



"Traveling through Tuscany" | "Passando por la Toscana"

Text Information

Author | Carvajal

Language | Spanish

Period | 15th Century

Genre | Serranilla

Source | Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, VITR/17/7, fol. 136v-137r.

Collection | Love Songs of the Medieval World: Lyrics from Europe and Asia

URL | https://sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/carvajal_traveling_tuscany/

Transcription and translation by Paulina Ochoa Figueroa. Introduction by Albert Lloret.

Introduction to the Text

This poem is a *serranilla*, an evolution of the Provençal *pastorela*. Written in short verse (*arte menor*), *serranillas* narrate a courtly poet's encounter with a mountain woman. This is one of six compositions in the genre by fifteenth-century author Carvajal (or Carvajales). Very little is known about Carvajal's life. His poetry is linked to the Neapolitan court of Alfonso the Magnanimous in Naples (r. 1442-1458) and to that of Alfonso's son Ferrante (r. 1459-1494). In addition to his famous *serranillas*, Carvajal is also known for his literary epistles and ballads.

In this poem, the poet subverts some of the genre's conventions by meeting not a rustic woman but a beautiful and courteous noble lady in a context in which he would have normally met a *serrana*. The two of them strike up a conversation as they walk together. The end of the composition reveals that the encounter was a dream vision.

Introduction to the Source

The poem is copied in Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, VITR/17/7, fol. 136v-137r. This manuscript is a copy of the poetry collection known as the *Cancionero de Estúñiga*, ca. 1465. It has been digitized: <http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000051837>. It contains a compilation of mostly Castilian poems, including ballads, as well as a few Italian compositions. Their authors accompanied the King of Aragon, Alfonso the Magnanimous, in Naples in the mid-fifteenth century.

About this Edition

The text has been punctuated. Word separation and capitalization follow modern usage. Elisions have been marked with an apostrophe.

Further Reading

Carvajal. *Poesie*. Edited by Emma Scoles. Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1967.

- *Critical edition of Carvajal's poetry.*

Gerli, E. Michael. "Chapter 6. The Libro in the Cancioneros." *Reading, Performing, and Imagining the 'Libro del Arcipreste'*. University of North Carolina Press, 2016, esp. pp. 194-203.

- *Reassessment of Carvajal's serranillas in view of their intertextual relationship with the Libro de buen amor.*

Marino, Nancy F. *La serranilla española: notas para su historia e interpretación*. Scripta Humanistica, 1987.

- *Study of the serranilla genre, with attention to Carvajal's poems in chapter 5.*



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Passando por la Toscana,
entre Sena et Florencia,
vi dama gentil galana
digna de grand reuerencia.

Traveling through Tuscany,
between Siena and Florence,
I saw an elegant gentle lady
Worthy of great reverence.

Cara tenia de romana,
tocadura purtoguesa,
el ayre de castellana,
vestida como senesa
discretamente, non uana;
yo le fise reuerencia
y ella, con mucha prudencia,
bien mostro ser cortesana.

5 She had the face of a Roman,
A Portuguese headdress,
And air of a Castilian,
Was dressed like a Sienese,
Discreetly, not vain;
10 I bowed to her
And she, very cautiously,
Did prove to be courteous.

Assy entramos por Sena,
fablando de compannia,
con plaser auiendo pena
del pesar que me plasia.
Sy se dilatara el dia
o la noche nos tomara,
tan grand fuego se encendia
que toda la tierra quemara.

That is how we entered Siena
Conversing in company
15 With pleasure and sorrow
For a grief that pleased me.
If the day had been extended
Or the night had arrived,
Such great fire would have been ignited
20 That it would have burned the earth out.

Vestia de blanchio domasquino,
camurra al touillo cortada,
ençima de un uelud fino
un luto la falda rastrada;
ponposa et agraciada,
una inuencion traya
por letras que non entendia,
de perlas la manga bordada.

Dressed in white damask,
Gamurra cut at the ankle
Over a fine velvet,
A mourning skirt down to the floor;
25 Pompous and graceful,
A verse she carried with her
With letters she did not understand,
On the sleeves embroidered with pearls.

Item mas, traya un ioyel
de richas piedras pesantes,
un balax y entorno d'el
çafis, rubis et dyamantes

In addition, she wore a little jewel
30 Of rich heavy stones,
A purple spinel and, around it,
Sapphires, rubies, and diamonds



firmando sobre la fuente
con muy grande resplandor,
pero dauale el fauor
Su gesto lyndo, plasiante.

En su fabla, uestir et ser
non mostraua ser de mandra.
Queriendo su nonbre saber,
respondiome que Casandra.
Yo con tal nonbre oyr
muy alegre desperte
e tan solo me falle
que por Dios pense morir.

Fixed on her forehead
With such a great glow;
35 But what favored her the most
Was her pleasant, beautiful countenance.

In her speech, dress, and demeanor
She did not appear to be rustic,
Wanting to know her name
40 She told me it was Casandra.
At just hearing such a name,
I woke up much delighted.
And I found myself so lonely
That by god I thought I would die.

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