



DELPHI
CLASSICS

Garcilaso de la Vega
Complete Works

DELPHI POETS SERIES

D E L P H I P O E T S S E R I E S

Garcilaso de la Vega

(c. 1500-1536)



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The Delphi Classics Catalogue

Garcilasso de la Vega

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Version 1

DELPHI POETS SERIES

Garcilaso de la Vega



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NOTE



When reading poetry on an eReader, it is advisable to use a small font size and landscape mode, which will allow the lines of poetry to display correctly.

The Life and Poetry of Garcilaso de la Vega



Toledo, central Spain — Garcilaso's birthplace



Toledo as depicted in the 'Civitates orbis terrarum', 1572

Brief Introduction: Garcilaso de la Vega



The soldier Garcilaso de la Vega was the most influential poet to introduce Italian Renaissance verse forms, poetic techniques and themes to Spain. Born in Toledo in c. 1500, he was the son of father Garcilaso de la Vega, a nobleman and ambassador in the royal court of the Catholic Monarchs. As Garcilaso was the second son, he did not receive an entitlement to his father's estate. Still, he spent his younger years receiving an extensive education, mastering five languages (Spanish, Greek, Latin, Italian and French) and learning how to play the zither, lute and harp. When his father died in 1509, Garcilaso received a sizeable inheritance. After his schooling, he joined the military in hopes of attaining a position on the royal guard. In time, he served on the imperial guard of Charles V and he was made a member of the Order of Santiago in 1523.

His first lover was Guiomar Carrillo, with whom he had a child. He reportedly had another lover named Isabel Freire, who was a lady-in-waiting of Isabel of Portugal, but this is today regarded as spurious. In 1525 Garcilaso married Elena de Zúñiga, who served as a lady-in-waiting for the King's favorite sister, Leonor. Their marriage took place in the poet's hometown of Toledo in one of the family's estates. Garcilaso went on to have six children: Lorenzo, an illegitimate child with Guiomar Carrillo, Garcilaso, Íñigo de Zúñiga, Pedro de Guzmán, Sancha and Francisco.

Garcilaso's military career meant that he took part in the numerous battles and campaigns conducted by Charles V across Europe. His duties took him to Italy, Germany, Tunisia and France. In 1532 for a short period he was exiled to a Danube island where he was the guest of the Count György Cseszney, royal court judge of Győr. In France he would fight his last battle. The King wished to take control of Marseille and eventually the whole of the Mediterranean, but this goal was never realised. Garcilaso died on 14 October 1536 in Nice, after suffering 25 days from an injury sustained in a battle at Le Muy. His body was first buried in the Church of St. Dominic in Nice, but two years later his wife had his body moved to the Church of San Pedro Martir in Toledo.

After writing poetry in conventional Spanish metres for a short period, Garcilaso became acquainted with the poet Juan Boscán Almogáver, who introduced him to Italianate metres of Petrarch, Giovanni Boccaccio, and Jacopo Sannazzaro. Garcilaso was a consummate craftsman and he transformed the Italian metres into Spanish verse of high lyric quality. His most important innovations in this regard were the verse stanzas of the *silva* and *lira*, both using combinations of 7 and 11 syllable lines, while making use of an analytical expression of thought and emotion. His major theme is the melancholy laments and misfortunes of romantic love, as traditionally conveyed in pastoral poetry. He repeatedly rewrote and polished his poetry, elevating his work above the more rudimentary and comic verses of his contemporaries.

His extant works reveal that he passed through three distinct episodes in his life. During his Spanish period, he wrote the majority of his eight-syllable poems; during his Italian or Petrarchan period, he wrote mostly sonnets and songs; and during his Neapolitan or classicist period, he composed more classical poems, including elegies, letters, eclogues and odes. Garcilaso adapted the eleven-syllable line to the Spanish language in his sonnets, mostly written in the 1520's, during his Petrarchan period.

Increasing the number of syllables in the verse from eight to eleven enabled him to compose verses with greater flexibility.

Key characteristics of his poetry include allusions to classical myths and Greco-Latin figures, great musicality, alliteration, rhythm and an absence of religion. His works influenced the majority of subsequent Spanish poets, as well as major authors of his own period, including Jorge de Montemor, Luis de León, John of the Cross, Miguel de Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Luis de Góngora and Francisco Quevedo. Spanish poetry was never the same after Garcilaso de la Vega. His small body of works were quickly accepted as classics and they largely determined the course of lyric poetry throughout Spain's Golden Age.



Portrait of Charles V by Titian, 1548. Charles V was Holy Roman Emperor and Archduke of Austria from 1519 to 1556, King of Spain from 1516 to 1556, and Lord of the Netherlands as titular Duke of Burgundy from 1506 to 1555.



