

Introduction

Amicitia en latín tanto quiere decir en romance como amistad, y amistad, según dijo Aristóteles, es una virtud que es muy buena en sí y provechosa a la vida de los hombres; y tiene lugar propiamente cuando aquel que ama es amado del otro a quien ama, pues de otra manera no sería amistad verdadera; y por ello dijo que diferencia grande hay entre amistad y amor y bienquerencia y concordia.¹

[*Amicitia*, in Latin, means friendship in Castilian, and friendship, according to Aristotle, is a virtue which is intrinsically good in itself and profitable to human life and that, properly speaking, it arises when one person who loves another is beloved by him, for, under other circumstances, true friendship could not exist; and therefore he stated that there is a great difference between friendship, love, benevolence and concord.]

The definition of friendship given above, which reads like a moral statement extrapolated from a didactic manual is, perhaps surprisingly, an extract from the *Siete Partidas*, a thirteenth-century law code designed to regulate all aspects of Castilian subjects' public and personal lives.² Even more interesting, perhaps, is that despite his claimed *potestas condendi leges*, the king himself was not exempted from obeying those rules. I found the presence of specific laws on friendship in a legal *corpus* fascinating and remarkably unusual, and this inspired me to embark on this exciting project to explore the wide range of meanings attributed to friendship in the medieval period, particularly in the Iberian context. My leading research questions were: what types of relationships and networks were defined and regulated as friendships; to whom their rules applied; whether and to what extent those norms reflected what occurred in reality (at least according to medieval contemporary sources); and whether ideas and interpretations of

¹ *Las siete partidas del Rey don Alfonso el Sabio: cotejadas con varios codices antiguos por la Real Academia de la Historia* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1807), Book IV, title XXVII, law I. For an English translation see Alfonso X, *The Siete Partidas*, ed. Robert I. Burns, trans. Samuel Parsons Scott (5 vols, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), vol. 4, p. 1003.

² More details on the *Siete Partidas* and on this title on friendship in Chapter 2, pp. 68-80.

amicable relationships shaped, or were shaped by, literary *topoi* and rhetorical models inherited from both Mediterranean and Central European traditions.

Friendship is a complex, multifaceted and nuanced subject, with specific characteristics which make it different, although strictly related to, love, benevolence and concord, as stated by the aforementioned law. Such a plethora of meanings and interpretations are still at the core of scholarly debates within and across different research fields, including historical and literary studies, sociology and anthropology.³ An interesting case is how, today, the language of friendship applies to different types of relationships established or consolidated via social media.⁴ The latter intertwine professional and leisure-based networks and their members interact virtually with ‘friends’, ‘followers’ and ‘contacts’, among others. Despite the undeniable differences, to some extent pre-modern communication shares similarities with our twenty-first century virtual networks. In the Middle Ages interpersonal relationships – in particular those named as friendships – were based on a shared sense of belonging to the same community, professional or ethnic groups, as well as on bonds generated by interests of different types. Moreover, forms of communication such as epistolary exchanges connected individuals who might not know each other in person and, yet, they addressed each other as friends, which was in most cases a rhetorical device used with broader social and political implications.⁵

³ For an overview John Scott, *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook*, 2nd edn (London: SAGE Publications, 2000); Julian Haseldine, ‘Friendship Networks in Medieval Europe: New Models of a Political Relationship’, *Amity: The Journal of Friendship Studies*, 1 (2013): pp. 69–88.

⁴ Marika Lüders, ‘Becoming More Like Friends: A Qualitative Study of Personal Media and Social Life’, *Nordic Review*, 30: 1 (2009): pp. 201–16.

