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Review of Luisa Elena Delgado, Pura Fernández,  
and Jo Labanyi, eds. *Engaging the Emotions in  
Spanish Culture and History*

Clinton D. Young

*University of Arkansas at Monticello*, [andavis@astate.edu](mailto:andavis@astate.edu)

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**Delgado, Luisa Elena, Pura Fernández, and Jo Labanyi, eds. *Engaging the Emotions in Spanish Culture and History*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016. ix + 300pp. + 24 ill.**

The cultural turn opened the door for historians to use frameworks from outside of the historical discipline, such as anthropology, linguistics, and media studies. Hispanist cultural historians have found dialogue with academics from outside fields especially fruitful, as political and social history arguably continue to be the dominant modes for understanding modern Spanish history. Thus, a volume like *Engaging the Emotions in Spanish Culture and History* comes as a welcome development. The fifteen essays here build on the scholarship of figures like Sara Ahmed and Eva Illouz, leaders in developing the so-called affective turn, the study of the role of emotions in history. While acknowledging that scholars can never truly access what an individual is feeling, the study of emotions is based on the theory that they are “a form of thought and knowledge” (2) that can be studied historically as “there is no such thing as purely inner or individual emotion, since all periods have a repertoire of emotional codes that shape not only the expression of emotions but the emotions themselves” (3). Thus, by understanding emotions as practices, they can be integrated into the repertoire of tools that historians use to interpret the past.

This volume is the first to examine the history of emotions in a specifically Spanish context. While only a few of the contributors identify as historians, each essay has a historicist bent. This review will focus on those that should be of most use to historians. The best example of how emotions can expand our understanding of history is Javier Krauel’s “The Battle for Emotional Hegemony in Republican Spain (1931-1936).” Rather than using the traditional narrative of the collapse of the Second Republic as a function of radicalizing right- and left-wing politics, Krauel focuses on the embattled center—specifically how republican intellectuals created a model in which emotional control legitimated the institutions and legal forms enshrined in the Constitution of 1931. However this idea, rooted in bourgeois parliamentary liberalism, was ill equipped to deal with new forms of politics that exploited emotion. Such an explanation enhances our understanding of how political differences could manifest themselves in the individual actions of so many Spaniards and thus lead into the cataclysm of the Civil War.

One of the benefits of this volume is the attention it pays to the understudied nineteenth century. In “Reasonable Sentiments: Sensibility and Balance in Eighteenth-Century Spain,” Mónica Bolufer traces the shift from Enlightenment ideas of sensibility, in which sentiments are meant to be channeled to bond the individual into society, to the Romantic idea of emotion as an expression of private and personal sentiments. She argues that this shift took place thanks to the War of Independence in Spain, later than the rest of Europe where it was a reaction to the French Revolution. Rebecca Haidt’s “Emotional Contagion in a Time of Cholera: Sympathy, Humanity, and Hygiene in Mid-Nineteenth Century Spain” demonstrates the tension between Enlightenment and Romantic notions of sensibility and emotion in her discussion of the ways in which personal sympathy for humanity were mobilized to support hygiene and public health projects. Lou Charon-Deutsch’s “‘Hatred Alone Does not Warm the Heart’: Figures of Ill Repute in the Nineteenth-Century Spanish Novel” examines the tropes that bind anti-Jesuit, anti-Freemason, and anti-Semitic portrayals in Spanish fiction ranging from

serialized pulp novels to Alas' *La Regenta*. She posits that the prevalence of these bigoted emotions was a reaction of liberalizers during the nineteenth century who were worried about the dominant (and sometimes reactionary) role that the Catholic Church continued to play in Spanish society where other traditional institutions like the monarchy were being eroded by liberal ideas of freedom and Spain's connections to growing international markets. Nor does *Engaging the Emotions* ignore the growing importance of the transatlantic to modern Spanish history. "'How do I Love Thee?': The Rhetoric of Patriotic Love in Early Puerto Rican Political Discourse" by Wadda Ríos-Font uses the story of Ramón Power y Giralt, a Puerto Rican delegate to the Cortes of Cádiz, to demonstrate how the inability of Spanish liberals to engage the patriotic emotions of colonial delegates engendered growing pride in the land and soil of America. (Ríos-Font is careful to note that this pride is not quite yet nationalist sentiment.) These essays will provide valuable resources to scholars of nineteenth-century Spain.

