and his readers these same basic

¹¹ George Lakoff & Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), and especially George Lakoff & Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason. A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). See also Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) and the salutary criticisms of Lakoff & Turner in the review by Ray Jackendoff & David Aaron, *Language*, 67 (1991), 320-338.

metaphors, and continue to use them to construe the world—conceptual metaphors which can be expressed in the sloganized small-capitals form that cognitivists work with such as LIFE IS LIGHT, LIFE OF HUMAN BEINGS IS A DAY, SIGNIFICANT IS BIG (INSIGNIFICANCE IS SMALL), CHEERFUL IS SUNNY, BAD IS BLACK, CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION, DEATH IS NIGHT, EVENTS ARE ACTIONS, THE MIND IS A CONTAINER, PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION, etc. It could be argued that all these conceptual metaphors—the basis of countless linguistic metaphorical expressions, including poetic ones—bear upon the process by which we are able to relate to what March is saying in this poem.

This perception of metaphor as something 'we live by', to use the title of one of Lakoff's books, at the root of the way we construe the world, just might help explain the anomaly of our readerly habitation of poetic worlds constructed with the literary language of the fifteenth century. There seems to be a considerable area of overlap between what is in the text and what we as later readers bring to it. This in itself suggests a mode of perceiving the world and of referring to it that is at least partly shared by poets like March and those who read their work today. Readerly competence has to be assumed of course: we need to know sufficient about the context of the poem to be able to avoid making grossly false assumptions and, thanks to such knowledge, we are able to jettison irrelevant parts of our own conceptual and cultural baggage. But such readerly competence—essentially, intellectual knowledge—does not explain how we are able to relate on an extra-intellectual level to a poem written in a period far distant from our own. Why is there a sense of recognizable experience in the reading of such poems? Because of the shared experiential basis of some kinds of conceptual metaphor, the Lakoffians would say. This has surely to be one of the reasons why some of this poetry can actually mean something to us—indeed, mean a great deal—at an affective level, and do so at such a huge temporal and cultural remove.

But each reader will also find his or her own reasons for relating to March's poems and, in a curious way, the gap between text and reader that language and history create only serves (as it does with Shakespeare) to augment the sense of vital immediacy and conceptual power. The translations in this volume are written in the belief that, even in the literary language of twenty-first-century England, something of this immediacy and power will manage to make itself felt.

Biographical note

AUSIÀS MARCH WAS BORN in 1400 in Valencia, and lived most of his life in the town of Gandia on the coastal plain of Valencia, and also perhaps in the nearby village of Beniarjó. The Marchs had been connected with the region since the final Christian reconquest in the mid fifteenth century, but it is not until the 1330s that March's grandfather establishes his branch of the family, which had its roots in Barcelona, in Valencia. His father, Pere, was a top-ranking court administrator, closely connected to the king, and it was through him that the family acquired its noble status in 1360. March was thus born as a second generation knight. As early as 1415, before he was knighted (this happened some time in or after 1419), Ausiàs is mentioned as a representative of his class at the royal court in Valencia that year.

In late youth and early manhood, March distinguished himself in Alfonso's first military campaigns in Sardinia and Corsica in 1420, and at the end of 1424 he was with the army that was sent to deal with pirates operating off the coast of North Africa and Sicily, and was present during the attack on the island of Djerba. In 1420 he is mentioned for the first time in relation to Queen Maria (subsequently regent during Alfonso's long absence), and in 1425, in consideration of his military service, the king confirms the rights and privileges in Beniarjó and other villages that had been conferred on his father a few decades before. But he does not join Alfonso in the later expedition to Italy. Instead, as far as is known, he remained in Valencia, administering his lands and attending to family business. However, in both 1427 and 1428 he is mentioned with the title

of 'head falconer' of the king, and again in 1434 and 1444 (but without the title) he is described as breeding and caring for royal falcons. One of his poems, certainly written after 1447, as it alludes very clearly to Lucrezia d'Alagno who is linked openly with the king from this time, is a request for a falcon with which to hunt and thus keep himself from mischief in his old age (the request is especially ironic since the king writes to March in 1446 asking him to send to Naples one of Ausiàs's own falcons). Such activities would have meant that for the earlier years at least March would have spent some time in the Albufera, the area surrounding the lagoon near Valencia, engaged in hunting and in rearing the birds.

