e-ISSN 2037-6588

Rassegna iberistica
Vol. 47 – Num. 121 – Giugno 2024

Why, Where, and When Was Garcilaso's *Ode ad florem Gnidi* Conceived?

Eugenia Fosalba
Universitat de Girona, Espanya

Abstract This article aims to provide arguments, based on historical and literary events, to place the conception of the *Ode ad florem Gnidi* in Leucopetra, the palace of Bernardino Martirano, during the two days of November 1535 when Emperor Charles V's entourage stayed in its chambers and gardens, while waiting for the grand celebration in Naples of the imperial military triumph over Tunis.

Keywords Leucopetra. Bernardino Martirano. Ode ad florem Gnidi. Alfonso d'Avalos. Onorato Fascitelli. Luigi Tansillo. Girolamo Borgia.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Peer review

Submitted 2024-01-17
Accepted 2024-03-13
Published 2024-06-13

Citation Fosalba, E. (2024). "Why, Where, and When Was Garcilaso's *Ode ad florem Gnidi* Conceived?". *Rassegna iberistica*, 47(121), [1-18].

DOI 10.30687/Ri/2037-6588/2024/22/001

1 Introduction

Was the *palazzo* of Bernardino Martirano, Secretary of State of the Kingdom of Naples, the setting for the conception of the *Ode ad florem Gnidi*? The beautiful *maseria* or villa of Leucopetra, the Hellenic name for Pietra Bianca, rested on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius, facing the sea. It was surrounded by a lush water garden with a pool or *sguazatorio*, and a nymphaeum in a grotto, lined with shells that housed various classical statues.[1] As discovered by Sánchez García, this villa in Portici was also the backdrop for Juan de Valdés' *Diálogo de la lengua*.[2] The finding discloses the active involvement of this humanist, who had fled Spain due to his emerging heterodoxy, as an active participant in the literary coterie of Pietra Bianca. Indeed, he would later become a pivotal figure in the spiritual trajectory of Mario Galeota,[3] to whom the *Ode ad florem Gnidi* is dedicated in code.

Other humanists who participated in the pseudo-academy of the *maseria* included Agostino Nifo, Berardino Rota, Scipione Capece, as well as the brothers Giano and Cosimo Anisio (Minieri Riccio 1880, 143), both friends of Garcilaso, to whom they dedicated several epigrams soon after his arrival in Naples. Another important figure was the young protégé of our poet, Luigi Tansillo, who visited Pietra Bianca from a very early age, along with Antonio Tilesio, a native of Cosenza like the brothers Coriolano and Bernardino, who played the role of hosts. It is not a coincidence that Garcilaso dedicated a Latin ode to Tilesio, conceived as soon as he settled in the city of Parthenope. Interestingly, in a composition that blends elegy and epistle ("Martirane tui decus immortale poetae"; Rota, *Carmina*, 83-4), Berardino Rota lamented the absence of its owner from Leucopetra, who apparently stayed in Rome at that time, away from its cheerful gardens, sparkling waters, and beautiful forest. Rota also insists that in Leucopetra, every year, tender violets and hyacinths bloomed (vv. 27-42).

This publication is part of "Garcilaso de la Vega en Italia. Clasicismo horaciano (2020-2024)", Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación. PID2019-107928GB-I00. I thank Maria Czepiel, Mark Riley and Adalid Nievas for their wise suggestions.

1 Mormile (1617, 66) describes it like this: "Bernardino Martirano Cosentino Secretario del Regno nel tempo dell'imperadore Carlo V vi edificò la sua bella Villa, latinamente Leuco petra detta e dal vulgo Sguazzatorio di pietrabianca, con bello palazzo, e commode stanze, e tra l'altre cose degne, vi è una grotta di maraviglioso artificio tutta di conchiglie marine, con gran magistria composte, il cui pauimento è di varii, e belli marmi vermiculati, con tanta abondanza d'acqua viua, che perciò è chiamato il Sguazzatorio, luogo in vero da ciascheduno non solo desiderato di goderlo, ma di vederlo…".

2 Sánchez García 2018, with additional data in 2020.

3 Galeota also appears as a member of the renowned literary and theatrical academy in Siena from an early period (Toscano in Martirano 1993, 19).

The gardens of Leucopetra are also hinted at in the natural scene filled with violets in the *Sylva* dedicated by Rota to Mario Galeota, included in his *Metamorphoseon liber* and entitled *Viola* ("Quis violas Galeota tibi, quis carmina nolit"). This flower also abounds in the brief epigram of the same poet ("Quas Charites pictis violas iunxere corollis"), again dedicated to Galeota. This perhaps explains the names of the protagonists of the Latin *Sylva*: Iolas, identifiable with *viola* (alluding to his transformation into the favorite flower of his beloved), and Hyanthis with Hyacintho, Jacinto. Indeed, it is in this *Sylva* where the metamorphosis of Iolas, a reflection of the young Galeota, takes place. He is an unrequited lover of the nymph Hyanthis, who, falling into a faint, transforms into the flower he loves so much, similar to the conversion of the protagonist condemned to the galleys of love in the *Flor de Nido*, when, languishing for love like Iolas, he eventually collapses before transforming into a *viola*.[4]

2 The Historical Context

However, there are other reasons, in addition to this confluence of floral and poetic elements, that suggest the setting of Leucopetra in the *Ode ad florem Gnidi*. It would be worth considering contextual details to see if indeed it was in that palace where its lyrical stanzas were conceived. Moreover, it would be advisable to ascertain whether its creation took place during the two momentous days (23-24) of November 1535 when the Emperor's stay occurred. The event, commemorated on a plaque, the only piece that remains standing from the ancient *palazzo* buried beneath the current Villa Nava, took place during the triumphant journey of the Emperor through Calabria upon his return from Tunis. During this time, he finally settled in the palace of the Secretary of State, waiting for Naples to adorn itself for the reception of his immense entourage. In that brief period, it is known that, among numerous others, the poem *Il pianto d'Aretusa* was recited, in which Garcilaso is mentioned serving in the battle as the faithful squire of the Duke of Alba.[5]

