## Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos

# SUSAN ANTEBI. Embodied Archive: Disability in Post-Revolutionary Mexican Cultural Production. U of Michigan P, 2021. x +225 pp.

## April Knupp

Volume 45, numéro 2, hiver 2021

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1100813ar DOI : https://doi.org/10.18192/rceh.v45i2.6713

Aller au sommaire du numéro

#### Éditeur(s)

Asociación Canadiense de Hispanistas

ISSN

0384-8167 (imprimé) 2564-1662 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

#### Citer ce compte rendu

Knupp, A. (2021). Compte rendu de [SUSAN ANTEBI. Embodied Archive: Disability in Post-Revolutionary Mexican Cultural Production. U of Michigan P, 2021. x +225 pp.] *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos, 45*(2), 506–509. https://doi.org/10.18192/rceh.v45i2.6713



érudit

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/

### Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

https://www.erudit.org/fr/



the role of French food in the establishment of a Mexican national identity under Porfirio Díaz, and the role played by Chinese food contributions in Peru. Many of the chapters explore the role that food plays as signifier in the negotiation of national and socioeconomic identities. Equally engaging and relevant are the approaches that explore food as a value in the racial construction of the nation state. In this context, food emerges as a key component of discourse of mestizaje or miscegenation. The wealth of approaches and materials studied are helpfully organized into four thematic sections. Taking colonial Mexico and Peru as points of departure, the first part of the book emphasizes the importance of Indigenous traditions and legacies, as well as their impact on later cultures and politics, together with the role food plays in helping understand decolonization. The idea of modernity and all its attendant notions are the focus of the second part, which explores the role of food in the formation of national identities and their concomitant narratives, while calling attention to transnational relations and the concept of modernity. Part 3 looks at food and gender, interrogating traditional perceptions of the link between food and female spaces. Chapters in this section propose the consideration of home spaces related to food as centers of empowerment while they interrogate perceptions of male-female power relations in that setting. Part 4 takes up theoretical and pedagogical notions, helping cement Latin American gastrocriticism as a field. The book will be an enjoyable read to academics and the general public alike. As María Paz Moreno foresees in her Epilogue, the important matter of food will continue to inspire much-needed studies. The studies included in this volume prove how productive and engaging the field of Food Studies can be, and helpfully points to critical areas of study where food can provide a vital through line to thereby enrich other disciplines.

ANA M. GÓMEZ-BRAVO University of Washington

SUSAN ANTEBI. Embodied Archive: Disability in Post-Revolutionary Mexican Cultural Production. U of Michigan P, 2021. x +225 pp.

Presently disability studies and its multiple intersections have molded the way in which Latin American cultural productions are being analyzed, despite the relatively newer emergence of this critical approach in the field. Amongst this centralized focus on disability is the groundbreaking research by Susan Antebi titled *Embodied Archive*, which contributes valuable findings on the intersections of disability and race in the post-revolutionary

Mexican national context. This book seeks to demonstrate how disability contingencies shape the way in which bodily differences are viewed and categorized, and how, in turn, disability influences the narratives in which such differences are portrayed.

*Embodied Archive* is broken into five chapters, an introduction, and an epilogue, all permitting the reader to make connections to Antebi's in-depth analysis of race, disability, and perspective in both literary and archival documents in post-revolutionary Mexico. The layout of the text is highly engaging, as Antebi includes copies of charts, reports, photos, and sketches to visually bridge a connection between her topics of investigation. To support her analysis, Antebi utilizes disability theory framework by numerous disability scholars, as well as investigates other notions and areas of study, such as eugenics, psychopedagogy, functionalism, biotypology, statistics, phenomenology and racialization, wounding/scaring, and temporal asymmetry.

In the first chapter, Antebi introduces the notions of eugenics and racial difference in the novel *Eugenia* by Eduardo Urzaiz and the influence of Mexican nationalism and disability in relation to temporal contingencies. She delves into an analysis of race through *mestizaje* and how race and disability function in conjunction with the act of seeing and eugenic discourse, connecting Urzaiz's point of view with that of José Martí. Antebi also touches on examples of racial difference in Urzaiz's book *Reconstrucción de hechos: Anécdotas yucatecas ilustradas*, comparing his work with that of Jean Martin Charcot, both of whom demonstrate that race and disability materialize with the other's gaze.

