

HENRY BERLIN. *Alone Together. Poetics of the Passions in Late Medieval Iberia.* Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2021. x + 320 pp.

Alone Together contributes important thematic and methodological approaches to the studies of affect and subjectivity in medieval Iberian literature. Through a careful reading of a wide selection of genres including letters, political, philosophical and theological treatises, magisterial lectures, courtly lyric and sentimental fiction written in Castilian, Catalan and Galician-Portuguese, Henry Berlin joins the Hispanists who are calling attention to the essential interconnectedness of a diverse medieval Iberian culture.

Berlin situates his analysis of affect in fictional and non-fictional textual output against the historical context of political turmoil in fifteenth-century Iberia. Having acknowledged that some of these political or cultural events coincide only loosely, Berlin goes on to argue that fifteenth-century Iberian authors' ubiquitous interest in the experience of passions exposes a shared commitment to rehabilitating passions from their habitual ethical condemnation. This wide-ranging cultural trend, however unpremeditated, is presented in *Alone Together* as a strategy for freeing the poetic and rhetorical power of passions and for exploiting their ability to foster intersubjective links. Closely observing the use of the language of the passions, Berlin proposes that, by way of intertextual dialogue that amounts to a lyrical invitation to shared emotion – hence, through an invitation to “com-passion” – the authors of these texts move towards the formation of something akin to what Barbara Rosenwein (2006) called “emotional communities.” This formation of shared subjectivities that stakes individual and private versus communal and public modes of being may be considered an attempt at the intersubjective response to the chaos ensuing from sociopolitical discords in the Iberian kingdoms. A sustained overview of the rich terminology for designating emotional experience, of relevant definitions and taxonomies of emotions, their ethical valuation, and the role of passions in defining subjectivity and lyrical theory in the introductory chapter prepares for the discussion of a large literary corpus in the rest of the study, which is divided into two parts.

The three chapters of the first part (Friendship and Pleasure) assess the influence of the Stoic and Christian monastic traditions, which present the failure of reason to control passions as a concern of ethical nature. Given that influence, Berlin reads several fifteenth-century political treatises that reflect on a proper management of emotions as an issue that is vital to “social cohesion” (28). Included is an analysis of “friendship,” and, as

relevant to it, of the role of language as “communication” and “conversation.” Amid the general cultural ambiance that privileges reason, the author observes instances of acknowledging the beneficial effects of some emotional experiences, such as “compassion” and “pleasure.” These attempts, however, do not mitigate wariness among courtly writers towards what was conceived as the unruly power of the passions.

The second part of the book (*Compassion and Consolation*) explores the notions of passion and compassion developed in Christian monasticism, and the metaphysics of Christ’s Passion, the language and the imagery of which courtly poets adopted as a reference for their own experience of amorous suffering. Berlin advances the term “passionate quotation” to encapsulate the practice of poets’ mutual referencing and identification through pain, with a place of honour assigned in that exchange to the legendary poet Macías. In the final two chapters, Berlin examines the authors’ awareness of death and an appeal to compassion. Of particular importance to this part of the analysis is the poetry of Ausiàs March, and his departure from both “ascetic rationalism” and “hylomorphic structures underlying troubadour love ethics” (23). Rather than a summary of the main points of the analysis, the concluding chapter is taken as an opportunity to examine an outstanding example of Catalan sentimental fiction.

The above summary does not nearly capture the complexity of Henry Berlin’s analysis of essential fifteenth-century texts, whose authors engaged in dialogue about passions and literary composition. In identifying the tools of analysis for the selected texts – the reading of which can challenge the most proficient philologists – Berlin draws on premodern, primarily but not exclusively Stoic theories of the passions; he engages philological method to unravel the meanings implied in the essential lexicon of fifteenth-century philosophy; he employs rhetorical and poetic theory that help unravel the conceptual and aesthetic complexity of the studied texts; and finally, he summons the theoretical apparatus on premodern and modern concepts of (inter)subjectivity. Having assembled these different methods of textual analysis, Berlin observes how authors throughout Iberia negotiate the moral implications of the experience of passions, how they contest or adhere to the orthodox binary of virtuous reason as a superior alternative to the vice of passion, and how they negotiate, through the language of passions, their individual and collective senses of selfhood.

The author’s meticulous reading of a large literary corpus alongside with non-fictional documents in three late medieval Iberian languages produces the outlines of a historical discursive context for the study of the passions in late medieval Iberia. The philological method applied for identifying the meaning and the distribution of concepts that relate to passions is of great use for unravelling the precise meaning of these difficult

medieval texts. By complementing theoretical approaches to the study of literature with rhetorical analysis, Berlin upholds the value of a careful study of language as a tool of literary analysis. The bibliography that supports the study is concise but well-chosen. The University of Toronto Press has been consistent for years in producing high quality of publications, with good layout and helpful index.

Alone Together is a dense study, conceptually, thematically, and theoretically packed, that opens up important venues for further lines of research. Because of a heavy concentration of difficult concepts and ideas, some of which could have benefited from a slower exposition, the readers who will be able to gain the most from the wealth of scholarship presented in *Alone Together* are experts and students at advanced levels of study.

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FREDERICK A. DE ARMAS. *Cervantes' Architectures. The Dangers Outside*.
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In *Cervantes' Architectures*, Frederick de Armas reads *La Galatea* (1585), *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615) and *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* (1617) as narrations in which Cervantes, like an architect, "not only builds a tentative architecture of the chapter or prose text he is writing, but also constructs within them edifices of many types" (5). In the introduction, De Armas states that these architectures "seem to emerge from words" and transform eurithmia into "plurithmia" (plural harmonies) and even 'dysrithmia' or ruptured harmonies, "as structures are reconstructed through the use of other architectures" (16). De Armas' approach to the narratives revolves around the figures of ellipsis and ellipse, with which he studies how words omitted and gaps in the writing form the geometrical shape that acquired importance with the discoveries of Johannes Kepler (9-10). He also links the theories on space by the Chinese-born American geographer Yi-Tu Fuan with Roman architect Vitruvius' *De Architectura* (first century BC), and a deep analysis of Cervantes' experiences at the Royal Jail of Seville in 1597.

In Chapter 2, dedicated to *La Galatea*, De Armas explains how space is created in the search for symmetry and perfection, but the characters "always encounter obstacles to their desires, thereby suffusing the work with melancholic aura" (27). Murder and plague turn topophilia to topophobia and eurithmia to dysrithmia, turning the location into a landscape of fear from which religious buildings serve as meeting points and places of refuge from dangers like plagues. Outside, death shines