But aside from this, March's life in Valencia and Gandia seems largely to have involved the zealous protection and exercise of the seigneurial privileges of the Marchs. Some of these privileges he saw diminished in favour of his immediate overlords (a measure clearly supported by the town of Gandia), while all the time the effective status of the lesser nobility in Valencia continued to shrink before the growing influence of the rich and powerful merchants, many of whom were already 'honourable citizens' and for all practical purposes at a comparable social level to that of the knights (March attacks one of them in poem XLII). March was one of the local landowners responsible for developing the cultivation of sugarcane (and he built a mill to extract the sugar himself). His entire life seems to have been plagued by lawsuits, many of them instigated by him. There are written challenges to other knights over matters of honour and over money (such challenges were often a short-cut through a ponderous legal system), while the final years of his life were overcast by the accusation of incitement to the unprovoked attack on an old enemy as well as incitement to two murders, and the committing of another by his own hand. Because of these accusations he was imprisoned (released after one day on the Queen's command) and then put under house arrest (thanks again to the intervention of the Queen).

March married twice. The first wife, Isabel Martorell, was the sister of Joanot Martorell, author of the great Catalan chivalresque romance, *Tirant lo Blanc*. The wedding was much delayed because of an insufficient dowry which could only be made up once Joanot returned from his journey to the English court where he had gone to ask the king to settle a matter of honour; the marriage involved the expansion of March's seigneurial lands. Due to the delay, March seems to have wanted to withdraw from the arrangement, but was held to it by the Martorells. There are interesting documents that describe March's frequent visits to the betrothed,

always in the company of his squires and servants. But the marriage ended less than a year later, in 1439, when Isabel died. His second marriage to Joana Escorna in 1443 lasted ten or eleven years (she died in 1453 or 1454) and also brought a rich dowry with it. March's will testifies to the high regard in which he held both wives, but especially Joana. Neither wife gave him an heir, but, as was normal with men of his class (and he had a relatively short married life), several illegitimate children were born to March both by free women and by slaves; one of these children was to be made his heir, but died before this could happen.

He died in 1459 in Valencia after an illness. Among his small collection of manuscript books (we have to assume that his main library, which assuredly included the quite extensive one of his father, was in Gandia or Beniarjó), two unbound volumes 'with verses' are mentioned. It is just conceivable that what is described here is the original manuscript, now lost, of his life's work as a poet.¹²

¹² The main sources for March's life are: Amédée Pagès, *Ausiàs March et ses prédécesseurs. Essai sur la poésie amoureuse et philosophique en Catalogne aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles* (Paris: Champion, 1912; reprint Geneva: Slatkine, 1974), and Jaume Chiner Gimeno, *Ausiàs March i la València del segle XV (1400-1459)* (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana-Consell Valencià de Cultura, 1997).

I

AIXÍ COM CELL, qui en lo somni·s delita
 e son delit de foll pensament ve,
 ne pren a mi: que·l temps passat me té
 4 l'imaginar, que altre bé no hi habita,
 sentint estar en aguait ma dolor,
 sabent de cert que en ses mans he de jaure.
 Temps d'avenir en negun bé·m pot caure;
 8 ço que és no-res a mi és lo millor.

Del temps passat me trob en gran amor,
 amant no-res pus és ja tot finit.
 D'aquest pensar me sojorn e·m delit,
 12 mas quan lo perd, s'esforça ma dolor:
 sí com aquell qui és jutjat a mort
 e de llong temps la sap e s'aconhorta,
 e creure·l fan que li serà estorta,
 16 e·l fan morir sens un punt de record.

Plagués a Déu que mon pensar fos mort
 e que passàs ma vida en dormant.
 Malament viu qui té son pensament
 20 per enemic, fent-li d'enuigs report,
 e com lo vol d'algun plaer servir
 li'n pren així com dona ab son infant
 que, si verí li'n demana plorant,
 24 ha tan poc seny que no·l sap contradir.

Fóra millor ma dolor soferir
 que no mesclar poca part de plaer
 entre aquells mals qui·m giten de saber.
 28 Com del pensat plaer me cové eixir,
 las!, mon delit dolor se converteix,
 dobla's l'afany après d'un poc repòs:
 sí co·l malalt que per un plasant mos
 32 tot son menjar en dolor se nodreix;

I

I'M LIKE A MAN who spends his life in dreams,
 whose only joy is what such folly holds,
 for all my thoughts are captive to the past,
 and only there for me can pleasure lie;
 4 yet pain, I can be sure, just bides its time:
 it lurks, and I will fall into its grasp.
 The future holds no promise, not for me.
 The best is what is over and is gone. 8

Call me a man enamoured of the past,
 of what is nothing, and exists no more.
 Memories are my solace and my joy;
 but once they fade, then pain strikes sharply back. 12
 Just so, a man might await the gallows,
 with resignation comforting his soul;
 then comes false news that his life will be spared
 –and they take him and hang him, unprepared. 16