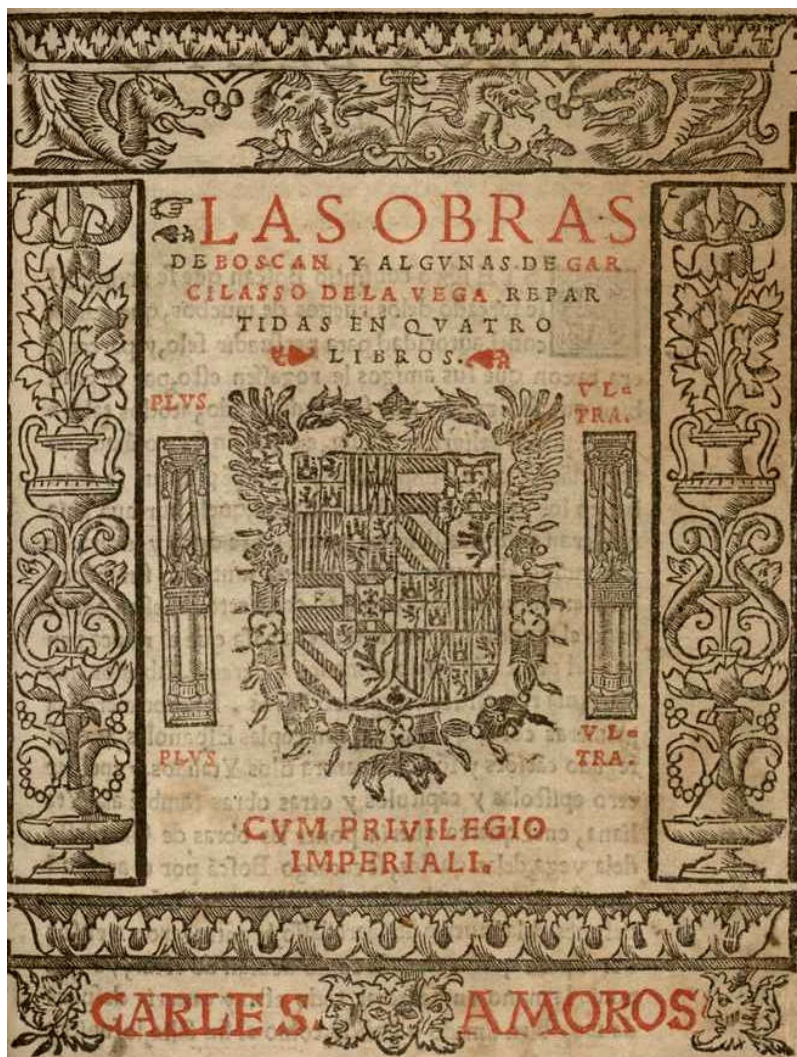
Portrait of Garcilaso, New Gallery, Kassel, 1550



*Fifteenth century painting of Ausiàs March by Jacomart in the Church of Santa Maria in Xàtiva.
March (1400-1459) was a medieval Valencian poet and knight from Gandia, Valencia. He is
considered one of the most important poets of the “Golden Century” of Catalan/Valencian literature.
His work was of great influence to Garcilaso.*



Monument to Garcilaso in Toledo



Cover of 'The Works of Boscán and Garcilaso de la Vega' in four books, 1543

**The Works of Garcilasso de la Vega, Surnamed the Prince of
Castilian Poets**



Translated by J. H. Wiffen, 1823

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WORKS
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GARCILASSO DE LA VEGA,
SURNAMED
THE PRINCE OF CASTILIAN POETS,
Translated into English Verse;
WITH
A CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL ESSAY ON SPANISH POETRY,
AND
A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

By J. H. WIFFEN.

“Sometimes he turned to gaze upon his book, Boscán or Garcilasso; by the wind Even as the page is rustled whilst we look, So by the poesy of his own mind Over the mystic leaf his soul was shook.”

LORD BYRON.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR HURST, ROBINSON, AND CO.

90, CHEAPSIDE, AND 8, PALL MALL.

1823.

TO
JOHN, DUKE OF BEDFORD,
IN PUBLIC LIFE
THE STEADY FRIEND AND ASSERTOR OF OUR LIBERTIES;
IN PRIVATE LIFE
ALL THAT IS GENEROUS, DIGNIFIED, AND GOOD;
This Translation,
IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE LITERARY EASE
THAT HAS LED TO ITS PRODUCTION,
IS, WITH DEEP RESPECT AND ADMIRATION,
Inscribed
BY THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.



