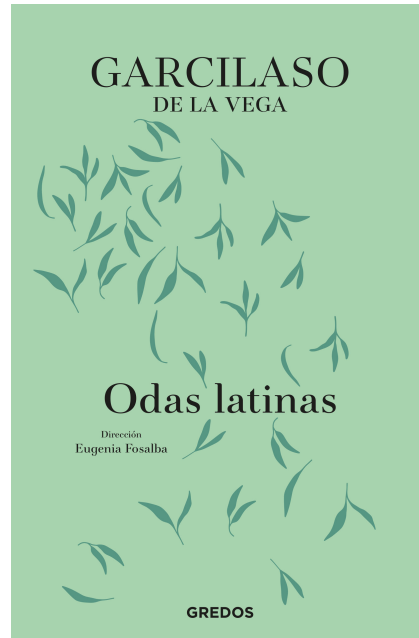


*Garcilaso de la Vega. Odas latinas* (Eugenia Fosalba Vela dir., Claudia Corfiati & Eugenia Fosalba Vela coords., Claudia Corfiati, Maria Czepiel & Rodney Lokaj eds., Juan F. Alcina trad.). Madrid: Gredos, 2026. ISSB: 978-84-249-9953-7. 213 pgs.

Reviewed by: Antonio Cortijo Ocaña  
University of California, Santa Barbara



The publication of this edition (a real *magnum opus*) of Garcilaso de la Vega's Latin Odes constitutes one of the most significant philological events in recent Garcilasian studies—not only for the intrinsic value of providing readers with a critically established and carefully annotated corpus but because the volume proposes a fundamental reconsideration of Garcilaso's place in the history of European Renaissance lyric poetry. We are not merely facing an edition of recovered or purified Latin texts, nor an erudite exercise in documentary restitution; what is attempted here is a critical intervention of greater scope, seeking simultaneously to fix a corpus, reorganize its interpretation, and redefine the very profile of the Toledan poet within a transnational humanistic tradition.

From its very material configuration, the book reveals the ambition of the project. Eugenia Fosalba serves as the volume's director and shares editorial coordination with Claudia Corfiati; the critical edition of the odes is distributed among Rodney Lokaj (responsible for the first), Claudia Corfiati (editor of the second and third), and Maria Czepiel (in charge of the fourth and fifth, the odes she discovered in 2022). The translation of the Latin text is provided by Juan Francisco Alcina, to whose memory the edition is significantly dedicated. This distribution of labor does not follow a merely administrative logic but a true philological specialization. The work is presented not as the individual undertaking of a single editor, but as the result of a collective effort sustained by complementary competencies: literary history, Latin philology, textual criticism (ecdotics), humanistic commentary, and the history of textual transmission. This disciplinary plurality explains much of the collection's solidity.

The intellectual core of the volume is concentrated, however, in the two initial essays by Eugenia Fosalba, which function as an authentic interpretive prologue and undoubtedly constitute the main critical novelty of the edition. The first, "Trajectory of Garcilaso's Odes: An Essay on Chronology," should not be read as a simple biographical

supplement or an auxiliary attempt at dating, but as a genetic reconstruction of the Garcilasian odic project. Its underlying premise is clear: Garcilaso's Latin odes are not scattered, accidental, or marginal exercises within his career, but manifestations of a coherent poetic practice developed through different life stages and closely linked to the poet's European mobility. The Garcilaso that emerges here is no longer solely the great renovator of Castilian poetry, but a humanist fully involved in the international circuits of Renaissance lyric, whose relationship with Horace is articulated not through abstract admiration, but through concrete praxis.

One of the essay's merits consists precisely in reconstructing that trajectory without falling into the temptation of offering a simplified linear narrative. Fosalba attaches importance to the French episode of 1530 as a moment when Garcilaso could have come into contact with contemporary Horatianism through the editorial circulation of the Neo-Latin odes of Jean Salmon Macrin, whose emergence as a modern Latin poet is a relevant datum for understanding the European horizon of the humanistic ode. But while that moment is significant—linking with Fosalba's own previous research—the true interest of the essay does not lie there. France functions more as an opening of possibilities than as the organizing center of the argument.