If only God would paralyse my brain
 so I could spend a lifetime lost in sleep!
 A wretch he is indeed whose thoughts become
 the enemy, and his own mind torment, 20
 and every time he looks to them for joy,
 he's like a woman with her screaming child:
 if it should ask with poison to be fed,
 she can't refuse, she has so little sense. 24

I had best resign myself to simple pain,
 forget all hope of mixing in some joy,
 and let the torment take its fatal course.
 Alas!, each time my dreams I set aside, 28
 so suffering comes to take the place of joy;
 a brief respite, and then redoubled pain:
 the tasty morsel tempts the sickly man,
 and then he must eat every meal in pain; 32

com l'ermità qui enyorament no·l creix
 d'aquells amics que havia en lo món,
 essent llong temps que en lloc poblat no fon,
 36 fortuït cas un d'ells li apareix
 qui los passats plaers li renovella,
 sí que·l passat present li fa tornar,
 mas com se'n part, l'és forçat congoixar.
 40 Lo bé com fuig ab grans crits mal apella.

Tornada

Plena de seny, quan amor és molt vella,
 absença és lo verme que la gasta,
 si fermetat durament no contrasta,
 44 e creure poc si l'envejós consella.

so is it for the hermit in his cave,
 who over time has ceased to miss his friends
 –the many that he left behind in town–
 but one of them quite suddenly appears, 36
 and all the former pleasures are recalled,
 and past fills all the present once again;
 the friend's farewell must usher in regret:
 when good takes flight, it loudly summons pain. 40

Envoi

Beauteous Wisdom, whenever love grows old,
 then absence chumbles at it like a worm;
 constancy will starve it; this, and if you'll give
 no heed to what these envious tongues might say. 44

II

PREN-ME ENAIXÍ com al patró que en plaja
 té sa gran nau e pensa haver castell.
 Veent lo cel ésser molt clar e bell,
 4 creu fermament d'una àncora assats haja.
 E sent venir sobtós un temporal
 de tempestat e temps incomportable.
 8 Lleva son jui: que si molt és durable,
 cercar los ports més que aturar li val.

Moltes veus és que·l vent és fortunal,
 tant que no pot sortir sens lo contrari.
 E cella clau que us tanca dins l'armari
 12 no pot obrir aquell mateix portal.
 Així m'ha pres, trobant-me enamorat,
 per sobresalt qui·m ve de vós, ma aimia.
 16 Del no amar desalt ne té la via,
 mas un sol pas meu no hi serà trobat.

Menys que lo peix és en lo bosc trobat
 e los lleons dins l'aigua han llur sojorn,
 la mia amor per null temps pendrà torn,
 20 sol coneixent que de mi us doneu grat.
 E fiu de vós que·m sabreu bé conéixer
 e, conegut, no·m serà mal graïda
 tota dolor havent per vós sentida.
 24 Lladoncs veureu les flames d'amor créixer!

Si mon voler he dat mal a aparéixer
 creeu de cert que vera amor no·m lluny.
 Pus que lo sol és cald al mes de juny
 28 ard mon cor flac sens algun grat meréixer.
 Altre, sens mi, d'açò mereix la colpa.
 Vullau-li mal com tan humil servent
 vos té secret per son defalliment.
 32 Cest és amor que mi, amant, encolpa.

II

I AM LIKE the master of some great ship
 riding at anchor off a stretch of beach,
 who sees above a blue and cloudless sky:
 a castle, he thinks, could not be safer.
 4 All at once a storm he feels upon him,
 and winds so strong it can't be weathered out.
 The decision's made: now the storm sets in,
 he must cast off, for some safe harbour try. 8

But often he is up against a gale
 and can't get clear without a contrary wind
 (for the key that locks you in the closet
 is not the same as lets you out again).
 12 Such, beloved lady, is the bind I'm in:
 the exceeding joy that you alone afford
 I must renounce, if love's to have an end;
 but that's one path that I shall never tread. 16

Sooner say that fish are swimming in the wood
 or that lions now across the oceans roam
 than that my love can ever start to wane
 –if only I am sure I don't displease you.
 20 I believe that you will come to know me
 for myself, and, when you do, ingratitude
 will cease to be your answer to my pain.
 Then will you see the flames of love's fire blaze! 24

If I have kept my feelings to myself,
 it's not, be sure, because I lack true love.
 My ailing heart burns hotter than the sun
 in June, yet unrewarded it remains. 28
 It's another's doing that this is so,
 not mine; blame him who has failed to ensure
 your humble servant's service reached your ears.
 It's love that makes me love, then blames me too! 32

Ma voluntat ab la raó s'envolpa,
 e fan acord, la qualitat seguint,
 tals actes fent que·l cos és defallint
 36 en poc de temps una gran part de polpa.
 Lo poc dormir magresa al cos m'acosta;
 dobla'm l'enginy per contemplar amor.
 Lo cos molt gras, trobant-se dormidor,
 40 no pot dar pas en aquesta aspra costa.