4 In the *Rusticus*, Poliziano specifies that the violet is not satisfied with just one color: it is white, it is red, or yellow, revealing the paleness of lovers ("Nigraque non uno viola est contenta colore: | Albet enim rubet & pallorem ducit amantum"). The *salaminiaci flores Jacinthes*, on the other hand, are red, associated with death, and also with the suffering of love (Pliny XXI, 38; Ovid, *Met.*, X, 162-219; Virgil, *Buc.*, III, 63, indicates its color: *rubens*). See the introduction and edition of Poliziano's *Silvas* by Galand (1987, 177, 196).

5 There is undoubtedly an association between Merion Lasso and Garcilaso in a passage that intimately depicts him as closely linked to the Duke (*Idomeneo d'Alba*), since Merion Lasso is portrayed as both his squire and relative: "Ecco la strage grande, ecco il fracasso, | e d'Alarbi e di Turchi e di Africani: | il grande Idumeneo d'Alva, che'l passo | apre col ferro e con le invitte mani; | ecco il cortese e forte Merion Lasso, | che

To provide further arguments, it is important to consider the months leading up to the event, beginning with August 7, 1535, a crucial date when Garcilaso was still in Africa. On that day, Pietro Bembo wrote back to his friend Onorato Fascitelli, overcoming as best he could the desolation caused by the loss of his beloved Morosina, who had died just a few hours earlier. He acknowledged the receipt of several Latin odes from Garcilaso and praised their high quality:

> La terza cosa e delle ode del S. Garcilasso, che egli [he, that is, Girolamo Seripando, via Onorato Fascitelli] mi manda. Nella quale molto agevolmente et molto volontieri posso sodisfarlo, dicendogli che quel gentile huomo e ancho un bello et gentil poeta; et queste cose sue tutte mi sonno sommamente piacute; et miritano singolar commendatione et laude. Et ha quello honorato spirito superato di gran lunga tutta la nation sua; et potra avenire, se egli non si stancherà nello studio et nella diligenza, che egli supererà ancho dell'altre, che si tengono maestre della poesia. (Bembo, letter 1707, 608)

Onorato in turn sent both Bembo's letter and a poem dedicated to Alfonso d'Avalos with his letter to Girolamo Seripando, written posthaste on August 8.[6] He was in a hurry to send *De gestis Alphonis Davali Marchionis Vasti* to the protagonist of the 212 heroic verses, which Bembo had just approved, before the imminent arrival of the Emperor from Tunis. For Seripando, the fastest channel was to forward them to Garcilaso, attaching Bembo's Italian letter bearing the precious compliments. Opportunely, Bembo remarks that he is not surprised that D'Avalos wanted Garcilaso with him ("Non mi maraviglio se il S. Marchese del Vasto l'ha voluto seco"). This comment reveals that both Bembo and Fascitelli were aware that Garcilaso was currently in the service of the great military man, known for his fondness for literature. There is no doubt that our poet had to be the one to hand-deliver the *Alfonsus* to the Marquis del Vasto. Bembo's flattery about Garcilaso's Latin odes, whose sincerity cannot be

dentro il sangue nuota di que' cani | e, mentre al suo signor combate a canto, | acquista il pregio e d'ogni onor il vanto". See Martirano, *Il pianto d'Aretusa*, 89.

6 The letter is dated August 8, 1535, from San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. It is an autograph letter from Fascitelli, found in manuscript XIII AA 64 (pages 13-14) of the National Library of Naples. There is a modern publication by Cassese (2002, 1-3). Regarding the relationships Garcilaso-Seripando-Fascitelli-Bembo, see the annotations by Mele (1923). Tobia Toscano has addressed this specific letter in his detailed study about this same chain of letters: "Se ne deduce che Fascitelli scriva a Seripando appena ricevuta la lettera che Bembo gli aveva inviato da Padova con l'articolato e lusinghiero giudizio sulle composizioni latine di Garcilaso, inserendola nello stesso plico con la sua ('gliele mando l'una e l'altra')" (Toscano 2018, 186-7). See also the recent study by Eugenia Fosalba (2018).

doubted, had, therefore, this very specific ulterior motive, and it is possible that he was expected to provide D'Avalos with initial information about the situation of the confiscated assets of the Fascitelli family. Through the powerful Marquis, close to the Italian cause but perfectly integrated into the highest imperial circles, the aim was to pull the strings leading to the recovery of the fiefs lost by the Fascitelli's family in the war against the French.

An unmistakable trace of the profound effect that the words of Bembo's Italian letter had on Garcilaso's mind is evident in his twenty-fourth sonnet, where our poet contemplates filling the dry bed of classical poetry with the waters of the Spanish language (the Tajo River waters). Garcilaso presents himself in the middle of the slope ascending Mount Helicon, hopeful of reaching its challenging summit, provided he does not falter on the path to being the first to accomplish this lyrical feat – the danger of fatigue or discouragement about which the great master had warned him in the mentioned missive that accompanied the *Alfonso* ("et potra avenire, se egli non si stancherà nello studio et nella diligenza, che egli supererà ancho dell'altre"):

> *si en medio del camino no abandona*
> *la fuerza y el espirtu a vuestro Laso*,
> por vos me llevará mi osado paso
> a la cumbre difícil de Helicona.

