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Estrada, Oswaldo. *Troubled Memories: Iconic Mexican Women and the Traps of Representation*. State University of New York Press, 2018. xv, 244 pp.

Women have always served as icons of cultural identity in Latin America, whether as the Christian Virgin Mary, political icons (La Monja Alférez, Manuela Sáenz, Eva Perón), folkloric figures (La Difunta Correa), fictional characters (María, Amalia, Iracema, Cecilia Valdés), or even as satiric figures (La India María, Catita), not to mention miscellaneous popular icons (Carmen Miranda, Tongolele), as well as globalized advertising images (Chiquita Banana). Many of these figures have been examined in detail, often in exemplary scholarly depth. While one might be tempted to dismiss most as superficial in import, often essentially trivial figures like Carmen Miranda may be examined from multiple perspectives that shed considerable understanding of national, continental, and international cultural processes. And in the cases of truly important figures, such as Eva Perón, critical fields of knowledge may be organized around that icon, as evinced by the extensive research bibliography associated with her.

Mexico is no exception in providing a dense field of female cultural icons, and as Estrada writes, “As icons, all of them have become symbols of national identity—associated with the Conquest of Mexico, the colonial era, the birth of the nation, the Mexican Revolution, and the postrevolutionary era” (3). Estrada goes on to characterize how, while all icons are likely to have routes identifiable in terms of specific sociohistorical circumstances, abiding icons transcend originating parameters to take on successive embodiments characterized by evolving meanings, increasingly diverse, increasingly complex and most characteristically as energetically contested sites of the societal imaginary, one might add. This is certainly the case with the Virgen de Guadalupe, a figure forged in crucible of a founding Mexican Creole identity and efficiently marshalled for successive inflections of that identity, such that, until very recent decades, along with the figure of the national President, she was essentially uncontested as the paragon of the nation. Yet, one sees the fascinating reinterpretations of the Virgen in Chicana identity politics, most especially with the Chicana feminist and lesbian appropriations of her figure.

Estrada undertakes to examine the complexities of five Mexican cultural icons. It is significant that he does not focus primarily on only major literary figures, whether authors like Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (such figures are doubly important: their lives are iconic, and their works are iconic and provide icons) or fictional personages. It is not just that there is already an extensive bibliography on many of them, but that the cultural realm offers so many to choose from. Estrada’s five choices are unquestionably prime figures and constitute very much of a centering canon: Malinche, Sor Juana, Leona Vicario, Adelita, and Frida Kahlo. The first two and the last one are expected and necessary choices, and Adelita indexes the figure of the *soldadera* and the revision of women’s roles in Mexican society that can be traced back to the important role women played in and on the margins of combat during the Mexican Revolution. Leona Vicario (1789-1842) is a less obvious. Although known to Mexicans as a “secret messenger” of the protracted revolutionary struggle against Spain and as an exemplar of those individuals of social and wealth and privilege who supported the Creole insurrection, she hardly enjoys the iconic role of Mexican identity associated, say, with Frida Kahlo. Yet her iconicity is central in referencing a particular mythification of the female endorsement of patriarchal projects, especially as a model for the domestic fortress and patriotic hearth.

Estrada's approach to these icons is to examine in depth important cultural texts that engage with the complexity of these female icons, from like soap operas that recycle received ideologies to deconstructive works of fiction in which there is an inquiry into the process of iconization and a layered portrayal of the clash between nationally serviceable icons and the contradictions of female empowerment in explicitly male-centered societies and their official histories. The result makes for exceptionally interesting critical readings. *Troubled Memories* may well serve as a model for parallel studies of female icons and feminist sociocultural discourses in other Latin American national traditions.

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Juárez-Almendros, Encarnación. *Disabled Bodies in early Modern Spanish Literature: Prostitutes, Aging Women and Saints*. Liverpool University Press, 2017. 201 pp.

Encarnación Juárez-Almendros' meticulous study of women's roles in early modern Spanish literature opens our eyes to a vanished world of discrimination, neglect, and false beliefs. This volume sets out to analyze the roles of women as represented in both literature and personal writings in the late fifteenth to seventeenth centuries from a feminist and disability perspective. In particular, the author focuses on the ways in which the female body was conceptualized, controlled, and denigrated by the social construction and conformity of the time. She theorizes that having a female body in early modern Spain was to be subject to a cognitive and socialized framework of disability. Women were consigned to being inferior by males in power in ecclesiastical, legal, governmental, as well as informal settings. Simply as a result of their embodiment, women endured rejection, stigmatization, lack of freedom and scant personal development.

The introduction provides a significant overview of Disability Studies, which situates this analysis within the parameters of theoretical approaches on this topic. The chapters that follow scrupulously examine early medical, religious and literary texts that illustrate the culture and beliefs that resulted in the conclusion that women's bodies were weak and inferior. Juárez-Almendros consults examples of early Spanish literature to survey and analyze the representation of prostitutes and syphilitic female bodies over time, noting a change from strong female characters in the fifteenth century to repulsive sub-human beings with defective bodies in the seventeenth century. She concludes that the presence of syphilis in women of early modern Spain was used by religious and moral powers to justify the inferior role of women in society and was "used as a significant trope to express alterity and rejection of difference in the period (75).

A further analysis of early modern Spanish literature reveals a disparaging view of aging women, those whose wizened features and gnarled joints are testimonies to their defective and unproductive bodies. Early modern Spanish authors generally presented aging women in a degrading way, as comic figures or witches. Juárez-Almendros notes that *Compendio*, a fifteenth-century medical text, warns its readers to be wary of aging women (85). Aging women often served as healers and midwives, positions which were downplayed, brought into disrepute, and mistrusted. Juárez-Almendros explores the relationship between the Spanish Inquisition and the treatment of aging female bodies, citing the persecution of