Unfortunately for those encountering the history of emotions for the first time, the biggest drawback to *Engaging the Emotions* may well be its Introduction. Kudos are due to the editors for avoiding the deadly "this essay will argue x, that essay will argue y" format typical of edited volumes; but their more synthetic approach that points out common themes among the various essays doesn't immediately outline the contours of the field for the uninitiated. For readers new to the subject, a better option might be to start with Javier Moscoso's "From the History of Emotions to the History of Experience: A Republican Sailor's Sketchbook in the Civil War" which gives a clear and concise history and methodological overview of the field. After this, those new to the history of emotions will be better equipped to deal with the thematic approach of the Introduction. The topic of Moscoso's essay—interpreting how the sketches of a Republican sailor used the interactions of personal emotions with the individual's personal knowledge and value to determine how that individual constructed the experience of life during the Civil War—demonstrates the potentials and pitfalls of the history of emotions. Accessing the emotions gives researchers another tool for the interpretation of primary sources (especially those like sketches that expand beyond traditionally text-based sources). But the increased subjectivity of personal emotions increases the difficulty of extrapolating a wider historical significance from the experiences of one person.

While each essay is written with a historicist bent that places the topic within a framework of concurrent historical events, some essays do suffer from a lack of historiographical contextualization. To be fair, most of the authors come from the fields of literature or cultural studies; contributing to historiography was not what they set out to accomplish. But essays like Pura Fernández's "Emotional Readings for New Interpretative Communities in the Nineteenth Century: Agustín Pérez Zaragoza's *Galería fúnebre* (1831)" and Enrique Álvarez's "Affective Variations: Queering Hispanidad in Luis Cernuda's Mexico" are especially frustrating for the historian. Fernández wants to demonstrate how reading Gothic fiction helped primarily female readers construct new forms of sociability during the upheavals of the 1830s, while Álvarez seeks to show how the homosexual eroticism of Cernuda's poems complicates our understanding of the colonialist orientalism Republican refugees from Franco used to understand their exile in Latin America. Each author does strong work in unpacking the texts at the core of their research, but they fail to address why their individual sources can claim to speak to a wider historical experience. All of the essays in the volume uphold a very high standard

of scholarship within their disciplines. Historians, however, will have to work a little harder than usual to make this research relevant to their own discipline and scholarship.

The value of this interdisciplinary approach to emotions is born out in the final two essays, Francisco Ferrándiz's "From Tear to Pixel: Political Correctness and Digital Emotions in the Exhumation of Mass Graves from the Civil War" and Luisa Elena Delgado's "Public Tears and Secrets of the Heart: Political Emotions in a State of Crisis," which use emotions to elucidate how history is being mobilized in Spanish politics today. Emotional responses are at the core of the revived debate on how to discuss the atrocities committed during the Civil War; they are also at the core of the strategies that have mobilized the Catalan independence movement and catapulted the Podemos and Ciudadanos parties to power in the wake of the global financial crisis and the 15-M movement. If liberal politics and the bourgeois public sphere have developed as places where emotions are supposed to be controlled and subordinated to reason, then the interjection of emotion into current political debates is a double-edged sword. Emotions have traditionally been gendered female and control of emotions has traditionally been a hallmark of the bourgeoisie, so the use of emotion in politics opens up new ways of political participation for marginalized groups. But emotions also lay claim to the idea that the personal is more important than the political, which can be dangerous: as Delgado notes, "public tears and admissions of personal regret should not bypass political obligations to the civic body" (278). In an era when emotions are posited as viable alternatives to facts and democratic liberalism is under siege from individuals who value personal gain more than civic obligations to the wider community, more than ever we need to understand how emotions are mobilized and utilized in society. *Engaging the Emotions in Spanish Culture and History* is an excellent place to start.

**Clinton D. Young**  
**University of Arkansas at Monticello**