If his strength does not falter, if he perseveres, our poet knows that he will reach the highest peak of classical Spanish poetry. To take this novel and daring step, he has felt duly encouraged by the supreme authority of the time, as evidenced by both the encouragement and admonitions of the master printed in those hopeful hendecasyllables. Therefore, there is no doubt that Seripando promptly conveyed these praises to Garcilaso, along with the *Alfonso*.

Bembo's second letter, the Latin one (not to be confused with the Italian), is dated August 26. This time it was explicitly addressed to Garcilaso, and from its wording, it seemed to serve as an introduction for Onorato himself, who would be responsible for delivering it upon the former's return from Tunis. The impression it must have made on Garcilaso was immense, as it confirmed the overcoming of the burden of Spanish cultural delay that, from the Italian perspective, weighed on the cultural roots of Spain and, by extension, on himself.[7]

7 The Italian perspective that Garcilaso had adopted in his letter to Doña Jerónima Paloma de Almogávar, published as a preface to the Boscanean translation of Castiglione's *Cortesano*.

However, another event, of the opposite nature, shook Garcilaso's heart before leaving Sicily: the Emperor, in Palermo, refused to recognize his many merits as a messenger, strategist, and, above all, a military man, employed in the preparations and execution of the Tunis campaign. All he offered was what had already been granted a year earlier, the governorship of Reggio. However, this time, the monarch addressed the Viceroy directly to ensure that he would compel Garcilaso to accept it since he had not yet taken possession of it.[8] In fact, the poet would resign after only six months. It is clear that it was a concession he had not requested or desired, as settling in Reggio went against the pardon of exile, one of his most fervent desires.

To return to November 1535, if Garcilaso conceived the *Ode ad florem Gnidi* with these two opposing feelings in the background of his mind – frustration at the Emperor's lack of recognition for his services in the Tunis campaign on one side, and the intellectual boost received from Bembo on the other – it would not be surprising that, as had happened in other intimately critical moments, despite the beauties or splendors of the environment, the poet was inclined to isolate himself and focus solely on the masterful art of his verses. This would explain why, in the midst of the pomp over the success of the African enterprise, he refused to flatter the powerful:

> no pienses que cantando
> sería de mí, hermosa flor de Gnido,
> el fiero Marte airado,
> a muerte convertido,
> de polvo y sangre y de sudor teñido,
>
> ni aquellos capitanes,
> en las sublimes ruedas colocados
> por quien los alemanes,
> el fiero cuello atados,
> y los franceses van domesticados. (11-20)

While writing a panegyric might have seemed a tempting opportunity to strive for the longed-for lifting of the punishment, instead he renounced it and delivered a subtle and cutting snub. The *recusatio* that appears in the ode is thus not merely a literary exercise imitating Horace, characteristic of a "precioso juguete", a "joya *menor*" (Lázaro Carreter 2002, 61). On the contrary, the shift away from the military subject-matter clearly engages with the immediate wartime context, which the poet deliberately disregards, preferring to take on the role of a meddler in some less-than-admirable love affair involving

8 Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, Real Cancillería, Registros, núm. 3969, 184*v*.

Galeota.[9] This is noteworthy, considering Mario was married and had eight children around that time, while Violante de Sanseverino, as we shall see, was a young woman of noble birth, facing dire straits as her family had been left in the care of her mother. An advantageous marriage was her only chance to escape ruin and disgrace. When reading the poem taking into account the context for the first time, Violante's refusal to yield to Galeota's adulterous infatuation becomes perfectly justified, whereas Garcilaso's frivolity is even more striking.

The Horatian rejection of such a resounding triumph in favour of frivolous themes constitutes a particularly deafening silence in the light of the panegyrics of all kinds that were poured forth on the occasion of the Emperor's advent, celebrating his victorious and regal figure, along with the most varied requests for grace, favor, or reward. Hymns to the Tunisian victory of the Emperor, often in Ariostan octaves, were sung so in unison that one voice could barely be distinguished from another. Recall, to mention just a few, the verses of Alessandro Verini in *La rota di Barbarrossa a Tunisi*, the *Crudelissimo pianto di Barbarrossa*, the *Stanze di M. Lodovico Dolce composte nella Vittoria Africana*,[10] the latter lavishing special attention on the Marquis del Vasto and other Italian captains, as well as the Castilians Alarcón and the Duke of Alba; nor should we forget the octaves dedicated to *Carlo Cesare Affricano* by Pompeo Bilintano, Berardino Rota's epigram *Fama ad Carolum V Caesarem loquitur*, also composed for the festivities (Rota, *Carmina*, 197). It is also worth remembering the stanzas in the vernacular dedicated to *Carlo Quinto Imperadore, vincitor dell'Africa* and *Carlo Quinto Imperatore Trionfante dell'Africa*, or sonnets like *Se quel che spese la tedesca rabbia* and *Re degli altri superbo, almo paese*, all from the pen of Antonio Sebastiano Minturno,[11] alongside other numerous Latin examples, such as the extensive hexameter

9 The poet refuses to write about his own love suffering. In this sense, it seems that the disillusionment is deeper than in Canción III, where Garcilaso reacts defiantly to adversity and hints at a much more intimate source of pain. The nest (*nido*) that the poet fears may be missing upon his return to Naples in Elegy II, might be a coded allusion to a high-ranking lady from the Seggio di Nido, to be more precise, Isabel de Villamarino, beautiful and wise. Morros, referring to Sonnet XIX, detects the keyword that opens up this possibility: "parece desvelar su nombre mediante un juego paronímico basado precisamente en él: 'y a sabella de vos del alma mía'. Podría estar diciendo de alguna manera que Isabella es esa parte de su alma ('Isabella del alma mía') en la que nunca puede dejar de pensar, incluso cuando no la tiene a su lado (vv. 1-2)" (2009). The Emperor's flirtation with this cultured and beautiful lady circulated from mouth to mouth during the Neapolitan celebrations.