Tornada

Plena de seny, donau-me una crosta
 del vostre pa qui-m lleve l'amargor.
 De tot menjar m'ha pres gran dessabor
 44 sinó d'aquell qui molta amor me costa.

In me desire and reason intertwine,
 and in the love of spirit are as one,
 so working together that my body
 has shed the greater part of bulk; my flesh
 36 is wasted from so many sleepless nights;
 my sharpened wits can meditate on love.
 To sleep all day is what fat bodies want;
 up this steep slope they cannot take one step. 40

Envoi

Beauteous Wisdom, of your bread one crust
 I ask, to take this bitterness away.
 Intolerable is all food to me
 44 excepting that which my great love may earn.

IV

AIXÍ COM CELL qui desija vianda
 per apagar sa perillosa fam,
 e veu dos poms de fruit en un bell ram
 e son desig egualment los demanda,
 no·l complirà fins part haja elegida
 sí que·l desig vers l'un fruit se decant:
 així m'ha pres dues dones amant.
 Mas elegesc per haver d'amor vida.

Sí com la mar se plany greument e crida
 com dos forts vents la baten egualment,
 u de llevant e altre de ponent,
 e dura tant fins l'un vent l'ha jaquida
 sa força gran per lo més poderós,
 dos grans desigs han combatut ma pensa
 mas lo voler vers u seguir dispensa.
 Jo·l vos public: amar dretament vós.

E no cuideu que tan innocent fos
 que no veés vostre avantatge gran.
 Mon cos no cast estava congoixant
 de perdre lloc qui l'era delitós.
 Una raó fon ab ell de sa part
 dient que en ell se pren aquesta amor,
 sentint lo mal o lo delit major,
 sí que, ell content, cascú pot ésser fart.

L'enteniment a parlar no venc tard
 e planament desféu esta raó,
 dient que·l cos ab sa complexió
 ha tal amor com un llop o renard
 que llur poder d'amar és limitat,
 car no és pus que apetit brutal,
 e si l'amant veeu dins la fornal,
 no serà plant e molt menys defensat.

IV

LIKE THE STARVING man on the brink of death,
 who must find food or be prepared to die,
 then sees two fruits that hang from one fine branch,
 with equal longing wants to have them both,
 but cannot eat until he's made his choice,
 and fixes his desire on one alone,
 thus I, who love two women equally.
 But I will choose that love which gives me life.

Just as the sea will loudly groan and howl
 when whipped with equal force by contrary winds,
 one blowing from the west, the other east
 –the struggle ceasing when the one gives way
 before the greater might of the other wind–
 so two desires have battled in my mind,
 but now at last my will has made its choice.
 Lady, it is this: to love you as I ought.

But do not think this means that I am blind
 to those great gifts with which your person's graced;
 this lewd body has fretted long to think
 that it must lose such promise of delight.
 One argument it had to make its case,
 saying that the body's where such love is born,
 and where its pain is felt and its delight;
 no form of love can flourish while it yearns.

The understanding promptly made reply,
 and soon made nonsense of the body's words,
 and said that, by its very nature, flesh
 thinks of love as a wolf does, or a fox,
 who naturally no higher can aspire
 than will their bestial appetite allow,
 and if in love's furnace we see lovers burn,
 no pity they deserve, much less defence.

Ell és qui venç la sensualitat.
 Si bé no és en ell prim moviment,
 en ell està de tot lo jutjament:
 36 cert guiador és de la voluntat.
 ¿Qui és aquell qui en contra d'ell reny?
 Que voluntat, per qui·l fet s'executa,
 l'atorg senyor, e si ab ell disputa
 40 a la perfí se guia per son seny.

Diu més avant al cos ab gran endeny:
 «Vanament vols, e vans són tos desigs,
 car dins un punt tos delits són fastigs;
 44 romans-ne llas: tot jorn ne prens enseny.
 Ab tu mateix delit no pots haver:
 tant est grosser que amor no n'és servit.
 Volenterós acte de bé és dit,
 48 e d'aquest bé tu no saps lo carrer.

