

## Touria Nakkouch: A Moroccan Vociferous Poetess Spelling Out her Gendered Voice Anew

By Ibrahim A. El-Hussari\*

*Few are those Arab poetesses whose voices have made an outreach beyond their locale. Touria Nakkouch, an outspoken Moroccan poetess<sup>1</sup> from the city of Agadir, and a university professor of comparative literature, is one of them. In her maiden collection of poems entitled *The Dance of the Moon*, published in Casablanca in 2009, professor Nakkouch braves the traditional, worn-out Establishment of Morocco and the Arab World by initiating a disquieting feminist monologue in search of a constructive dialogue with the other gender in a world punctuated by masculine hegemony. She redefines her own gender and feminist identity in a reluctant discourse embedded in an internal monologue which seems to transmit various messages addressed to the powerful other. This paper looks at the discursive features of one of her poems entitled “Musings Before Birth”, in which she ascribes to herself the voice of a stubborn fetus resisting to be born into a world a female newborn is almost unwelcome as a guest. To this effect, the paper uses a discourse analysis approach, informed by positioning theory, to uncover the multi-layered feminist message implied in the text to create a gender-focused understanding of the audience.*

**Keywords:** *Nakkouch, establishment, discourse, positioning, dialogue, monologue, feminist*

### Preamble

It was during an evening gathering of poetry reading, scheduled by the Agadir Conference<sup>2</sup> for a cultural activity, that I met Touria Nakkouch for the first time. In that gathering, Touria gave me a gift. It was a poetry book signed by her. It was *The Dance of the Moon*.<sup>3</sup> I read her first collection of thirty-seven poems in one sitting. I should admit that the book is both a source of amusement and an urge for contemplation. What matters most in this poetry book is not the variety of themes tackled by poetess Nakkouch, but her authoritative voice reverberating throughout all the poems making that book. While addressing various disrelated topics, each of which can be viewed as an issue in itself, the voice of the poetess remains the

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\*Professor, Lebanese American University, Lebanon.

<sup>1</sup>This paper uses ‘poetess’ (not poet) to make a gendered point carried by female poets with audible voice.

<sup>2</sup>It was the International Conference on Comparative Literature & the ‘Un-Worlding’ of the Human Sciences in the Global Era, organized by Professor Touria Nakkouch, then Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Ibn Zohr university, Agadir, Morocco, 13-15 March, 2012. In those gatherings, most of the participants in the conference, including Touria, would recite from their own poetry collections.

<sup>3</sup>It is Touria Nakkouch’s maiden book of poems, some of which are written in Arabic, others in English & French, published by Najah El-Jadida, Casablanca, Morocco, 2009.

same: steady, confident, challenging, and unfaltering. Hence, the itch for writing this conference paper. My very choice of the poem “Musings Before Birth” for a textual, discursive study, is justified as follows. The poem is so compelling that it has made me, both as reader and scholar, raise an eyebrow concerning the poetess’s unorthodox approach to the term *dialogue*. Dialogue is traditionally defined as a fundamental tool of expression often used to exchange views between two or more persons over disputable issues, and this can be dubbed as dialogue in practice. However, the poem “Musings Before Birth”<sup>4</sup> as envisioned by Touria Nakkouch is a virtual dialogue, or an internal monologue, that is a dialogue made impractical in the absence of another interlocutor. If the central issue of the poem is a feminist complaint against a social fabric tailored by masculine domination and discourse, then who is the poetess addressing to make a point? What message is being sent in that manner to make a difference? Why is the poetess avoiding a face-to-face dialogue with the other gender? Is the poetess’s internal monologue an implicit form of a dialogue with a silent other? All these questions raised for research correspond to the poetess’s voice contemplating resistance to the existing scale of values endorsed by a stagnant socio-political and socio-moral system towering over her Arab Moroccan Community. In this connection, it is the poetess’s voice which, alone, is likely to prompt readers to develop an assumption about the type of person who would spearhead that imaginative confrontation with the regrettably unresponsive other.

Prompted by the above questions, this paper studies the discursive features of the language transmitted through the feminist voice betraying a seemingly irreversible trauma plaguing the male-female relationships in the poetess’s local community and probably beyond.