10 All these compositions are collected in volume 4 of *Guerre in ottava rima*: *Guerre contro i turchi* (Beer, Ivaldi 1988, 441-615).

11 Minturno, *Rime et Prose*, 166, 176. The first one, follows this way: "Se quel, che spense la Tedesca rabbia | col ferro ardente, e quel che ti difese | dal Gallico furore, e quel, che'n gabbia | rinchiuse à forza il gran Cartaginese | purgando te de la enemica scabbia | N'hebbe più rar'onor ch'è non attese, | Italia mia quanto conuien, che n'habbia | Cesare tuo di più lodate imprese", 88.

poem by the same author, *De adventu Caroli V. Imperatoris in Italiam* (circa 1536),[12] or Girolamo Borgia's lengthy praise in *Africana Caesaris Victoria*, subtitled *Hieronymi Borgii ode de laudibus Illustris. Domini Petri Toleti Praesidis Regni Neapolitanum*, where the Muses pay tribute to Viceroy Pedro de Toledo, verses celebrating the growth of the empire under Caesar's protection and encouraging Partenope to rejoice in the fading danger. In another composition by the same poet, this time a dialogue in dactylic hexameters between Mercury and Rome, titled *Africanus Caroli Quinti, Caesaris Romanorum Imperator*,[13] the entire journey and exploits of the army led by the Emperor during the maritime journey and the conquest of La Goleta are summarized. Of course, as a loyal servant (Borgia was the tutor of his son Luis de Toledo), no mention is made of captains who rivaled the Viceroy, who at that time was at risk of losing his position. There is silence regarding adversaries like Alfonso d'Avalos, who was leading the opposition of the Neapolitan aristocracy at that point, conspiring to discredit the Marquis of Villafranca before the Emperor and thus secure his removal, taking advantage of his majesty's presence in Naples.[14] Borgia, on the other hand, puts in Charles's mouth a fervent praise of the Duke of Alba, his lord's nephew, with whom the monarch shares in advance the honor of victory, in the midst of the troops' rallying speech at the gates of Tunis. In these verses, Borgia describes Fernando as the flower and honor of the Iberian world, a prince in whom Alba rejoices with illustrious titles, establishing Alba proudly over the Tagus, his distinguished monument (and it must be read between the lines that the exalted place is Toledo, as it honors his name):[15]

12 Published for the first time many years after its composition, in Minturno, *Antonii Sebastiani Minturni Poemata*, occupying the first place without pagination. See the comprehensive study by Roland Béhar (2012).

13 We consulted the copy housed in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli with the call number S.Q.XXV K 57, under the title *Ad Carolum Caesarem Optimum Maximum Monarchiam*, and in the colophon: *Romae per Antonium Bladum Asulanum ídib. Septembris 1542*. Carlos J. Hernando is one of the few connoisseurs of these works by Borgia, which he cites in a note (2001, 475). I thank doctoral candidate Laura Avella for providing me with her transcription of these works by Borgia.

14 Nevertheless, in May, Borgia had placed his highest hopes and praises in the figure of the Marquis del Vasto, whose figure is repeatedly and highly praised, comparing him favorably with Mars, who with a strong hand and vigilant mind, with his daring, will change the great downfall of Latium, heading towards the shores of Libya. *Ad Phoebum de laudibus Illustris. Alfonsi Avali Vasti March. Ducis armipotentis*: "Phoebe quo vatem rapis? ecce in altos": "Marte romanas iterum potenteis: | In iubae terram comitante classes | Pro Deo aeternum decus auspicatur | Inclyta virtus | Par quidem antiquae: nitet inter acres | En duces Heros ducibus trecentis | Editus claris, Avalumque nomen | Tollit olympo. | Qualis Immanes latii ruinas | Cum manu forti vigilique mente | Vertit audendo libycas in oras | Martis alumnus", in *Ad Carolum Caesarem Optimum Maximum Monarchiam*, 1542.

15 Herrera (1580, 650) considers this possibility in the first place, among others.

e-ISSN 2037-6588

> Tu Ferrande virum flos et decus orbis iberi
> Principe quo gaudet titulisque illustribus Alba:
> Alba superba Tago: monumentum insigne tuorum:
> Fortiter ulte patris pulchram cape praemia, mortem.[16]

This passage leads to suspect that Eclogue III must have been written in the context of the war hinted at in its verses ("tomando ora la espada, ora la pluma"), in Tunis, during the summer of 1535, when Garcilaso was in the direct service of the Duke of Alba, grateful for the significant support he received after the setback with the wardenship of Reggio. The María to whom the eclogue would be dedicated would be María Enríquez Álvarez de Toledo, as the verse addressed directly to its recipient shows, giving a key ("con recebillo tú, yo m'*enriquez*co"). She was the cousin and wife of the Duke, and the poet would present her surrounded by her sisters in an eclogue that pays tribute to her double surname, as she was a Toledo both by her own lineage and by marriage. In any case, it is clear that the eclogue could not have been dedicated (wholeheartedly) to the wife of Pedro de Toledo since in the summer of 1534 the Viceroy requested the position of constable of Reggio for Garcilaso, marking a date of estrangement in his relations with Garcilaso. Instead, placing it just before the reception of Bembo's commendatory letters makes perfect sense. When the poet refers in Sonnet XXIV to this new channel of the river, hitherto dry, that he is going to fill with the waters of the Castilian language (the Tagus), he must be referring, therefore, to the Horatian aspect rather than the bucolic, since it is the praise of his Latin odes that is going to give a new turn to his poetry. Consequently, the culmination of his poetic trajectory would not be this eclogue, as has been repeatedly assumed, but rather the *Ode ad florem Gnidi*.

