



# Pen Portraits of Illustrious Castilians (Medieval Translation)

*Fernán Pérez de Guzmán*

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## **Pen Portraits of Illustrious Castilians (Medieval Translation)** Fernán Pérez de Guzmán

Pen Portraits of Illustrious Castilians is the first English translation of *Generaciones y Semblanzas*, a compilation of thirty-four biographical sketches of the most illustrious Castilians of the mid-fifteenth century. These include three kings, a queen, and thirty nobles, prelates, and scholars who represented the most prominent families of the day. Notably, this is the first collection of biographies in Spanish historiography to be published.

The text was written in Spanish in 1450 by Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, an historian, moralist, politician, and poet whose personal contact with the most powerful nobles of the time provided him with the material for these intimate and revealing portraits. Through insightful commentary on his subjects' family background, personality traits, outstanding deeds, virtues, and vices, the author brings to the reader vivid portraits of some of the most important players in Castilian history. Within the portraits, occasional digressions provide the author with the opportunity to present his own personal beliefs on such timely issues as the situation of Jewish converts in Castilla, the greed and self-serving motives of many of his contemporaries, and the role played by Divine Providence in shaping the history of his country. Pérez's introduction appears to be the first treatise written in Spanish on the nature of history and on the duties and responsibilities of those recording it.

The translators have succeeded in maintaining certain stylistic characteristics of fifteenth-century Spanish without sacrificing readability. Their introduction and notes provide useful background information, as do the map and genealogical table.

Marie Gillette, a Senior Lecturer in Spanish, and Loretta Zehngut, a Lecturer in Spanish, both teach at Penn State University.

Advance Praise:

"Fascinating and highly readable.... The book brings striking reality and personality to these historical figures."--Prof. Olivia R. Constable, University of Notre Dame

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