## Introduction

The interface of language and social reality has constantly revealed itself in literature. Poetry, as one of the four genres of literature, would function as a plane mirror reflecting the private worries of the poet as well as the public concerns of the nation. Poetry would do that in an intimate manner more than any other literary genre. Hence, it is not uncommon to say that the poet is the voice of his own clan, tribe, or community. This has precisely been the situation in Arabia<sup>5</sup> and elsewhere across world cultures (Breathwaite 1984). In her poetry book, *The Dance of the Moon* (2009), Touria Nakkouch plays this representative role of the poet as she voices her feminist concerns against the backdrop of her own macho culture, as implied in her poem “Musings Before Birth” (Appendix). Quite aware of the power relations in her conservative community, her prideful, yet powerless, voice underlying the written text is still desperately seeking a way out – probably waiting

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<sup>4</sup>See Appendix.

<sup>5</sup>The term is not only restricted to the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula, but it also includes the Arabian geographic space between Morocco on the Atlantic Ocean and Sultanate of Oman on the Arabian Sea. In this Muslim-dominated culture, the Arab poet is often viewed as the voice of his tribe, clan, or nation. Examples from the history of Arabic literature abound.

for a powerful and wise voice coming from that Establishment for a dialogue that might open some opportunity for both sides to settle that feminist and socio-cultural gender issue. If the written text in question is telling a story, it is the poet's discourse that counts much in the context of conflicting discourses. Her narrative may illuminate directions by means of which a buried wisdom may emerge if the dialogue between the two conflicting voices allows for a starting point and gradually leads to a common ground. In this connection, Isaacs (1999) argues that real dialogue is the art of thinking together, where there should be no winners or losers – just the opposite of what an ego-centric debate usually yields. In conducting a constructive dialogue, where participants should attempt to find a common ground to reach a mutual understanding, there is no room for the ego to boast or show off, for “ego-centeredness is not individuality at all” (Bohm 1996, p. 18). To recall Paolo Freire:

Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their own decisions, do not organize the people – they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress.  
(Freire 1970, p. 23)

In the same vein, Romney (2005) elaborates on the parameters of a dialogue by adding a prompting factor. That is, she encourages interlocutors to keep raising questions and listening to one another. She calls this mutual act of questioning ‘the spirit of wonder’ which to her is ‘a sine qua non’ of dialogue. To quote her:

It is when we let our guard down and allow our differences and doubts to surface and interact that something authentic and original can begin to emerge, tentatively, in the spaces between us.  
(Romney 2005, p. 9)

Despite the specificity of the context of situation peculiar to each of the above descriptions framing the term dialogue, the four researchers quoted above seem to have agreed on setting similar criteria for an effective engagement in a dialogue. A significant factor they share is the assumption that dialogue, as an art, needs the participation of two or more people who are willing to suspend their certainty and individuality in the presence of each other. However, none of them seems to have crossed the theoretical threshold of their descriptions to explore new and tangible ways for participants to see and do things – that is dialogue in practice. None of them has ever assumed that a dialogue may also take place in the physical absence of one of the participants engaged in the same dialogue. As a matter of fact, today various social media platforms<sup>6</sup> can be used to record virtual dialogues taking place between two or more participants. Equally important, yet provocative enough, is the assumption that a dialogue could take place in the absence of the other participant or participants altogether. It all depends on the context of situation pre-

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<sup>6</sup>Platforms used to extend conversational dialogues are increasing in number today, thanks to the advanced technological communication applications and platforms such as Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok, Instagram, to mention only the most common.

conditioning that peculiar form of dialogue. In this sense, an internal monologue as discourse can be considered one of the various types of dialogue. Puchalska-Wasyl (2016) illustrates the difference between three types of dialogical activity: dialogue, soliloquy, and internal monologue. She argues that internal monologue is a type of dialogue through which polyphonic intrapersonal communication (Bakhtin 1981) is viewed as complex, yet a revealing activity that reflects conflicting discourses and disputes over identity, gender, ethnicity, and other controversial issues.

This paper looks at the significance of the discursive features of the poetess's internal monologue in terms of discourse. The poem "Musings Before Birth" (Appendix), as a written text, extends this possibility of studying the conflicting discourses embedded in the socio-cultural milieu in which poetess Nakkouch addresses her own complaint in form of a dramatic monologue. To that effect, this paper recalls discourse analysis as a research tool used to approach the poem as a polyphonic text raising questions that beg for answers. Although the voice of the poetess in the text is unheard, thanks to the internal monologue carrying it, her feminist position is quite clear. The written text makes her voice loud enough to be considered effective and worth studying as part of an unorthodox form of dialogue basically entrenched in conflicting discourses. Hence the following research question: What is the message borne by the poetess's voice that resists being born as a baby girl (female) in what she views as patriarchal community?