This acclaim, directed to Alba and his uncle, Pedro de Toledo, by Borgia, the faithful servant of the latter, contrasts with the above-mentioned hexameters praising the armed Mars of Alfonso d'Avalos, which Seripando sent to Garcilaso around the same time, composed by Fascitelli in anticipation of the Tunisian Campaign and received by the Spanish poet immediately after. In these verses, the great Italian captain is presented proudly leading a chariot, a recent victor over the French, erasing sorrow from Campania: he exhorts his followers from there to erase sad events from their hearts. Fascitelli calls blessings down on the victorious hero and announces new captive cities. By alluding to

16 And so, with sacred studies (literary), the sweet Siren watches over the poet at the summit of the mountain in blissful leisure, and the kindly goddess (the Muse) favors not only Virgil. In a verse note acting as a postscript, Girolamo adds a few lines dedicated again to his lord, not forgetting him even though he has devoted himself extensively to praising the Emperor. He now portrays himself, filled with new joy, in this same triumphant procession ("pompa"), taking notes with a swift pen.

e-ISSN 2037-6588

the hosts that Italic Mars brings with him – countless legions subdued by his power, monuments of his glorious triumph, like the Ethiopian Meroe,[17] distant Bactriana,[18] the Dacians,[19] the Sabaeans (Arabs), those whom unfortunate Mecca sustains (Muslims), and those who drink from the Indus, as well as the twice one hundred cities of Caria,[20] and all the others whom the great world surrounds and Anphitrite embraces with her Ocean – Fascitelli is identifying Alfonso d'Avalos, presented *all'antica*, with the mythical figure of Alexander the Great, on his emblematic chariot sowing peace in his devastating wake:

> Meus, meus ecce propinquat
> Quadriiugo invectus Campana per oppida curru
> Alfonsus, pacemque ferat, finemque malorum
> qui statuat; curasque iubens procul esse sequaces,
> aeterna inducat miserarum oblivia rerum.
> Victor io trahit ecce tot inclyta regna, tot urbes
> captivas; montesque novos ostentat; et arces
> Montibus, et rapido fluviorum vortica tutas
> Victor agi, clari secum monumenta triumphi:
> Innumeras Italo prostatas Marte phalangas;
> Aethiopum Maroën, et Bactra extrema, Dahasque,
> Quosque habet infelix Mecha Sabaeos,
> Quique bibunt Indum, et centumgemina oppida Cari
> Neque alios, aliosque omnes, quos maximus ambit
> Orbis, et Oceano complectitur Amphitrite. (102-16)

Significantly, the identification of Alfonso d'Avalos with Alexander the Great provides the key to the enigma related to *aquellos capitanes* in Garcilaso's ode, writing of them:

> en las *sublimes ruedas* colocados
> por quien los alemanes,
> el fiero cuello atados,
> y los franceses van domesticados…

17 Meroe was a city in the region of Kush, north of present-day Sudan. It was not located precisely in Ethiopia, but it was situated in a nearby area.

18 It was an ancient region located in Central Asia, where there are now areas of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The Greco-Bactrian civilization, following the conquest of the region by Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC, maintained a Hellenistic influence in the region for some time after Alexander's death.

19 It is an ancient Indo-European people that inhabited what is now Romania and parts of Moldova and Bulgaria in antiquity.

20 Former region on the southwest coast of Asia Minor, where part of Turkey is now located. It bordered Lydia and Phrygia to the north, Lycia and Pisidia to the east, and Ionia to the west. The region had a coastline along the Aegean Sea.

The allusion to the *sublime wheels* can only refer to those that ascend, lofty as wings, to the heavens: a clear cross-reference to Alexander, highlighting one of his attributes, that is, the mythical flight of his chariot, implicit in the image of the Alexandrian quadriga evoked by Fascitelli, which leaves behind mountains and seas, providing a complete view of the world left in the rear **[fig. 1]**.[21]

Figure 1 *The Ascension of Alexander*. Twelfth century. Marble relief. Northern facade of the Basilica of San Marco (Venice, Italy). Mentioned by Rodríguez Peinado 2018, 13. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2a/Alessandro_Magno_%28scultura_da_Constantinopoli_XIsec.%29.jpg

A glance at the stylized wheels of the emblematic quadriga of the King of Macedonia in the relief on the facade of the Basilica of San Marco suffices to visualize the poetic image of the sublime wheels upon which Garcilaso places his captains (plural for singular), in the apotheotic flight of Alfonso d'Avalos. Our poet was very aware of D'Avalos's identification with Alexander by Fascitelli, that autograph that had passed through his hands in a very simple chain: Bembo-Seripando-Garcilaso-d'Avalos, the latter being the protagonist of the poem, coinciding with the moment immediately preceding the Emperor's court's two-day stay in Leucopetra. However, Garcilaso states that he refuses to sing for him, in favor of the lady whom the poet also refuses to flatter unless she leaves behind her fierceness (*fiereza*), and various motives for this can be surmised. Firstly, as we have seen, Garcilaso did not want to evoke warlike motives associated with the furious Mars (Charles V?) or Alfonso d'Avalos (Alexander the Great), who had just played a role in one of the most unforgettable imperial feats,

21 On the other hand, the figure of Alexander the Great remains omnipresent in the iconography of the perfect captain "sia per il culto dell'eroe cavalleresco che per quello modellato sull'archetipo classico" (Fantoni 2001, 30).

celebrated with great fanfare. Garcilaso's poetic evasiveness toward his current protector, D'Avalos, could be due to additional reasons: in particular, he did not want to express his current preference for D'Avalos over the Viceroy, uncle of the Duke of Alba, Don Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, to whom he was indebted so much in general and at this precise moment. This would have been an affront to the Marqués de Villafranca due to the ugly conspiracy that the Marqués del Vasto was about to lead, which was also soon thwarted. This ambiguity with regards to political matters was much to the poet's liking, and can also be seen in the enigmatic sonnet XXI, *Clarísimo Marqués, en quien derrama*, which could be read as referring to either marquis. Garcilaso prefers this strategy of ambiguity: he does not want to mention Alfonso, but he does mention him, of course, in a symbolic and synecdochic image, where the defeated are only the French (for war-related reasons present in Fascitelli's poem) and the Germans (more a wish than a reality, since the struggles against the Germans were for religious reasons and were far from being resolved);[22] on the other hand, the Turks defeated in La Goleta, who are present among other exotic civilizations in Fascitelli's poem, and mentioned straightforwardly in Borgia's poem, are conspicuous by their absence.