Si bé complit lo món pot retenir,
 per mi és l'hom en tan sobiran bé.
 E qui sens mi esperança·l reté
 52 és foll o pec e terrible grosser.»
 Aitant com és l'enteniment pus clar
 és gran delit lo que per ell se pren.
 E son pillard és subtil pensament,
 56 qui de fins pasts no·l.jaqueix endurar.

Tornada

Plena de seny, no pot Déu a mi dar
 fora de vós que descontent no camp.
 Tots mos desigs sobre vós los escamp;
 60 tot és dins vós lo que·m fa desijar.

Sensuality always it defeats;
 in desire's first impulse it has no part,
 but it alone can judgement exercise,
 and thereby be the will's unfailing guide. 36
 The understanding cannot be denied.
 The will, through which all actions are performed,
 calls it master and, though it may dissent,
 by reason will be governed in the end. 40

More it has to say, indignant, to the flesh:
 'Vain are all your hopes, and vain are your desires:
 no sooner have you sampled your delights
 you're bored and flaccid: you will never learn. 44
 Unaided, you're incapable of pleasure,
 too brutish to be of service to love;
 an act of the will to attain a good
 is love; but you've no clue where such good lies. 48

If good, absolute, can in this life be found,
 then only through me may such good be known.
 Who without my help aspires to reach it
 is mad, or else a fool, or mindless lout.' 52
 A lucid understanding is the only way
 that we may attain the higher pleasures;
 always it rides with subtle thought at hand,
 sustaining it ever with the choicest foods. 56

Envoi

Beauteous Wisdom, if not you, there's nothing
 I'd ask of God to make me once content.
 All my desires I've cast on you alone,
 and in you alone such desires take shape. 60

XVIII

FANTASIANI, amor a mi descobre
 los grans secrets que als pus subtils amaga,
 e mon jorn clar als hòmens és nit fosca,
 4 e visc de ço que persones no tasten.
 Tant en amor l'esperit meu contempla
 que par del tot fora del cos s'aparte,
 8 car mos desigs no són trobats en home,
 sinó en tal que la carn punt no·l torbe.

Ma carn no sent aquell desig sensible,
 e l'esperit obres d'amor cobeja;
 12 d'aquell cec foc qui·ls amadors s'escalfen
 paor no·m trop que jo me'n pogués ardre.
 Un altre esguard lo meu voler practica
 quan en amar-vos, dona, se contenta,
 16 que no han cells qui amadors se mostren,
 passionats e, contra amor, no dignes.

Si fos amor substança raonable,
 e que·s trobàs de senyoria ceptre,
 20 béns guardonant e punint los demèrits,
 entre·ls mellors sols me trobara fènix,
 car jo tot sols desempare la mescla
 de lleigs desigs qui ab los bons s'embolquen.
 Càstig no·m cal, puis de assaig no·m tempten;
 24 la causa llur en mi és feta nul·la.

Sí com los sants, sentints la llum divina,
 la llum del món conegueren per ficta,
 28 e menyspreants la glòria mundana
 puis major part de glòria sentien,
 tot enaixí tinc en menyspreu e fàstig
 aquells desigs qui, complits, amor minva,
 prenint aquells que de l'esperit mouen,
 32 qui no és llassat, ans tot jorn muntuplica.

XVIII

IN REVERIES has love revealed to me
 deep secrets hid from men of subtler wit;
 clear day for me is others' darkest night,
 4 sustained by food which they can never taste.
 So deeply does my spirit ponder love,
 it rises up, the body left behind;
 none can aspire to know desires like mine,
 8 unless he's quite untroubled by the flesh.

My body is untouched by lewd desires;
 alone for acts of love the spirit longs;
 I have no fear that I could be consumed
 by that blind fire with which most lovers burn. 12
 With other ends my will is bent on love
 of you, lady, and with other joys than
 those lovers self-proclaimed, to passions bound,
 16 unworthy, and the enemies of love.

If love were substance, and with reason crowned,
 wielding the sceptre of its sovereignty,
 rewarding good works, punishing misdeeds,
 among the best a phoenix I would be: 20
 I disentangle – only I – the skein
 of good desires that reach man mixed with foul.
 By these untouched, I'm quite beyond reproach;
 24 in me their cause can only ever fail.

Just as the saints, perceiving Heaven's light,
 saw at once the falseness of this world's light,
 and then much greater glory they discerned
 when worldly glories they had learnt to scorn, 28
 in just this way, I loathe and I abhor
 desires which, satisfied, then leave love dead;
 only those I choose that from the spirit rise,
 32 that never fails, but ever stronger grows.