## Literature Review

Text and discourse are two terms which are commonly used in literature, linguistics, and language studies. These two terms are not necessarily interchangeable; however, they inform of each other when the text is said to be socially situated or contextualized. That is, in the process of socially produced utterances, text can add to the dimensions of discourse, for utterance is considered as a unit of discourse (Bakhtin 1981). Bakhtin also argues that all texts have "dialogic overtones, and that each sphere in which language is used develops its own types of these utterances which are social constituents rather than individual psychological expressions" (1984, p. 81). Likewise, Hoey (2001) sees that the written text, as discourse, tends to avoid overt confrontation and looks for consensus building. He claims that discursive studies can be enriched by focusing on textual interaction between writer and reader, speaker and addressee. Furthermore, Fairclough (1993) develops an original framework for discourse analysis which firmly situates discourse in a broader context of social relations bringing together text analysis, the analysis of processes of text production and interpretation, and the social analysis of discourse events. Fairclough seems to have built his view of discourse analysis on the premise that institutionalized power operates in modern societies to effect social change. In "Musings Before Birth", the poem under study in this paper, Foucault's concept of power is recalled to text-analyze what the poet says and does to map forms of knowledge, sites of resistance, and social change. It is through sites of resistance engendered by power relations that "the positioning of social subjects is achieved in discourse"

(Fairclough 1993, p. 4). Positioning theory (Moghaddam et al. 2008) applies to conflicting discourses where participants seek a situated definition and redefinition of the “I” for the construction and reconstruction of social order.

Linguists also argue that a written text, as discourse, can be highly interactive. It can be viewed from a variety of perspectives, one of which is internal monologue. In fact, the dialogic features of the formally monologic written text are of increasing interest in the field of discourse analysis (Bondi 1999). The assumption that “inner monologue” and “inner dialogue” are interchangeable; that is, they are the two sides of the same coin, is practically associated with the task of the writer catering to the needs of the target audience. In “Musings Before Birth”, the poetess is exercising this privilege, for her indirect feminist discourse is also dialogic. It involves the active collaboration of other interactants, for it indirectly addresses a social reality represented by powerful yet silent voices (Kauffman 1970, Mey 2020). It is through language that we communicate our own social perception of reality. However, our perception of reality is never fixed, especially when it comes to gender differences in practice. Hence the emergence of stereotypes as both cross-cultural and culture specific variables. This is roughly the case when people interact with each other and continue to reproduce their gender images as often revealed in literature, art, scholarship, stand-up comedy shows, and television social programs (Talbot 1998). In a study of forms of social oppression conducted on ethnic minorities inhabiting a suburb of New York city, Fiske (2011) has found that stereotypes can be used to subordinate certain social groups. However, social change across various cultures remains a possible endeavor, thanks to the increasing voices and sites of resistance emerging from those cultures. To this effect, Cameron (2003) suggests that if more people question the status quo, opponents cannot keep standing in the way of social change. She contends that power in today’s social relationships can be negotiated, for it is never stable or consistent.

In “Musings Before Birth”, the voice of the poetess, transmitted through an internal monologue, is only a show case of her own uneasy feminine status in a conservative society. Seemingly a powerless speaker, the poetess’s attempt to negotiate her feminine status cannot be viewed as worthless. Decrying her feminine status could be part of a larger feminist movement taking place across other cultures. Discourse, as Foucault (1975) has claimed, does not explain where resistance to power or domination comes from. In practice, however, feminist resistance to oppression starts when people, including women, recognize how a patriarchal society has managed to produce knowledge and has also determined what counts as commonsense knowledge or “truth” (Foucault 1972, Weatherall 2002). In the text under study (see Appendix), the voice of the poetess keeps rising steadily, from beginning to end, to question that “truth” produced by social institutions over time.