⁵ See for example Courtney DeMayo, ‘Ciceronian *Amicitia* in the Letters of Gerbert of Aurillac’, *Viator*, 38 (2007): pp. 319–38; Holle M. Canatella, ‘Friendship in Anselm of Canterbury’s Correspondence: Ideals and Experience’, *Viator*, 38 (2007): pp. 351–68; Constant J. Mews, ‘Cicero and the Boundaries of Friendship in the Twelfth Century’, *Viator*, 38 (2007): pp. 369–84; Cary J. Nederman, ‘Friendship in Public Life during the Twelfth Century: Theory and Practice in the Writings of John of Salisbury’, *Viator*, 38 (2007): pp. 385–97.

Recent scholarship on friendship in the Middle Ages presents some interesting views, although most of those studies focus on French, Italian and German examples, while far less attention has been dedicated to other areas, which were commonly regarded as the far-end frontiers of the known world.⁶ Among the major absentees there is Iberia, a fascinating and yet underexplored area as far as this subject is concerned. As María Isabel Alfonso suggested:

*Nadie, que yo sepa, ha emprendido la tarea de estudiar esta institución en España detenidamente y en todos los múltiples aspectos con que aparece en nuestros documentos medievales. Pienso que su estudio sería labor interesante no sólo como aportación a la Historia de las Instituciones sino también a la Historia de las mentalidades, dado que la 'amicitia' es fundamentalmente un modo de entender y plantearse las relaciones sociales en conexión, claro está, con el desenvolvimiento de determinadas formas económicas.*⁷

[Nobody, as far as I know, has ever studied this institution in Spain either in detail or considering the multiple aspects which appear in our medieval documents. I believe that not only will this study be interesting for the History of the Institutions, but also for the History of mentality, since friendship is a way of planning and understanding social relationships in connection with, obviously, the development of certain economic structures.]

⁶ Reginald Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship: The Idealization of Friendship in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature* (Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1994); *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Julian Haseldine (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999); *Friendship in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, ed. Marilyn Sandidge and Albrecht Classen (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2010). The latter includes one chapter on Iberia: Antonella Liuzzo Scorpo, 'Spiritual Friendship in the Works of Alfonso X of Castile: Images of Interaction between the Sacred and Spiritual Worlds of Thirteenth-Century Iberia', in Sandidge and Classen, *Friendship in the Middle Ages*, pp. 445–77.

⁷ María Isabel Alfonso, 'Sobre la "amicitia" en la España medieval', *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 170 (Madrid, 1973): pp. 379–86.

More than 40 years later, only Carlos Heusch and Marilyn Stone dedicated some attention to friendship in medieval Iberia, although at the core of their studies there was only one source: the aforementioned *Siete Partidas*.⁸

With these considerations in mind, I decided to focus my attention on the vibrant thirteenth-century period, conventionally labelled as the Peninsular ‘Renaissance’ for the splendour and advance achieved in different fields, including a renewed interest in both the representation and regulation of different types of social exchanges. This is also regarded as one of the most prolific periods in Spanish history in terms of both artistic and literary achievements, such as those undertaken under the patronage of its *ante litteram* and enlightened ruler: Alfonso X of Castile, later named ‘the Wise’ and ‘the Learned’. Classical philosophy, medicine, astronomy and even astral magic were some of the subjects which were made available in vernacular translations through the works produced in his scriptorium. He also supported the process of linguistic, administrative and – although highly debateable – political unification of his kingdom, sowing the seeds of a developing proto-national identity. Alfonso X was also one of the leaders of the Christian ‘Reconquest’ of the Southern part of the Peninsula still under Muslim control, although he experienced problematic, and in most cases unsuccessful, situations, among which his claim of the imperial title (*fecho del imperio*) and the failed conquest of Northern Africa (*fecho de allende*).⁹

At the core of my study there are three encyclopaedic collections produced in the Alfonsine scriptorium and chancery, true gems of artistic and aesthetic splendour, which offer a comparative overview of thirteenth-century ideas, interpretations and representations of

⁸ Carlos Heusch, ‘Les fondements juridiques de l’amitié à travers les Partidas d’Alphonse X et le droit médiéval’, *Cahiers de Linguistique Hispanique Médiévale*, 18–19 (1993–94): pp. 6–48; Marilyn Stone, *Marriage and Friendship in Medieval Spain: Social Relations According to the Fourth Partida of Alfonso X* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990).