22 In the documentation provided by Simancas from periods preceding the preparation of the fleet against Barbarossa, princes resistant to Catholic pacification, such as the Landgrave of Hesse, and less frequently the Duke of Württemberg or the Dukes of Bavaria, who were always conspiring with Francis I, constitute the main concern, especially for Antonio de Leyva from Milan, who had better control of the northern zone. However, it is mostly about resolving conflicts and suspicions through diplomacy and agreements rather than armed conflict. See related letters, such as those from Rodrigo Niño to the Emperor on April 10, 1533, Archivo General de Simancas (AGS) fasc. 1309, cc. 89-90; November 19, 1533, Governor of Marano to the Emperor, AGS fasc. 1310, c. 76; June 6, 1534, Count of Cifuentes to the Emperor, AGS fasc. 862, cc. 32-33; June 11, 1534, Emperor to the Prince of Amalfi, AGS fasc. 29, cc. 2-3; July 21, 1534, Count of Cifuentes to the Emperor, AGS fasc. 861, cc. 121-129; and January 2, 1535, Emperor's instructions to the Count of Rœulx departing from Madrid to Italy, Germany, and Flanders, AGS fasc. 1458, c. 38.

3 The Neapolitan Venus

Now, let us consider other grounds that bring us closer to Leucopetra and the events of November, also based on references from the *Ode ad florem Gnidi*. It is evident that the context of the neoclassical-inspired gardens of the palace could have contributed to the depiction of the extraordinarily beautiful lady who, but for her hard-heartedness, possesses all the qualities to be Aphrodite. Not in vain, the nymphaeum described by Martirano himself in his *Il pianto d'Aretusa*, lined with shells of white, black, and yellow, included, among various statues such as Neptune, Doris and her daughters, Cupid and the Graces, Acis and Galatea, a Venus that could only be the Cnidian, given the aquatic surroundings. All copies of Praxiteles' original sculpture depict the Venus of Knidos about to take a purifying bath: the goddess languidly abandons her garments on the hydria and covers her pubis with the other hand; the slight tilt of her face contains the entire serene intention of the impending movement and, at the same time, the instinctive surveillance against any outsider's gaze. The model for its sculptor seems to have been the courtesan Phryne, and the story told by pseudo-Lucian about the youth who left the thigh of one of the first female nude in history stained with his semen lends this unsurpassed artistic representation of female beauty a double layer of sexual and ecstatic charge, in an ambivalent combination of nobility and plebeian nature that is not only in the background of this version of the goddess but also in the subtext and tone of the entire Garcilasian composition.[23]

In addition to the metamorphosis of Arethusa ("perduta avendo ogni sua forma umana | ivi piangendo, divenne fontana"), a new conversion, very close to that of Anajarete in Garcilaso's ode, appears in the same poem in the transformation into stone of Leucopetra, who gives her name to the villa. Leucopetra was a huntress nymph who had dedicated her virginity to Diana and was aptly transformed by Jupiter into rock, a just punishment for her hardness of heart towards Vesuvius and the River Sebeto. This legend fills the ancient vengeance of Nemesis with Neapolitan resonances and verbal echoes which recall Garcilaso's playful admonition.

> Ma la superba, che mutati vede
> i gioveni infelici a sé davanti,
> né pietosa si pente, né si crede
> dever render ragion d'uccider tanti.

23 See, for example, the Italian version around the time of Garcilaso in *Dialogi di Luciano*, specifically, "Dialogo di Licino e Theomnesto", Vinegia, Francesco Bindoni & Mapheo Pasini, 1527, 135-49.

Ma quei sospir saliti a l'alta sede
(donne, imparati a disamar gli amanti!)
chiesero tanto su nel ciel vendetta,
chavventò Giove in lei la sua saetta.[24]

E come dura fu vie più che i sassi,
piacque al gran padre trasformarla in pietra:
e mentre corre, ecco, le ferma i passi,
i membri indura, l'arco e la faretra:
un bianco scoglio al mar vicino stassi,
ch'è detto ancor da tutti Bianca Pietra,
indi poi a' prieghi del cortese Crate,
le prime mebra le furon tornate. (estr. 84-85)

However, it is Tansillo, dear friend of Garcilaso, who provides a clue about the unspecified nymphaeum in Martirano's poem: in the second piscatory song "Qual tempo avrò giamai che non sia breve":

Nel più bell'antro che la terra copra,
che fra le meraviglie
del mondo non è forsi la minore,
ove si vede la mirabil' opra
di pietre e di conchiglie
torre et al ferro et al pennel l'onore,
Crate, brutio pastore,
signor del luogo egregio,
per amor mio *le tue bellezze sante*
col nome fe' ritrar, perché fra tante
opre che fiano in pregio
mille e mille anni in quelle sacre mura
il mondo onori ancor la tua figura.
Ivi splender si vedon le tue lode
fra cento Ninfe belle,
in mezzo a Leucopetra et Aretusa. (vv. 66-79; emphasis added)[25]

As these verses reveal, there were more than a hundred prominent ladies of Naples portrayed as nymphs in Martirano's cave, with their names written beneath their faces. Now it is easier to understand

24 Cf. "No quieras tú, señora, | de Némesis airada las saetas | probar, por Dios, agora…". Regarding the transformation of Violante into stone, see the verses by Mario Galeota indicated by the illuminating article by Tobia Toscano (2010, 186) about Mario Galeota disguised under the mask of Fabio. The motive was also present in Berardino Rota, who was part of the sodality discussing Galeota's infatuation with this maiden, see Fosalba (2021).

