I do not study in order to write, and even less to teach—which, in me, would be colossal arrogance—but rather only to see if by studying I can be less ignorant. This is my answer and this is what I feel.

God graced me with a gift of an immense love for the truth)—is that since the first light of reason dawned on me my inclination toward letters was so intense and powerful that neither reprimands by others, of which I have had many, nor self-reflection, of which I have done not a little, have been sufficient for me to stop pursuing this natural impulse that God put in me. God Almighty knows why and for what purpose. And he knows I’ve asked him to snuff out the light of my mind and leave only what’s necessary to keep his commandments. Some would say that any more is too much in a woman, and some even say that it is harmful. The Almighty also knows that, since my request failed, I have tried to bury my intellect along with my name and to sacrifice all this only to the one who gave it to me. For no other reason I entered a religious order even though its duties and fellowship were anathema to the unhindered quietude required by my studious intent.

Later on, when I was six or seven years old, and already knowing how to read and write along with all the other skills that women learn such as embroidery and sewing, I heard that in Mexico City there was a University and there were Schools where people studied the sciences. As soon as I heard this I began to kill my mother by constantly and naggingly begging her to dress me in boy's clothes and to send me to live with some relatives of hers in Mexico City so that I could study by enrolling in the University. She refused, and she was quite right, but I assuaged my desire by reading many kinds of books belonging to my grandfather, notwithstanding the punishment and scolding intended to stop me. So, when I came to Mexico people were amazed, not so much by my intelligence as by my memory and the facts that I had acquired at an age that seemed hardly enough just to be able to learn to speak.

I entered a religious order because, although I was aware that that lifestyle had certain things (I'm talking about incidental not official ones), or rather, many things that were abhorrent to my character—given my total rejection of marriage—it was the least objectionable and the most respectable one I could choose with regard to my desire to safeguard my salvation. In the face of this primary concern (surely it is the most important one) all the stubborn little impertinences of my nature gave way and bowed: that is, wanting to live alone; wanting not to have any obligatory duties that would hinder my freedom to study; being free from community noises that would interrupt the peace and quiet of my books.

I proceeded in this way, as I've said, always directing the path of my studies toward the summit of holy Theology. In order to reach it, it seemed to me necessary to ascend the ladder of the sciences and the humanities, for how can one who does not first know the ancillary fields possibly understand the queen of the sciences? Without logic, how could I possibly know the general and specific methods by which the Holy Scriptures are written? Without rhetoric, how could I possibly understand its figures, tropes, and phrasing? Without the natural sciences, what about so many questions pertaining to the multiple natures the animals used in biblical sacrifices, in which so many symbols have already been explained, with many more unexplained? If Saul was cured by the sound of David's harp, was it by virtue of the natural power of music, or the supernatural power God chose to infuse in David?

This habit or bent of mine is of such a nature that I never look at anything with giving it a second thought. Two little girls were in front of me playing with a top, and, given this proclivity of mine,
no sooner had I seen its movement and shape than I began studying its easy spinning and spherical shape, and I saw how long the impulse of its momentum lasted independent of its cause, for, separated from the girl's hand, which was its motive cause, the little top went on dancing. Not content with this, I ordered someone to bring me some flour and to spread it around it so that, when the top was dancing in it, it could be discerned whether or not the circles it was making with it movement were perfect or not. I found that they were but spiral lines that gradually lost circularity as the momentum decreased.

I have not lacked for support in the many examples I have read in both sacred as well as secular writings. For I see a Deborah issuing laws in military matters as well as political affairs while governing a people among whom there were so many learned men. I see the extremely wise Queen of Sheba, so learned that she dares test the wisdom of the greatest of all sages by posing riddles without being chastised for doing to; rather, because she did this she will become the judge of unbelievers. I see so many significant women: some adorned with the gift of prophecy, like Abigail; others with persuasion, like Esther; others, with piety, like Rahab; others with perseverance, like Hannah, Samuel's mother; and infinitely more with other types of talents and virtues.

And this is so just that interpreting Holy Texts was forbidden not only to women (who are held to be so inept) but also to men (who simply for being men think they are sages). This holds for all save those who are most learned and virtuous and of meek temperament and well intentioned.

It follows that many parents choose to keep their daughters uncouth and uneducated rather than expose them to such a notoriously perilous familiarity with men. But all this would be avoided if there were educated elderly women, as St. Paul desires, and if the teaching profession were passed from one generation of women to the next just as what happens with sewing and all other customary skills.

was that piece anything more than simply relating my views with all of the sanctions for which I am grateful to our Holy Mother Church? For if she, with her most holy authority, does not forbid me so, why must others so forbid me? Was it too bold of me to express an opinion in opposition to Vieyra, while it wasn't so for his Reverend Father to express an opinion in opposition to the Church's three Holy Fathers? My understanding, such as it is, isn't it as free as his, since it comes from the same backyard? Is his opinion any one of the revealed principles of our Holy Faith such that we must believe it with our eyes shut? Besides, I neither showed any lack of respect due such an eminent man, like that which his defender has shown in this case.

Therefore, if the evil lies in verses being used by a woman, we have already seen how many women have used them commendably. Then, what is the problem with me being one? Of course, I confess my baseness and my base, vile nature; but I maintain that no one has ever seen an indecent poem of mine. Moreover, I have never written anything of my own volition, but rather at the request or directive of others. As a result the only thing I recall writing for my own pleasure is a little piece called the Dream.