Much more decisive is the German episode and, in particular, the Danubian confinement and the ode addressed to Johann Alexander Brassicanus. Here the book offers one of its most fertile intuitions, because what appears is no longer just a biographical circumstance transformed into poetry, but an authentic programmatic formulation of poetics. The isolation on the island of the Danube is interpreted not only as a melancholic episode or one of courtly frustration, but as a space of creative concentration and artistic self-definition. The ode to Brassicanus acquires much greater relevance in this context. Read in light of the theory of *modus* later developed by Fosalba, this composition ceases to be a simple occasional poem and becomes a lyrical manifesto. The point is crucial. Through a *modus diastoliké*—that is, distinctive or discriminative—Garcilaso formulates a true *recusatio*. Faced with the expectation of heroic or epic matter, faced with the song of imperial campaigns and deeds, the poet delimits another territory. Against the song of battle, he chooses another poetic universe: that of aquatic nymphs, a lyric modulated by other tones and rhythms. This is not a hollow *topos* inherited from classical tradition, but an authentic aesthetic stance resulting from another politics, conditioned by the traumatic experience of exile. In that gesture of distinction, Garcilaso does not just reject a subject; he defines a program (which would be fulfilled in *Eclogue III*, conceived in Tunis, according to Fosalba). This program is central to understanding the volume as a whole, as it allows the odic trajectory to be read not as an accumulation of occasional pieces, but as a progressive awareness of a poetic identity.

The importance of Germany, therefore, is considerably greater than a reading centered on France might suggest. If the French contact allows one to imagine Horatianism as a contemporary practice, the Danubian episode represents the moment when that possibility transforms into programmatic self-definition. It is there where the ode ceases to be an experiment and becomes a conscious poetic option.

Naples, for its part, represents the stage of maturation and intellectual densification of this process. Here, Fosalba's essay shows the ability to reconstruct the humanistic ecosystem in which Garcilaso is embedded. Rather than merely listing names or possible influences, she places the poet within a medium where Horace functions as a shared cultural language. Seripando (intermediary and constant support), Telesio (as an introducer into Neapolitan humanistic circles), and Bembo (the authority figure who gives the final *placet*), in addition to the fundamental Pontanian legacy and the Neapolitan

academic environment, all configure a horizon in which the odic practice acquires critical depth and intellectual legitimacy.

It is, however, Fosalba's second essay, "The Modus as a Configuring Agent of the Renaissance and Garcilasian Ode," that constitutes probably the most original contribution of the volume. Its critical strength lies in a methodological shift as simple as it is productive: abandoning traditional thematic definitions of the genre to think of the ode from its rhetorical and pragmatic organization. The operation is significant. For a long time, critics tended to classify odes according to their content: love poems, encomiastic, moral, friendly, or religious. But a careful reading of Horace quickly makes that taxonomy problematic, because the subject matter of the ode is ostensibly heterogeneous. If the Venusian poet can sing indistinctly of wine, banquets, friendship, political exhortation, love, or lament, then content cannot be the true defining principle of the genre.

Fosalba recovers the humanist perspective here, particularly through Minturno (whose *De Poeta*, as Fosalba proved in 2016, was written long before 1559 and thus could have shared his ideas *in progress* with Garcilaso during his Parthenopean stay). The ode is defined not by what it says, but by how it organizes its voice. What unifies the genre is not the subject, but the *modus*: to thank, exhort, supplicate, rebuke, console, praise, persuade, or invite to pleasure. Thematic heterogeneity ceases to be a problem if it is understood that the identity of the genre resides in its rhetorical behavior, in its pragmatic modulation of discourse.

This conceptual shift allows for something even more fertile: the operational recovery of the Greek titles transmitted by Cruquius. Far from presenting them as mere scholarly relics, Fosalba turns them into a hermeneutic tool. The question is no longer "what is this ode about?" but "what discursive operation does it set in motion?" Thus, the ode to Telesio can be read as a complex journey between lament, exhortation, inspired enthusiasm, and conclusion; the one dedicated to Sepúlveda as a text whose encomiastic appearance conceals *memptiké* (complaining) or even vituperative tensions; and the one to Brassicanus as a distinctive *recusatio*. The result is a much more dynamic and formally precise reading of the corpus.

This change in perspective has an additional important consequence: it allows for a much more organic integration of the *Ode ad florem Gnidi* (*Ode to the Flower of Gnidus*) within Garcilaso's lyrical project. One of the volume's most notable achievements is preventing the Castilian ode from appearing as an isolated anomaly or a capricious excursion within the poet's work. Read through the logic of the *modus*, the *Flor de Gnido* ceases to be a generic rarity and becomes the coherent culmination of an already mature odic practice. The question then shifts from why Garcilaso exceptionally writes a Castilian ode to how he technically resolves the transfer of a consolidated odic praxis into the vernacular tongue.

This is where Fosalba's contribution regarding Pontano acquires its true scope, and the point must be carefully specified so as not to reduce it to a simple substitution of sources. The interest of the proposal does not merely consist in displacing Navaggiero as the main intertext of the *Flor de Gnido* to replace him with Pontano. Such an operation, while useful, would still move within a relatively conventional logic of identifying textual precedents. What Fosalba proposes is something much deeper: a reconsideration of the historical problem of the very praxis of the Renaissance ode.