25 Luigi Tansillo, *Rime*, 350.

how Garcilaso came up with the idea of promising a lady to associate her name not with just any nymph but with the very Venus of Knidos. Provided she fulfilled his request, of course. Around that time of imperial festivities, praises for Neapolitan ladies became fashionable, and among the many circulating, there is one that offers a clue about the family of Violante de Sanseverino at the delicate moment when her family had just lost the Nido palace and the duchy of Somma.[26] However, out of loyalty, Jacomo Beldando, in his *Specchio delle Bellissime donne napoletane* (printed by Sultzbach, in Naples, in February 1536), persists in calling her mother by the title already lost to the Spanish. The stanza reads as follows:

> Alhor senti' chiamare «O mia Duchessa
> di Soma [= Somma]» da le tre che venian dietro;
> indi presi a mirar la gloria istessa
> che tralucea come nascosta in vetro.
> Ella rispose: «O mia Violante, o d'essa
> care sorelle, che vedere impetro
> hor quivi meco a la stagion megliore
> a render gratie di bellezze Amore,
>
> felici voi, s'a la bellezza vostra
> si giungerà il valor come conviensi».

On the other hand, *Il triompho de Carlo V a cavallieri et alle donne napoletane* by Giovanni Battista Pino, printed on September 8, 1536, by Sultzabach, Naples, clarifies that the Duchess of Somma from the Seggio di Nido was *Maria Diacarlona*; in other words, Maria Diaz Garlon, the mother, indeed, of Violante Sanseverino. In the *Specchio*, the young lady is affectionately named by her mother while addressing the ladies who follow her; she was certainly a woman of great beauty, just as extraordinarily beautiful as her predecessors had been, including Violante Grappina, her grandmother. The latter's beauty had been praised by Sannazaro in a brief epigrammatic dialogue between Venus and Cupid where he employs a play on words between the Viola flower, a *senhal* of the lady, and her name.

We now know that Maria Diaz Garlon had married Alfonso Sanseverino in 1509. She contributed a dowry to his nobility, which she vehemently defended when her husband squandered everything due to his reckless and profligate behavior. Sanseverino had purchased the possessions of Somma in Terra di Lavoro from Guglielmo de Groy in 1521,

26 By the way, is Garcilaso probing the wound of the recently vacated Seggio by Violante's family? Is he playfully suggesting that if she succumbs to Galeota's affections, she will reenter the most prestigious *sedile* in Naples? Will she once again belong to the aristocracy?

thus acquiring the title of Duke at that time. When the Duke joined the Angevin cause, always burdened by economic distress, he paid off his debts and increased his estate. However, when the Imperial forces prevailed, he had to leave for France, while his wife, a true Mother Courage, did not follow him (De Negri 1991). She stayed behind to try unsuccessfully to reclaim the duchy that Neapolitan poets maintained for her, and she managed to marry her daughters to men who saved them from ruin. Violante finally married Giulio Orsini, a *condottiero* supporting the French cause. At the time Garcilaso wrote his Ode dedicated to her, the marriage had not yet taken place, and her virtue, along with her mother's firm hand, was the only thing that could save her from being lost.

The Ode had to be written, thus, before the wedding of Violante with the rough mercenary, a moment that Rota, sympathizing with his friend Mario, describes in an epigram depicting Ursus (Orsini) tearing with its bear claws the delicate violets over which Galeota had wept, while stripping and dishonoring its immaculate beauty.

> Ad Marium Galeotam
>
> Quas Charites pictis violas iunxere corollis,
> quas Venus auratis implicuitque comis,
> quasque rigavit Amor, lacrymis quas lavit amantum
> in primis lacrymis mi Galeota, tuis.
> Ecce ferus subito foedatis unguibus Ursus
> colligit, intactum dedecoratque decus.
> Deceptum agricolae semper genus: i, cole flores:
> Quas meruit violas Iuppiter, Ursus habet.
> (Rota 1991, 102, quoted by Mele 1923, 125-6)[27]

The brutality of the image of Ursus possessing Violante puts an end to Galeota's love affairs, while suggests that the mercenary was not a refined man like Rota's friend. Furthermore, it implies that the young woman was deflowered upon becoming his wife, as corroborated by the family genealogy.

One could conclude here that the *Ode ad florem Gnidi*, pierced by the painful needle of disillusionment, written in the hope of the highest artistic excellence, stands at the culmination of Garcilaso's art and also at the chronological end of his poetic trajectory. Meanwhile, Eclogue III should be repositioned in the phase of maturity immediately prior to the reception of Bembo's letters.

27 The data provided by the Tavola 6 of the genealogical tree *Linea del Monte Ramo de Monterotondo*, from the marriage of Violante Sanseverino and Giulio Orsini, son of Mario Orsini (deceased in 1529) and Virginia della Rovere (deceased in 1567), does not indicate any descendants, see Mora 2016, 286.

Bibliography

Beer, M.; Ivaldi, C. (a cura di) (1988). *Guerre in ottava rima*. Vol. 4, *Guerre contro i turchi*. Modena: Panini; Istituto di Studi Rinascimentali.