TILL WITHIN THE last few years but little attention appears to have been paid in England to Castilian verse. Our earliest poets of eminence, Chaucer and Lord Surrey, struck at once into the rich field of Italian song, and by their imitations of Petrarch and Boccaccio, most probably set the fashion to their successors, of the exclusive study which they gave to the same models, to the neglect of the cotemporary writers of other nations, to those at least of Spain. Nor is this partiality to the one and neglect of the other to be at all wondered at; for neither could they have gone to more suitable sources than the Tuscans for the harmony and grace which the language in its first aspirations after refinement wanted, nor did the Spanish poetry of that period offer more to recompense the researches of the student than dry legends, historical ballads, or rude imitations of the Vision of Dante. But it is a little singular that this inattention should have continued when the influence of the Emperor Charles the Fifth became great in the courts of Europe, and the Spanish language, chastised into purity and elegance by Boscán, Garcilasso, and their immediate successors, obtained a currency amongst the nations correspondent with the extent of his conquests. The hostile attitude in which England stood to Spain under Elizabeth, may be regarded as perhaps the principal cause why we meet in the constellation of writers that gave lustre to her reign, with so few traces of their acquaintance with the literature of that country; whilst the strong jealousy of the nation to Spanish influence, catholicism, and jesuitical intrigue, no less than the purely controversial spirit of the times, had, I doubt not, their full effect under the Stuarts, in deterring the scholars of that period from any close communion with her poets. Meanwhile the corruption of style which had so baneful an effect on her literature, was silently going forward under Gongora, Quevedo, and their numerous imitators. Before the reign of Philip the Fifth, this corruption had reached its height; his accession to the crown of Spain, and the encouragement he gave to letters, might have re-established the national literature in its first lustre, if the evil had not struck root so deeply, and if another cast of corrupters had not opposed themselves to the views of this monarch, viz. the numerous translators of French works, who disfigured the idiom by forming a French construction with native words. Thus the curiosity of the poets of Queen Anne's time, if it was ever excited, must have been speedily laid asleep; and (though we may notice in Dryden, and perhaps in Donne, a study of Castilian,) it was scarcely before the middle of the last century that this study began permanently to tinge our literature. To Mr. Hayley, who first directed public attention to the great merits of Dante, must be ascribed the praise also of first calling our notice in any great degree to the Spanish poets. Southey followed, and by his "Chronicle of the Cid" and "Letters from Spain," quickened the curiosity excited by Mr. Hayley's analysis and translated specimens of the Araucana of Ercilla. Lord Holland's admirable dissertation on the genius and writings of Lope de Vega, gave us a clearer insight into the literature of Spain, whilst the French invasion brought us into a more intimate connexion and acquaintance with her chivalrous people; nor could the many English visitants which this drew to her shores view the remains which she keeps of Arabian and Moorish magnificence, or even listen to her language, which preserves such striking vestiges of oriental majesty, without having their imagination led back to her days of literary illumination, and without deriving some taste for the productions of her poets. The struggle which she

then made, and that which she is now making, first against the unhallowed grasp of foreign coercion, and next of that priestly tyranny which has so long cramped her political and intellectual energies, have excited in every British bosom the most cordial sympathy; and it is evident that from these causes, there is a growing attention amongst us to her language and literature. Since the present volume was begun, a translation has appeared of the excellent work of Bouterewek, on Spanish and Portuguese poetry; another is going through the press of Sismondi “Sur la Littérature du Midi de l’Europe;” and Mr. Lockhart has just given us a choice selection of those beautiful old Spanish ballads, which, as Mr. Rogers observes of the narratives of the old Spanish chroniclers, ‘have a spirit like the freshness of waters at the fountain head, and are so many moving pictures of the actions, manners, and thoughts of their cotemporaries;’ like rough gems redeemed from an oriental mine, they have assumed under his hand a polish and a price that must render them indispensable to the cabinets of our men of taste. Nor, in speaking of those whose labours have tended to spread a knowledge of Hesperian treasure, must we pass over without due praise the masterly notices on Spanish poetry, which Mr. Frere and Mr. Bowring are understood to have given forth in the Quarterly and Restrospective Reviews.