Sí com sant Pau Déu li sostragué l'arma
 del cos perquè ves divinals misteris
 (car és lo cos de l'esperit lo carçre,
 36 e tant com viu ab ell és en tenebres),
 així amor l'esperit meu arrapa,
 e no hi acull la maculada pensa.
 E per ço sent lo delit qui no·s cansa,
 40 sí que ma carn la vera amor no·m torba.

Pren-me enaixí com aquell filosofe
 qui, per muntar al bé qui no·s pot perdre,
 los perdedors llançà en mar profunda,
 44 creent aquells l'enteniment torbassen:
 jo, per muntar al delit perdurable
 (tant quant ha·l món), gros plaer de mi llance,
 creent de cert que·l gran delit me torba
 48 aquell plaer que en fàstig, volant, passa.

Als naturals no par que fer se pusquen
 molts dels secrets que la deitat s'estoja,
 que revelats són estats a molts martres
 52 no tan subtils com los ignorants i aptes;
 així primors amor a mi revela,
 tals que·ls sabents no basten a compendre;
 e quan ho dic, de mos dits me desmenten,
 56 dant a parer que folles coses parle.

Tornada

Llir entre cards, lo meu voler se temprà
 en ço que null amador sap lo sempre.
 Ço fai amor, a qui plau que jo senta
 60 sos grans tresors; sols a mi·ls manifesta.

As when God drew Paul's spirit from the flesh,
 that he might holy mysteries perceive
 (the spirit dungeoned in the body lies,
 and dwelling there, it can but darkness know),
 36 in such a way love bears my spirit off,
 but will not touch a single tainted thought.
 Unfading pleasure thus is mine, and flesh
 cannot impede the workings of pure love. 40

Like that philosopher I'd say I am
 who, striving for the good that never ends,
 cast all his worldly goods into the sea,
 the encumbrance to his understanding:
 44 in just this way I strive for lasting joy
 (as much as this world holds), casting aside
 all gross delights, for true joy cannot lie
 in fleeting pleasures that in loathing end. 48

The natural philosophers deny
 that many secrets kept from us by God
 should to numerous martyrs be revealed
 and yet be hidden from cleverer men,
 52 just so, love lends to me such subtle truths
 even the wisest cannot comprehend;
 and if I speak of them, they say I lie,
 and that I utter not one word of sense. 56

Envoi

Lily among thorns, of such stuff my will
 is forged as no other lover's has been cast.
 Love so chose to make me: its vast treasures
 alone to share, revealed to none but me. 60

XXVIII

LO JORN HA POR de perdre sa claror
 quan ve la nit que expandeix ses tenebres.
 Pocs animals no cloen les palpebres
 e los malalts creixen de llur dolor;
 los malfactors volgren tot l'any duràs
 perquè llurs mals haguessen cobriment;
 mas jo, qui visc menys de par en turment
 e sens mal fer, volgra que tost passàs.

E d'altra part faç pus que si matàs
 mil hòmens justs menys d'alguna mercé,
 car tots mos ginys jo solt per trair-me.
 E no cuideu que·l jorn me n'excusàs,
 ans, en la nit treball rompent ma pensa
 perquè en lo jorn lo traïment cometa.
 Por de morir o de fer vida estreta
 no·m tol esforç per donar-me ofensa.

Tornada

Plena de seny, mon enteniment pensa
 com aptament lo llaç d'amor se meta.
 Sens aturar, pas tenint via dreita.
 Vaig a la fi si mercé no·m defensa.

XXVIII

DAY SEES WITH TERROR how its last light fades
 and night comes, spreading darkness in its path.
 Wide-eyed, small creatures dare not welcome sleep;
 the sick and weak endure redoubled pain.
 Now evil men come out to do their worst:
 cloaked by the dark, they'd have it last all year.
 Not I: of me need none fear harm, tormented
 like no other: I long for night to pass.

And yet, if I had murdered a thousand
 guiltless men I could do no worse: each night
 I set my wits to plot my betrayal.
 And don't suppose the dawn will bring respite:
 all night I'm busy wrenching from my mind
 how best to shape the next day's perfidy.
 What fear holds death or else the prison cell
 in one who's traitor to his very self?

Envoi

Beauteous Wisdom, there's none to blame but me
 if Love has placed his noose around my neck.
 The road runs straight, and I don't drag my steps.
 The end's in sight: will pity send reprieve?