Béhar, R. (2012). "Le *De adventu Caroli V. Imperatoris in Italiam* (ca. 1536) de Minturno: la célébration héroïque et mythique de Charles-Quint". Castellani-Dufrêne, N. (éd.), *La lyre et la pourpre. Poésie latine et politique de l'Antiquité Tardive à la Renaissance*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 117-32.

Bembo, P. (1992). *Lettere*. Vol. 3, *1529-1536*. A cura di E. Travi. Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua.

Cassese, M. (2002). *Girolamo Seripando e i vescovi meridionali, 1535-1563*. Vol. 2, *La corrispondenza: edizione critica*. Napoli: Editoriale scientifica.

De Negri, F. (1991). s.v. "Diaz Garlon, Maria". *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*. https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/maria-diaz-garlon_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/.

Di Leo, M. (1894). *Lodi di dame Napoletane del secolo decimosesto dall'Amor prigionero*. A cura di G. Ceci e B. Croce. Napoli.

Fantoni, M. (a cura di) (2001). *Il 'perfetto capitano': immagini e realtà (secoli XV-XVII) = Atti dei seminari di studi, Georgetown University a Villa Le Balze, Istituto di Studi Rinascimentali di Ferrara 1995-1997*. Roma: Bulzoni.

Fascitelli, O. (1776). *Honorati Fascitelli aeserniensis Opera*. Napoli: excud. Raymundii Fratres.

Fosalba, E. (2018). "La carta de Bembo a Garcilaso". *Ínsula*, 862, 9-13.

Fosalba, E. (2021). "La *sodalitas* como fuente de inspiración en la poesía de Garcilaso". *Studia Aurea*, 15, 227-54.

Hernando Sánchez, C.J. (2001). "El Glorioso Triunfo de Carlos V en Nápoles y el Humanismo de Corte entre Italia y España". *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane*, 119, 447-521.

Herrera, F. (1580). *Obras de Garcilasso de la Vega con anotaciones*. Sevilla: Alonso de la Barrera.

Lázaro Carreter, F. (2002). "La *Ode ad florem Gnidi*". Lázaro Carreter, F., *Clásicos españoles. De Garcilaso a los niños pícaros*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 39-61.

Martirano, B. (1993). *Il Pianto d'Aretusa*. A cura di T.R. Toscano. Napoli: Loffredo.

Mele, E. (1923). "Las poesías latinas de Garcilaso de la Vega y su permanencia en Italia". *Bulletin Hispanique*, 25, 136-7.

Minieri Riccio, C. (1880). "Cenno storico delle Accademie fiorite nella città di Napoli". *Archivio Storico per la Provincie Napoletane*, 5, 131-57, 349-73, 578-612.

Minturno, A.S. (1559). *Rime et Prose del Sig. Antonio Minturno, nuovamente mandate in luce all'illustrissimo sig. Don Girolamo Pignatello*. Venetia: Francesco Rampazetto.

Minturno, A.S. (1564). *Antonii Sebastiani Minturni Poemata, ad Consaluum Pyretium*. Venetiis: Apud Io. Andream Valuassorem.

Mora, E. (2016). *L'Archivio Orsini. La famiglia, la storia, l'inventario*. Roma: Viella.

Mormile, G. (1617). *Descrittione del amenissimo distretto della città di Napoli, et della antichità della villa di Pozzuolo*. Napoli: Pietro Antonia Sofia Libraro, nella stampa di Tarquinio Longo.

Morros, B. (2009). "La muerte de Isabel Freyre y el amor napolitano de Garcilaso. Para una cronología de sus églogas y de otros poemas". *Criticón*, 105, 5-35. https://doi.org/10.4000/criticon.12464.

Poliziano, A. (1987). *Les Silves*. Éd. par P. Galand. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Rodríguez Peinado, L. (2018). "La ascensión de Alejandro Magno. Su iconografía medieval". *Revista Digital de Iconografía Medieval*, 10(18), 9-23.

Rota, B. (2007). *Carmina*. Torino: Edizioni Res.

Sánchez García, E. (2018). "Un cenáculo napolitano para Juan de Valdés: la villa de Leucopetra de Bernardino Martirano y el Diálogo de la lengua". Fosalba, E.; de la Torre Ávalos, G. (eds), *Contexto latino y vulgar de Garcilaso en Nápoles: redes de relaciones de humanistas y poetas (manuscritos, cartas, academias)*. Bern: Peter Lang Verlag, 249-72.

Sánchez García, E. (2021). *Nombres y hombres. Onomástica y significación del Diálogo de la lengua*. Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert.

Tansillo, L. (2001). *Rime*. A cura di T. Toscano. Roma: Bulzoni Editore.

Toscano, T.R. (2000). *Letterati, corti, accademie. La letteratura a Napoli nella prima metà del Cinquecento*. Napoli: Loffredo.

Toscano, T.R. (2001). "Le muse e i colossi: apogeo e tramonto dell'umanesimo politico napoletano nel trionfo di Carlo V (1535)". Martínez Millán, J. (ed.), *Carlos V y la quiebra del humanismo político en Europa (1530-1558*), vol. 3. Ed. por J. Bravo Lozano y F. Labrador Arroyo. Madrid: Sociedad Estatal para la conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 301-10.

Toscano, T.R. (2010). "Fabio o Mario Galeota? Sull'identità di un rimatore napoletano del XVI secolo". *Filologia e critica*, XXXV(2-3), 178-203.

Toscano, T.R. (2018). "Onorato Fascitelli 'alma de verdadero poeta': dall'amicizia possibile con Garcilaso all'invettiva contro l'*hispana avaritia*". Fosalba, E.; de la Torre, G. (eds), *Contexto latino y vulgar de Garcilaso en Nápoles: redes de relaciones de humanistas y poetas (manuscritos, cartas, academias)*. Bern: Peter Lang Verlag, 185-219.