In this situation of things, it may not be wholly unacceptable to the public to receive, though from an inferior hand, a translation of Garcilasso de la Vega, the chastest and perhaps the most celebrated of the poets of Castile. A desire to vary the nature of my pursuits, with other reasons not necessary to mention, first led me to his pages; but the pleasure I derived at the outset from his pastoral pictures and harmony of language, soon settled into the more serious wish to make his merits more generally known, and thus to multiply his admirers amongst a people ever inclined, sooner or later, to do justice to foreign talent. I would, however, deprecate any undue expectations that may be raised by the high title bestowed on Garcilasso by his countrymen — a title conferred in their enthusiastic admiration of his success in giving suddenly so new and beautiful an aspect to the art, and in elevating their language to a point of perfection, truly surprising, if we consider all the circumstances connected with that revolution; but this peculiar merit, so far at least as relates to the language, must necessarily from its nature be wholly untranslatable, and he is thus compelled to lose much of the consideration with the merely English reader that is his real due. But it would be unjust in an English reader, who glances over the subjects of his fancy, to conclude that because Garcilasso has written little but Eclogues and Sonnets, compositions, he may say, at best but of inferior order, he is therefore worthy of but little regard in this age of poetical wonders. I will be bold to assert, that the poets, and readers of the poets of the day, will be no way degraded by coming in contact with his simplicity: our taste for the wilder flights of imagination has reached a height from which the sooner we descend to imitate the nature and unassuming ease of simpler lyrists — the Goldsmiths and Garcilassos of past ages, the better it may chance to be both for our poetry and language. Nor let the name of Eclogues affright the sensitive reader that has in his recollection the Colins and Pastorals that sickened his taste some thirty or forty years ago. The pastorals, as they were called, of that period, are no more to be compared with the *rime boschereccie* of Garcilasso, than the hideous distortion of the leaden Satyr that squirts water from its nostrils in some city tea-garden, and that is pelted at irresistibly by every boy that passes, — with the marble repose and inviolable beauty of the Piping Faun in a gallery of antique sculptures.

Whilst employed on this translation, I was struck with the lucid view which Quintana gives, in the Essay prefixed to his “Poesias selectas Castellanas,” of the

History of Spanish Poetry, and I thought that it might be made yet more serviceable to the end which its author had in view, by a translation that would disclose to the English reader what he might expect from a cultivation of the Spanish language. The only fault perhaps of this Essay is, that Quintana has judged his native poets too strictly and exclusively by the rules of French criticism and French taste, which ought not I think to be applied as tests to a literature so wholly national as the Spanish is, so especially coloured by the revolutions that have taken place upon the Spanish soil, and so utterly unlike that of any other European nation. Still the Essay will be found, if I mistake not, as interesting and instructive to others as it has proved to me: from it a more compact and complete view of the art in Spain may be gathered, than from more extensive histories of the kind; nor was I uninfluenced in my purpose by the advantage which the judgment of a native, himself one of the most distinguished of the living poets and lettered men of Spain, would have over any original Essay derived from the writings of foreigners, who, whatever may be their critical sagacity and literary repute, can neither be supposed to be so intimately acquainted with the compositions of which they treat, nor such good judges of Castilian versification.

It is time to conclude these prefatory observations; yet I cannot forego the pleasure of first acknowledging the great advantage I have derived from the kind revision of my MSS. by the Rev. Blanco White. That gentleman's desire to aid in any thing that might seem to serve the reputation of his country — the country, whose customs and institutions he has pourtrayed with such vivid interest, originality, and talent, joined to his native goodness of heart, could alone have led him to volunteer his services, in a season of sickness, to one nearly a stranger; and if I submit the following pages to the public with any degree of confidence in its favour, it is from the many improvements to which his friendly and judicious criticisms have led.

To Mr. Heber also, who, with the spirit of a nobleman, throws open so widely the vast stores of his invaluable library, I feel bound to express my obligations for the use of Herrera's rare edition of the works of Garcilasso, which I had in vain sought for in other collections of Spanish books, both public and private: his voluntary offer of this, on a momentary acquaintance, enhances in my mind the value of the favour.

The astonishing number of authors which the Bibliotheca Hispanica of Don Nicolás Antonio displays, is a sufficient proof of the great intellect that Spain would be capable of putting forth, if her mind had a play proportioned to its activity. No nation has given to the light so many and such weighty volumes upon Aristotle, so many eminent writers in scholastic theology, so many and such subtle moral casuists, or so many profound commentators on the Codices and Pandects. And if she has produced these works in ages when the withering influence of political and religious despotism, like the plant which kills the sylvan it embraces, searched into every coigne of her literary fabric, what may not be expected from her, when the present distractions, fomented by the accursed gold of France, are composed into tranquillity, and the inquiries of her talented men embrace under free institutions a wider range of science than they have yet dared to follow, except by stealth! There is not one lettered Englishman but will rejoice with his whole heart when the winged Genius that is seen in Quintana's poems, chained to the gloomy threshold of a Gothic building, looking up with despondency to the Temple of the Muses, may be represented soaring away for ever from the irons that have eaten into its soul. —

The present work will be shortly followed by a Spanish Anthology, containing translations of the choicest Specimens of the Castilian Poets, with short biographical notices, and a selection of the Morisco ballads.

Woburn Abbey,
4th Month 8th, 1823.

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End of Sample