⁹ More details on Alfonso X’s life and political career in Chapter 2. See also Carlos Estepa, ‘Alfonso X y el “fecho del imperio”’, *Revista de Occidente*, 37 (1984): pp. 43–54.

friendship. Namely, the sevenfold legislative code of the *Siete Partidas*, regulating any aspects of life concerning all subjects; the chronicles of the *Estoria de España*, which narrates events of the history of Spain from its origins up to the reign of Ferdinand III (r.1217–52), Alfonso X's father; and the *Cantigas de Santa María*, a collection of poems, enhanced with musical annotations and miniatures, displaying the miracles performed by the Virgin Mary, which also provides an insight into different devotional experiences within the complex ethnic and social panorama of medieval Iberia. The first two *compendia* were composed in the main vernacular of Castile (although regional variants are recognizable), while the Marian songs were written in Galician-Portuguese, which has been frequently referred to as the language of poetry *per antonomasia*, although the recent discovery of a parchment containing extracts from the *Siete Partidas* translated into Galician-Portuguese might suggest a much wider use of this language for multiple purposes.¹⁰

Social, legal, political, religious, ethnic and personal aspects were at stake – some of them simultaneously, some excluding each other – in shaping the multifarious meanings and typologies of friendship. Nonetheless, it is important to remember, as Duby remarked upon, that ‘our sources of information reflect reality to a certain extent, but all or nearly all of them were inevitably written at some distance from this reality’.¹¹ In the case of the Alfonsine production, despite the fact that it was regarded as the product of privileged and separated circles – the royal chancery and scriptorium – it is highly significant because it also presents a wide range of aspects and features depicting the lives and customs of the lowest subjects. Therefore, reading the Alfonsine works is like peering into thirteenth-century life through a two-way mirror, which gives access to both the highest and the lowest ways of establishing and maintaining friendships. Through the enlightened didactic norms and moral rules promoted in his literary,

¹⁰ For details on each of these works see Chapter 2.

¹¹ Georges Duby, *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), see in particular chapter ‘Towards a History of Woman in France and Spain’, pp. 95–101, at p. 100.

historical and legal production Alfonso X explicitly declared his desire to be respected and loved as a friend by all his subjects. However, it was his superior status which, in most cases, made such an instance very difficult to occur in reality.

Last but not least, these Alfonsine collections were imbued with elements from different times and traditions, which had converged into the bosom of the Peninsula.¹² Considering all this, another question which arises is to what extent were those contents originally and fully Alfonsine or were they rather the echoes of some Arabic chroniclers' voices (such as Ibn Alqama's) or the Roman jurists' sentences, which were translated and manipulated to fit this thirteenth-century royal production. Undeniably, there are clear points of coincidence, but there are as many, and even more, which are peculiarly Alfonsine. And with regard to these peculiarities, the lexicon of *amicitia* occupies a significant position. As Esther Pascua suggested, in official treaties of peace between kings as they appear in pre-vernacular sources, a whole range of words such as *fides*, *amor*, *placitum*, *convenientia*, *concordia*, *pax*, *securitas* and of course *amicitia*, were used 'in the attempt to exhaust the rich world of personal relations of medieval society'.¹³ Similarly, in the Alfonsine vernacular works, different terms, such as *amigo* or *compañero*, defined relationships as being conceptually different, even if sometimes coincident in practice.¹⁴

The parameters adopted to define the categories which appear in the Alfonsine works are numerous, and they include the typologies of the parties involved, their peculiarities – gender, age, position and social status – and the situations which led to the tightening of their amity bonds. All of these ingredients, mixed together in different quantities and qualities,

¹² On intertextuality and intersubjectivity see, for example, *Essays in Semiotics= Essais de sémiotique*, ed. Julia Kristeva, Josette Rey-Debove and Donna Jean Umiker (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).