To conclude this section, it is not uncommon to consider a situated dialogue as one of the perspectives of discourse in both theory and practice. Most of the literature reviewed above has shown salient discursive features of text when language is used to extend and communicate various dialogical perceptions of social reality. However, none of those research works has directly studied the

significance of internal monologue as another form of dialogue. This paper assumes that in a culture-specific context, as reflected in “Musings Before Birth”, the internal dialogue used by the poetess as a tool to communicate her own apprehension about becoming part of a male-dominated social order cannot be viewed as a call in the wilderness. No matter how implicitly or indirectly addressed, this internal monologue caters to a wider community, including the people guarding the Establishment and its social order. Accordingly, this paper focuses on the significance of the poetess’s internal monologue communicating a real female grievance that needs to be redressed, despite power relations that may delay or slow down the process of social change.

### **The Poem as a Dialogic Text**

“Musings Before Birth” is a conventional, narrative poem consisting of eleven sections that carry the bold and consistent message of poetess Touria Nakkouch. However, that message, which holds a feminist issue, is channeled in an unconventional manner to reach the end-users. Although the lines comprising these sections vary in length and number, the linguistic valency of the female issue communicated through the voice of the poetess is never reduced in effect. The poem follows a narrative pattern without sacrificing rhyme and syllabic stress; however, as a piece of art telling a tale, the poem uses economic language to show rather than tell. The only voice filling the space of this narrative poem is that of the indignant, yet audacious, poetess recollecting the tiny moments of her mother in travail; voicing her own resistance as a fetus about to leave her mother’s womb and come out into this world; describing her plight as a growing-up female; and conjuring up her own way into freedom as a mature woman. It is the poetess, as the storyteller of her own tale that fantasizes the three stages of her life as dramatically anticipated in the modern yet patriarchal Moroccan society.

The poem opens with a short scene showing an obstetrician/midwife breaking the news that the poetess’s mother is expecting a fine, baby girl “in a month or so”. In reaction to that news, the poetess, as a fetus, feels stifled as her mother’s uterine muscles begin to contract more intensely due to “the first shock” she received. So far, there is no clash with the outside world – only a sheepish reaction to that news on the part of the mother as felt by the poetess recollecting that moment.

The next scene shows the poetess taking the part of a would-be child questioning herself if the world to be born in would be ready to accept her as a female. Still, there is no clash with the outside world; however, there is a mounting doubt or fear on the part of the poetess-as-narrator that she might not be welcome as a newcomer into her own community.

Being born a female in a male abode?  
My first thought! The unsure present I am to be born in  
And the happy past where my mother and I have been.

The scene that follows echoes the same concern of the poetess as a fetus about to be delivered into an unfriendly world. However, this time her feeling uneasy

about her future turns out to be an intense vocal protest, not only on her own behalf but also on behalf of her race. The following lines, betraying a clash with the outside world, express the poetess's angry attitude towards her community in a blunt manner (see Harlow 1987). The voice of the storyteller is looking for a response, a reaction, so that a dialogic argument would take place.

Clear the way for me; I shall oceans and deserts ride;  
Carry my virtues and sins and those of my race, beside!

I know that world I am supposed to be born in,  
I heard it in my mother's -- and sister's -- sobbing.

The last lines of this poem close the last scene of the story. They steadily build up the poetess's potential resistance to the status quo and culminate in her brave decision to break away with that stagnant social order, construct a new genderless identity, or vanish once and for all.

I would rather make the rest of the journey across  
As simply me, unique, indivisible, genderless;  
I would rather be given means and the right  
To choose what cause to guard, what war to fight.

*O God, let me out free or else  
Freeze me into one of those Sleepers  
Who stay on in their liquid innocence,  
Until they die or till man's madness ends. [italics mine]*

In brief, "Musings Before Birth", as a text holding a feminist message, cannot be simply categorized as just an internal monologue. It is rather a complex text through which the poetess, Touria Nakkouch, addresses a long-standing gender issue in a male-dominated Arab Moroccan community. Telling the tale of an unborn baby girl in that unconventional manner rests on two assumptions when it comes to the end-users receiving the poetess's message. Firstly, it is an inward message where the speaker is recollecting her own plight as a female barely welcome into her own social milieu. Secondly, it is an outward message where the speaker is raising a gender issue which needs redressing through a possible social change. The clash between sexes, as gradually nursed through the poetess's voice of resistance, sounds virtual. In fact, the text mentions no "powerful" man as addressee or opponent; it only hints to man as an oppressor. However, the rigorous presence of masculinity as an implied authoritarian power guarding that social order runs throughout the poem. In a word, "Musings Before Birth" is a dialogic text par excellence.