The classical tradition, and particularly the Horatian one, offers a metric repertoire of extraordinary sophistication—the heir to complex Greek structures and a quantitative technique that is difficult to transfer to modern experimentation without mediation. The classical ode possesses immense prestige, but it does not immediately provide an

operational model for sustained Renaissance practice, much less in the vernacular. The true problem, therefore, is not finding an admirable model, but making the genre practicable. It is here where Pontano becomes decisive—not so much as a specific source but as a reorganizer of Renaissance odic praxis on a metrical level. Fosalba shows that Pontano introduces a rationalization of the classical repertoire that makes the ode operational for modern humanism. Where the Latin tradition had bequeathed a technically prestigious but excessively tortuous terrain for stable modern practice, Pontano introduces order, rearticulates possibilities, and offers a metrical reorganization according to lyrical specialization that allows the ode to be conceived once again as a living genre.

This has decisive implications for Garcilaso. The *Ode ad florem Gnidi* is no longer understood as a simple Castilian adaptation of a diffuse Horatian spirit, but as a concrete solution to a formal problem. The poet needs a stanza that preserves the generic dignity of the ode without aspiring to an impossible mechanical reproduction of classical quantitative complexity. Pontano provides a form of reorganization of the Horatian legacy that makes its modern practice imaginable. Evidently, this Neo-Latin mediation must be completed through strictly vernacular experimentation. At this point, Bernardo Tasso acquires an essential complementary role. The five-line stanza (*lira*) of some of his odes offers a solution from the vernacular sphere that dialogues productively with the Pontanian reorganization. The *Flor de Gnido* thus appears as the result of a double mediation: Pontano rationalizes the problem from Latin humanism; Bernardo Tasso offers formal experimentation in the vernacular; and Garcilaso synthesizes both lines into a Castilian solution of extraordinary technical elegance.

From this perspective, the old insistence on Navaggiero loses much of its explanatory power. The problem is not only that intertextual coincidences are less convincing or that textual dependence is debatable; it is that Navagero does not allow for a sufficiently robust explanation of the formal resolution of the generic problem. Pontano, on the other hand, does. And precisely because of this, the critical shift proposed by Fosalba has a much greater scope than a mere correction of genealogies: it redefines the very process of the constitution of the Castilian ode.

The interpretive power of the volume does not, however, sacrifice philological solidity. On the contrary: one of its most evident virtues consists in sustaining its hypotheses on a rigorous ecdotic basis. Claudia Corfiati's essay, "The Tradition of Garcilaso's Latin Odes, with a Note on Metrics," fulfills a decisive function here. Against the interpretive breadth of Fosalba's double prologue, Corfiati fixes the textual ground, precisely reconstructing the editorial history and transmission of these compositions. And that history is much more troubled than one might suppose.

Until very recently, Garcilaso's Latin corpus was much smaller. For a long time, only three odes were known; furthermore, their transmission was late and fragmentary. The first was made known in the 18th century by Francesco Daniele, without a clear indication of the source; others emerged only at the end of the 19th century, thanks to manuscript recovery work in Spanish and Italian archives. Later came the works of Mele, Keniston, Gutiérrez, Gallego Morell, Luque Moreno, Morros, or Alcina, configuring a respectable but discontinuous editorial tradition not always supported by a complete review of witnesses.

This history is not a simple bibliographic background: it radically conditions our reading of the Latin Garcilaso. We are not dealing with a stable corpus solidly canonized since antiquity, but with a set reconstructed progressively, whose configuration has changed substantially in recent dates.

Here the role of Maria Czepiel is fundamental. The discovery of new compositions implies not just a quantitative expansion of the corpus, but a qualitative alteration of its intelligibility. While a small set could still seem episodic, a larger corpus allows for talking about a truly sustained practice. Fosalba's hypothesis on the coherence of the odic project becomes much more convincing precisely because the philological ground has changed. In this sense, the volume not only interprets Garcilaso better; it materially modifies the very object of interpretation.

Also from an editorial point of view, the work is conceived with notable care. The section "The Present Edition" makes it clear that we are not looking at an improvisation, but at the printed evolution of previous work developed within the environment of *Soledad Amena* and the *Pronapoli* project. The fundamental ecdotic decisions stem from that previous work, but the printed edition reorganizes, refines, and makes the presentation of the material much more operational. Fosalba explains the division of tasks with transparency: Corfiati redesigned the layout of the notes and wrote the textual note and description of witnesses; Fosalba supervised the whole, redistributed materials, and revised translations and critical aspects, in addition to writing the general prologue. This explicitness is welcome: it makes philological work visible instead of hiding it behind a supposed editorial neutrality.