XXIX

Sí COM LO TAUR se'n va fuit pel desert
 quan és sobrat per son semblant qui l'força,
 ne torna mai fins ha cobrada força
 per destruir aquell qui l'ha desert,
 tot enaixí-m cové llunyar de vós
 car vostre gest mon esforç ha confús.
 No tornaré fins del tot haja fus
 la gran paor qui-m tol ser delitós.

4

8

XXIX

DEEP IN THE wilderness the wild bull flees,
 the fierce battle lost with one of his kind,
 but once he's built up strength, goes straight to seek
 him out, and with defeat avenge his loss;
 such am I, who for my own good flee you:
 your beauty was enough to sap my strength.
 I'll not return until I've quelled the fear
 that stands between me and all chance of joy.

4

8

XLVI

VELES E VENTS han mos desigs complir
 faent camins dubtosos per la mar.
 Mestre i ponent contra d'ells veig armar:
 4 xaloc, levant los deuen subvenir
 ab llurs amics lo grec e lo migjorn,
 fent humils precés al vent tramuntanal
 que en son bufar los sia parcial
 8 e que tots cinc complesquen mon retorn.

Bullirà·l mar com la cassola en forn,
 mudant color e l'estat natural,
 e mostrarà voler tota res mal
 12 que sobre si atur un punt al jorn.
 Grans e pocs peixs a recors correran
 e cercaran amagatalls secrets;
 fugint al mar on són nodrits e fets,
 16 per gran remei en terra eixiran.

Los pelegrins tots ensems votaran
 e prometran molts dons de cera fets;
 la gran paor traurà al llum los secrets
 20 que al confés descoberts no seran.
 En lo perill no·m caureu de l'esment,
 ans votaré al Déu qui·ns ha lligats
 de no minvar mes fermes voluntats
 24 e que tots temps me sereu de present.

Jo tem la mort per no ser·vos absent,
 perquè amor per mort és anul·lats;
 mas jo no creu que mon voler sobrats
 28 pusca esser per tal departiment.
 Jo só gelós de vostre escàs voler
 que, jo morint, no meta mi en oblit.
 Sol est pensar me tol del món delit
 32 car, nós vivint, no creu se pusca fer:

XLVI

I SHALL RETURN: the winds shall swell my sails,
 I'll set a course of danger through the sea,
 not caring West and North-West winds take arms:
 4 Levanter with Sirocco will hold firm,
 helped by their allies –North-Eastern, Midi–
 who humbly will entreat the great North wind
 to stay its blasts, so favouring their cause
 8 that all five together may bring me back.

The sea shall bubble like a pot of stew,
 losing its form and colour as it seethes.
 All that upon it a single moment
 12 ventures will feel its malice at full force,
 and all the creatures of the deep in vain
 will rush to seek some secret refuge, fleeing
 the very sea which spawned and nurtured them,
 16 on dry land leaping to their desperate end.

The pilgrims all as one will make their vows,
 pledging their offerings of votive wax,
 and sheer terror will force those secrets out
 20 that never fell on the confessor's ear.
 In such danger, you shall not leave my thoughts,
 and to the God who joined us I shall vow
 never to weaken in my firm resolve,
 24 and day and night to only think of you.

I fear death, that is eternal absence
 and by which love is always cancelled out,
 not that I believe such parting –even this–
 28 could overcome the strength of my desire.
 I long for you to love me as you should,
 and that you'll not forget me if I died.
 But one thought there is that makes me wretched
 32 (and this could never be while we two live):

après ma mort d'amar perdau poder
 e sia tost en ira convertit,
 e jo, forçat d'aquest món ser eixit,
 36 tot lo meu mal serà vós no veer.
 Oh Déu, ¿per què terme no hi ha en amor,
 car prop d'aquell jo·m trobara tot sol?
 Vostre voler sabera quant me vol,
 40 tement, fiant, de tot l'avenidor.

Jo són aquell pus extrem amador
 après d'aquell a qui Déu vida tol.
 Puis jo són viu, mon cor no mostra dol
 44 tant com la mort per sa extrema dolor.
 A bé o mal d'amor jo só dispost,
 mas per mon fat fortuna cas no·m porta.
 Tot esvetlat, ab desbarrada porta,
 48 me trobarà faent humil respot.

Jo desig ço que·m porà ser gran cost
 i aquest esper de molts mals m'aconhorta.
 A mi no plau ma vida ser estorta
 52 d'un cas molt fer, qual prec Déu sia tost;
 lladoncs les gents no·ls calrà donar fe
 al que amor fora mi obrarà;
 lo seu poder en acte·s mostrarà
 56 e los meus dits ab los fets provaré.