## Discussion

A salient, discursive feature of “Musings Before Birth” is the feminist issue of producing the self in the context of incompatible social power relations. In a speech-act theory, spoken statements can do things and create new situations (see Austin 1975). In the text under study, the speaker does this action through self-narration. She, as the storyteller of part of her own autobiography, plays three roles simultaneously: animator, author, and main character. Such multiple vantage points show someone whose position is established when words are spoken, beliefs are told, and commitment to what is said is met (see also Goffman 1981). Hence, the reference to discourse positioning as a process in which interactants locate themselves in relation to others by producing a narrative. Positioning is, hence, a discourse process through which people negotiate their own and others’ identities in interaction by portraying themselves as characters in the narratives they produce (see Batroy 2010, Jauss 1985). There are two types of positioning: reflexive and interactive. In reflexive positioning, the interactants position themselves as having a distinct voice, their own voice. In interactive positioning, the interactants position themselves and others, thus creating ample room for negotiating identities. In this connection, this paper uses interactive positioning as a tool to study the implied meanings of discourse and interaction in “Musings Before Birth” as text.

Interactive positioning (Harré and van Langenhove 1999) is the discursive construction of personal narratives. It adds meaning to the action or issues raised by the individual telling his/her own stories in a way that intelligently caters to speaker and hearer in a specific situated context. With interactive positioning, the focus is on the way in which conflictive discursive practices allow the interactants involved to negotiate new positions within the social order to which they belong. In “Musings Before Birth,” as a narrative poem, there is no candid clash between speaker and hearer as interactants, because the narrative space described in the text is virtual, and because the conflict does not pit them against each other directly. It is the speaker who takes a position and gradually sees the world from that position. However, in telling a fragment of one’s life-story, “a speaker assigns parts in the episode, both to oneself and to other people described (see Davies and Harré 1990). In the text in question, the narrator, who speaks like a victim, is consistently addressing an unidentified public hearer, to make a point. She uses her own feminine discourse as a way of being in the world, and through which she transforms words into practice (see Ferlinghetti 2007). In the last scene of the narrative, the speaker files a grievance, on behalf of herself and her race, against a social order denying the feminine gender access to personal and social identity.

Let man not decide of our becoming. (Appendix 41)

Harré and van Langenhove (1999) elaborate on “the dichotomy of the perceived permanency of personal identity and the changeability of social identity as it is constantly in flux by constricted in situ” (p. 61). In line with her demand to prove her feminine identity, the poetess, as character-narrator, gradually heightens the tone of her voice as the sequential scenes of the narrative frame her feminist



position. The discursive features of the language used by the speaker embolden her resistance to the male-dominated social order which has for long marginalized her as a woman and neutralized her voice and role. That's why the speaker seems to have restored her own voice when her defensive attitude at the beginning of the poem turns out to be offensive as the narrative is gradually closing.

I would rather make the rest of the journey across  
As simply me, unique, indivisible, genderless

Nevertheless, the speaker's new position, adjusted by her sharp tone of voice and attitude, may not be seen as involving a shift in power or access to claimed or desired identity. This statement is endorsed by Isolda Carranza as follows: "To center our attention on the content of the participants' narrative is to limit analysis to the ideational function of language, which does not lead us to a fruitful exploration of identity" (Carranza 2009, p. 154). In other words, in the unintentional absence of a public hearer, the assumed dialogue sounds rather monologic and univocal, for it is hard to believe if the implied other or hearer is made ready to conform to the speaker's definition of herself as a feminist. One way of grasping the concept of positioning is to assume that someone is listening to or reading the narrative voiced by someone else on the receiving end. However, this does not mean that positioning oneself in a dialogue, whether real or virtual, is eventually a fiasco in practice. The possibility to agree or disagree with an assigned positioning is equally as present as the possibility of resisting it. In fact, when power relations are challenged by the unprivileged, it is the subject position made available within the discourse of the less powerful that counts. Positioning herself as a "powerless" female denied access to rights and duties not equally or fairly observed by her own society, and raising questions to that effect, the poetess-as-speaker makes a moral choice stemming from her strong discourse in producing self to reconstruct or reinvent her own identity. The repetition of the situated first-person pronoun as a stance marker in the wider context of contradictory gender discourses, along with relevant discursive practices thereof, is likely to lead to negotiating the need for social change and eventually the production of personal and social identity. Viewed as a potential force for changing social reality, her voice, corresponding to her new position, is likely to usher in a process by means of which certain trains of consequences are set in motion.