One of the most successful aspects of the volume is precisely its editorial architecture, designed to simultaneously serve different types of readers without renouncing rigor. The index clearly shows a modular and extremely functional organization: each ode constitutes an autonomous unit composed of an introduction, Latin text, translation, critical apparatus, a note on the text and metrics, and commentary. This seriality is not a simple criterion of material ordering; it reveals a very precise conception of what a modern critical edition should be: an instrument usable by both the specialist and the educated reader who is not necessarily a philologist.

Each poem thus receives individualized treatment. The introductions place each composition in its historical circumstance, discuss its chronology, reconstruct addressees and contexts of production, and address specific problems of interpretation. The Latin text is offered critically established; the translation by Juan Francisco Alcina does not act as an ornament or a concession to popularization, but as an authentic reading tool, carefully modulated to maintain precision without losing intelligibility. The notes of the critical apparatus expose variants and textual decisions; the note on the text and metrics allows one to understand the foundations of the editorial constitution; and the commentary itself deploys the interpretive apparatus.

Especially interesting is the internal organization of this commentary. "The Present Edition" explains the adopted logic quite clearly. The edition reorganizes and typographically redesigns notes from the previous project, distinguishing between *loci similes*, scholarly notes, and explanatory observations. This point is not minor. The *loci similes*, explicitly non-exhaustive, function as suggestions of borrowings, echoes, models, or possible intertextual affinities. This is a particularly intelligent editorial decision in the case of the Latin Garcilaso, whose writing cannot be understood apart from humanistic composite imitation. We are not dealing with a poetry of "originality" in the Romantic sense, but with a practice in which dialogue with previous traditions constitutes an essential part of the creative process. The specialized reader can work on the intertextual tradition and critical problems; the general reader can orient themselves without being excluded by technical density. It is an elegant editorial solution rarely achieved with such balance.

The critical apparatus also fulfills an important pedagogical function: it constantly reminds the reader that the text is not a transparent or naturally stable entity, but the result

of explicit editorial decisions. Faced with so many editions that present the text as if it existed in a final, almost ontological form, here the reader can perceive the materiality of transmission, the problems of the witnesses, and the contingency of certain ecdotic decisions. This visibility of philological work constitutes one of the volume's silent strengths.

In this sense, the book achieves something particularly valuable: it does not separate interpretation and philology but shows to what extent they depend on each other. Fosalba's hypothesis about Garcilaso's place in the history of the Renaissance ode would be much less persuasive without the prior work of textual establishment, corpus reconstruction, and transmission analysis. Similarly, the critical edition does not appear as a self-sufficient technical exercise, but as an indispensable base for a historical and interpretive reconsideration of greater scope.

Altogether, what this edition proposes is a substantial relocation of Garcilaso within the European literary map of the Renaissance. The poet ceases to appear exclusively as the founder of great modern Castilian lyric and emerges also as an active participant in the humanistic reinvention of the ode. But the strength of the argument lies in the fact that this international reinsertion is not built upon vague cultural affinities, but upon a much more precise framework: the French possibility of a modern ode through Macrin; the programmatic self-definition of the German episode and the *recusatio* of Brassicanus; the Neapolitan intellectual maturation; the poetic debate articulated around Minturno; the Pontanian metrical reorganization; the vernacular mediation of Bernardo Tasso; and the Castilian culmination in the *Ode ad florem Gnidi*. And finally, in a moment of discouragement prior to being freed from the "remora of Naples," the writing of the *Ode to Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda*, with all its ambivalent and critical flashes.

The most convincing part of the approach is that this trajectory is not presented as a simple sum of influences, but as a process of constructing a poetic praxis. Fosalba's insistence on the *modus* is decisive here, because it allows the continuity between the Latin odes and the Castilian experience to be understood not through thematic repetition, but through a shared rhetorical-pragmatic logic. Garcilaso does not appear as someone who occasionally "tries out" different genres, but as a poet who consciously develops a specific conception of lyric. The reading of the ode to Brassicanus as a programmatic moment, the recovery of the *modus* as a defining category, and the reformulation of Pontano's role are not simple accessory hypotheses: they productively reorder the field. Perhaps the best proof of the volume's success is precisely this: after reading it, it becomes much more difficult to continue thinking of the Latin Garcilaso as a minor appendix or marginal curiosity. The odes cease to be lateral pieces and take on a structural place in the understanding of his poetic career.

In short, this edition does three things at once, and does them extremely well. It philologically restores a corpus whose textual history has been troubled; it offers a critical and editorial tool of enormous utility; and it proposes an ambitious reinterpretation of Garcilaso's place in Renaissance poetic culture. It is not common for a critical edition to simultaneously achieve material rigor, editorial intelligence, and interpretive power. It is, in sum, a real *tour de force*.