Tornada

Amor, de vós jo·n sent més que no·n sé,
 de què la part pijor me'n romandrà,
 e de vós sap lo qui sens vós està.
 60 Ajoc de claus vos acompanyaré.

that any love for me you might have borne
 would also die, and promptly turn to hate.
 As for me, when I am driven from this world,
 36 all my pain will be to look on you no more.
 Oh God, if only there were bounds to love,
 for none would be as close to them as I.
 Then, between fear and hope no longer torn,
 I'd know for sure what love is in your heart. 40

None ever loved to such extremes as I,
 save those who for love's sake gave up their lives;
 I cannot show the torment of my heart
 44 unless it's by the final proof of death.
 Good or bad, I am ready for what love
 decrees, but Fortune keeps my fate concealed;
 love will find me, keeping vigil, gates unbarred,
 48 humbly prepared to do what it commands.

The very thing I pray will happen soon
 could cost me dear, yet this alone consoles.
 When that event most fearful comes to pass,
 52 I ask of God He will not spare my life.
 For then with their own eyes will people see
 the outward signs of all love works in me
 –potentiality in act revealed–
 56 and all my words I shall have proved with deeds.

Envoi

Love, if I could understand you as I feel!
 To me can only fall the loser's share;
 no one can know you while he's in your thrall.
 60 How to define you? Let's say a game of dice.

LXVIII

4 NO·M PREN AIXÍ com al petit vailet
 qui va cercant senyor qui festa·l faça,
 tenint-lo cald en lo temps de la glaça
 e fresc d'estiu com la calor se met,
 preant molt poc la valor del senyor
 e concebent desalt de sa manera,
 veent molt clar que té mala carrera
 8 de canviar son estat en major.

12 Jo son aquell qui en lo temps de tempesta,
 quan les més gents festegen prop los focs,
 e pusc haver ab ells los propis jocs,
 vaig sobre neu, descalç, ab nua testa,
 servint senyor qui jamés fon vassall
 ne·l venc esment de fer mai homenatge;
 16 en tot lleig fet hagué lo cor salvatge;
 solament diu que bon guardó no·m fall.

Tornada

20 Plena de seny, lleigs desigs de mi tall.
 Herbes no·s fan males en mon ribatge:
 sia entés com dins en mon coratge
 los pensaments no·m devallen avall.

LXVIII

4 It's JUST THE opposite with me as with
 that little page who thinks that he dislikes
 his master's ways, quite blinded to his worth,
 expecting he should keep him snug and warm
 in frost, and cool throughout the summer months,
 and seeks another, pampering, master,
 but promptly learns the error he has made:
 8 as good as he once had he'll never find.

12 Such am I: while others give themselves to fun
 and I too could make merry round their hearths,
 barefoot I labour through the driven snow,
 my head uncovered to the raging storm,
 serving a master who is no man's liege
 and to no lord would ever homage pay;
 his ruthless heart would scorn no ugly deed;
 16 his only words: that there'll be good reward.

Envoi

20 Beauteous Wisdom, ugly desires all
 in me I cut and slash; my field is free
 of every noxious weed. By this I mean
 my heart will hold no thoughts that drag me down.

LXXXI

AIXÍ COM CELL qui s'veu prop de la mort,
 corrent mal temps, perillant en la mar,
 e veu lo lloc on se pot restaurar,
 e no hi ateny per sa malvada sort,
 ne pren a me qui vaig afanys passant
 e veig a vós bastant mos mals delir.
 Desesperat de mos desigs complir,
 iré pel món vostre ergull recitant.

4

8

LXXXI

LIKE ONE IN peril on the storm-tossed sea
 who knows that death awaits him close at hand,
 and meanwhile sees the safety of the shore
 –in vain, for adverse fate soon sends him down–
 so must I suffer all the pain of love
 which you could cure, yet watch you from afar.
 Bereft of hope, desires all unfulfilled,
 the world I'll wander, singing of your pride.

4

8

LXXXIII

Sí CO·LMALALT qui llong temps ha que jau
 e vol un jorn esforçar-se llevar,
 e sa virtut no li pot molt aidar,
 4 ans, llevat dret, sobtament plegat cau:
 ne pren a mi que m'esforç contra amor
 e vull seguir tot ço que mon seny vol.
 8 Complir no ho pusc perquè la força·m tol
 un mal extrem atraçat per amor.

LXXXIII

LIKE THE INVALID long to bed confined
 who one day tries to struggle to his feet,
 but finds he simply does not have the strength,
 and at the first step crumples to the ground, 4
 so with me, as I struggle against love
 and strive to act as reason has ordained,
 my strength will always fail me while love plies
 its special pain, invented just for me. 8