

I CAME INTO THE UNKNOWN:
John of the Cross

I came into the unknown
and stayed there unknowing,
rising beyond all knowledge*

I did not know the door
but when I found the way,
unknowing where I was,
I learned enormous things,
but what I felt I cannot say,
for I remained unknowing,
rising beyond all knowledge.

It was the perfect realm
of holiness and peace.
In deepest solitude
I found the narrow way:
a secret giving such release
that I was stunned and stammering,
rising beyond all knowledge.

I was so far inside,
so dazed and far away
my senses were released
from feelings of my own.
My mind had found a surer way:
a knowledge by unknowing,
rising beyond all knowledge.

And he who does arrive
collapses as in sleep,
for all he knew before
now seems a lowly thing,
and so his knowledge grows so deep
that he remains unknowing,
rising beyond all knowledge.

*In the original English translation of the poem, the word “science” is used, which means—in Spanish and English—*systematized knowledge*. I have replaced it with “knowledge.”