¹³ Esther Pascua, 'Peace among Equals: War and Treaties in Twelfth-Century Europe', in *War and Peace in Ancient and Medieval History*, ed. Philip de Souza and John France (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 193–210, at p. 194.

¹⁴ *Amigo* (friend) and *compañero* (companion).

generated the several varieties of friendship examined in this study. Interestingly, modern sociological and anthropological definitions do not seem to differ radically from such medieval perceptions of what friendship was, how it should be established and through which means it should be preserved. For example, the sociologist Allan's argument that '[N]ot only do our friends help to provide us with our sense of identity, but they also confirm our social worth'¹⁵ recalls classical Greek ideas, very familiar to the medieval tradition, according to which friendship was both a personal and political link, beneficial and profitable in different spheres of human life.

How and to what extent are medieval representations of friendship the legacy of such a classical tradition, while paving the way to more nuanced, formulaic and multi-layered definitions of social, political, personal and perhaps emotional bonds? In order to answer these questions and present an overview of the changes experienced in the forms of establishing and interpreting *amicitia*, Chapter 1 maps out a history of friendship, from its classical philosophical definitions as *philia* and political connections between fellow citizens, to its medieval reinterpretations across Europe. Chapter 2 outlines the particular situation of Iberia during the reign of Alfonso X of Castile (r.1252–84) and discusses how his political and cultural projects reflected or embodied wider trends of change and continuity. A more detailed analysis of each individual collection is also provided to contextualize the thematic approach adopted in the following chapters, each dedicated to different categories of friendship. Chapter 3, for instance, presents spiritual and religious friendships. The latter recalls part of the characteristics of the spiritual connections, but only to secularize them, as it is evident from the analysis of the relationships established by clergymen either within or outside the cloister, as well as those between them and their believers. In Chapter 4, concerning relationships established within the secular spheres, special attention is dedicated to political friendships, the rules of which affected

¹⁵ Graham Allan, *Friendship: Developing a Sociological Perspective* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989). See also Liz Spencer and Raymond Edward Pahl, *Rethinking Friendship: Hidden Solidarities Today* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

military armistices and diplomatic affairs, among other pacts. Following the same line of thought, and considering the multicultural and multi-ethnic environment in which Alfonso X operated, Chapter 5 deals with interfaith relationships, including the pragmatic alliances signed between Christian rulers and Muslim leaders. A thought-provoking case study is that of a figure who later became the Spanish national hero, El Cid *Campeador*, as presented in the *Estoria de España*. The Alfonsine chronicle presents the self-made ruler of Valencia as the master of his own destiny, who skilfully managed to strengthen personal, political and vassalic networks with both Christian and Muslim lords. Whether it was a sense of vassalic duty or, more probably, a matter of mere convenience which motivated El Cid to establish such relationships, yet some of the key features conventionally attributed to friendship appear. To conclude, Chapter 6 deals with typologies of relationships which were catalogued as unconventional and in which the individuals involved were regarded as ‘others’ for their gender and positions, as much as they were (as demonstrated in the previous chapter) for their ethnic and religious backgrounds. Amorous and sexual connections, relationships with and between women, as well as cases of tutorship and companionship, are some of the examples which fall within this last category.

This journey into thirteenth-century Iberia, through the works of one of its most celebrated kings and patrons, Alfonso X, will provide an insight into what friendship meant in different entourages, while discovering characteristics which were strictly connected to contemporary historical contingencies, as well as envisaging elements which might be applicable to universal human experiences. Due to its interdisciplinary nature, this study touches upon a number of tangential, and sometimes overlapping, research fields such as cultural history, philosophy, literary studies and the history of emotions, among others. Yet, this is an intriguing subject still open to multiple interpretations, most of which are impossible to disentangle from ideas of personal and group identities; community; social and political networks; pragmatic needs of different kind; as well as from definitions and display of private and public emotions in medieval daily lives. Further research in this area is required and I believe that this study is a step to move forward in this direction