



The Bilingual Review

VOL. XXXV • No 3 • December 2023

La Revista Bilingüe

OPEN-ACCESS, PEER-REVIEWED / ACCESO ABIERTO, JURADO PROFESIONAL

Leaving the World

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Let her go, Juana. Shake those clumps of golden hair
from between your fingers. Get the broom, and sweep
them up. Then ask the young woman weeping on the
floor near the door her forgiveness. Look at her: your
lady-in-waiting, patches of pale scalp exposed like
broken lands on a map. How can I leave you Castile?

cover	my fist
my feet the storm	batters the wall
moans 'round	where
the walls and turrets	sullenly sleep
wax drips from	the Indians
the torches, flames	how faithless
quiver as do I	the unshackled
it sweeps away those	who bleat
like sheep	in the current
down the Duero	out to sea

Let me go. I—like the ground beneath
Carmona, like Juana's lady-in-waiting, like
the word from worlds away. This is done
for the people and See, this *audiencia* on both
knees, this leaving, the world in Your hands.

—Isabella I;¹ near noon on 26 November 1504; in the castle of La Mota in Valladolid,
Spain

¹ During the joint rule of **Isabella I** (1451-1504) and Ferdinand V over Castile and Aragón, the two main Spanish kingdoms, from 1474 until her death, they retook Spain from the Moors, instituted the Inquisition, expelled all Jews from Spain, and sponsored Columbus's four voyages to the New World. Called *la Católica* ("the Catholic"), Isabella was also sympathetic to the plight of the Indians of the New World, fostered a love of study, was a collector of books, and most concerned not only with the future of Castile but also, when on her deathbed, the salvation of her own soul. Isabella's daughter Juana, known as "the Mad" because of her mental imbalance, was to inherit the Castilian crown upon her mother's death. When Isabella was on her deathbed in 1504, an earthquake hit the city of Carmona in the spring and a hurricane was ravaging southern Spain.