I would rather be given means and the right  
To choose what cause to guard, what war to fight.

The role that language plays in the construction of social reality owes, in large part, to the discursive practices of the interactants involved in a dialogue. As an approach to episodic language informing of social and cultural significance, discursive practice elucidates the consequences of grounding language use in a view of social realities as discursively constructed, of meanings as negotiated through interaction, of the context-bound nature of discourse, and of discourse as social action. In "Musings Before Birth", discursive practice sounds functional, for

poetess Nakkouch uses it smartly to construct her own feminist narrative which is totally addressed to herself and her male-sharers in that social order. The poetess's internal monologue, whispered aloud to send a message, is also one form of dialogue in practice. In linguistics, discourse is not something located in one's mind, nor is it something which has a personal form. It is a collective and dynamic process through which meanings are shaped, constructed, acquired, and transformed. Accordingly, the language used in the text in question has not probably constructed the basis for social action, and this assumption is likely to invite further academic negotiation.

### Concluding Remarks

This paper has used discourse analysis, informed by interactive positioning, as a research method of analysis to study the discursive features of Touria Nakkouch's narrative poem, "Musings Before Birth." This academic method fostering the dramatic function of the internal monologue, which the speaker espouses to voice herself, is also dialogic in effect. It allows the poetess-as-speaker to address the hegemonic masculinity represented in the text by the virtual recipient of the message sent, requesting a practical response. Hence the significance of the discursive feminist issues in gender relationships, most important of which is the female personal and socio-cultural identity. This paper has also shown that identity, dramatized in the text as a problematic issue, is situated in a real socio-cultural milieu portrayed as livid with tacit anger. This specific Moroccan milieu is what makes the text interesting for academic research on gendered issues. The speaker's consistent feminist attitude owes much to the internal monologue viewed by discourse analysts as a contextualized utterance or discourse, be it monologic or dialogic. In brief, the poetic monologue in Touria Nakkouch's 'Musing Before Birth' is both strategic and smart insofar as it affords her a capacious intellectual and emotional space to explore her own 'gendered' voice without being overtly adversarial.

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## **Appendix**

### *The Poem as Text*

The poem under study is taken from Touria Nakkouch, *The Dance of the Moon*, Casablanca, Morocco: Najah El Jadida, 2009, pp. 43–44).

#### **Musings Before Birth**

“In a month or so”, said the soft fingers  
As they dealt bold, hygienic tapings  
To the roof of my dark dwelling  
“A fine baby girl you will deliver!”

A first shock! Water stiffened around me  
And the reeling filament almost stilled me.

Is it merry excitement I now exhort,  
Sharing already my sister’s playground?  
Or is it something else – an itching of sorts –  
Being born a female in a male abode?

My first thought! The unsure present I am to be born in  
And the happy past where my mother and I have been.

How I had kicked and kicked,  
Gliding that harness binding me to her,  
How I had danced to her uneven notes,  
Impatient to discover the world out there!

How I had dared the taut walls of my concavity  
Until, from joy or pain, I heard her shout;  
How I had dared the world I was to be born into  
In friendly fingers that kept daring me out!

I had felt my power surge in loud protest  
Deadened only by the aquatic end of my site.  
Clear the way for me; I shall oceans and deserts ride;  
Carry my virtues and sins and those of my race, beside!

But now that the erudite claim has been made  
I am no longer sure: to step out or stay behind?  
I know that world I am supposed to be born in,  
I heard it in my mother’s – and sister’s – sobbing.

I heard it in the sneers of those who will, I am sure,  
For greed or concepts, hurt me with tact and tenure.

I sensed it in conflicts resolved at persons' expense;  
In wars waged in my name or out of sheer nonsense.  
I would rather make the rest of the journey across  
As simply me, unique, indivisible, genderless;  
I would rather be given means and the right  
To choose what cause to guard; what war to fight.

O God, I am not yet born and  
It will take the world and time to be;  
I'll need oceans of love and humility  
To lift the architecture of my sinking world.  
Let man not decide of our becoming.

O God, let me out free or else  
Freeze me into one of those Sleepers  
Who stay on in their liquid innocence  
Until they die or till man's madness ends.