In Chapter 2, Antebi shifts focus to archival documents of anti-alcohol and hygiene campaigns of the 1920s and 30s, and José Vasconcelos's *The Cosmic Race* and *Ética*, connecting past and future collectives to disability contingency, and racialized identity. She stresses the relationship between disability and temporality, linking Mexican eugenics to race, addiction, hygiene, and prediction of future disability, such as in national anti-alcohol campaigns focusing on the deleterious, transgenerational effects of alcoholism on the Indigenous subject.

The third chapter discusses Mexican state ideology and the connection between pathology of both humans and architecture in schools in Mexico City during the 1920s and 30s. These schools were overseen by a *médico escolar*, who diagnosed both children and buildings. Antebi analyzes work done by the Department of Psychopedagogy and Hygiene, and the National Institute of Psychopedagogy, and makes ties to artist and architect Juan O'Gorman and his work on hygienic and functionalist school designs, underscoring the problem of linking disability exclusively to the hygiene of social and material spaces. Chapter 4 focuses on how the use of statistics shapes perceptions of disability. Antebi shows that statistics "tends to devalue and dehumanize disability and racial difference" (155) and proves how disability and racial differences develop through historical processes, observation of the other, and numerical statistics. Antebi demonstrates these points through her analysis of statements by engineer García de Mendoza on Mexican eugenics, and research on autism by psychiatrists José Gómez Robleda and Leo Kanner. She underscores how these works show skin (race) as a vehicle for diagnosis and a continuity of the physical malady.

The final chapter discusses how wounded and disabled war bodies effectively narrate the events and aftermath of the Mexican Revolution and can affect the chronology of history in literary texts which seek to generate a nationalist identity. By using novels by Rafael F. Muñoz (*Se llevaron el cañón para Bachimba* and *¡Vámonos con Pancho Villa!*), Antebi proves a perpetuation of wounds, even post-revolution, affecting temporality and creating a cyclic violence shown through disability aesthetics and the "thrill of otherness" (206). Antebi reminds the reader that allegiance and wounding was a common theme during the revolution, and that "ideals of nation and revolution transcend the materiality of a given body" (217).

Antebi closes with the "Epilogue", where she underscores the dilemmas in both modern-day and past Mexico of placing the disabled person in an uncertain, marginalized category and space, hoping that through her archive, society may begin to rethink human differences and recognize the "discursive and literal violence" (225) observed throughout her work.

In her innovative study, Antebi seeks to demonstrate how the treatment of disability in the past can echo into the future. She graciously discusses her own diagnosis in the introduction, a detail that allows the reader to understand her connection to the work at hand and seamlessly segue into her investigation. The various theoretical notions applied in each chapter create a multi-dimensional analysis that undeniably connects each work studied. In this way, the reader can visualize a certain cohesion amongst the chapters, even though they vary in topic. It is worth noting that in each chapter there are multiple sub-headings and sections, allowing Antebi to explore several works, ideas, and theoretical notions within one chapter, creating a dynamic study of both archival and literary texts that demonstrates violence stemming from causal perspectives that marginalize the disabled body. This embodied archive is an "encounter that shapes the conditions through which we unravel and reimagine our own disability genealogies" (27) and reminds us to rethink how we see and perceive bodily difference.

Through *Embodied Archive*, Antebi creates an archival narrative that allows the reader to connect disability and race to works of post-

revolutionary Mexico, and understand the complexity of disability contingencies and their effect on mediating bodily difference. Her research, writing, and analysis is challenging yet provides the reader with a clear view and new perspective on the issues of disability and race in the Global South. Antebi's book is a valuable, interdisciplinary study for any scholar who focuses on cultural representations of Mexico and for those who seek to better understand the importance of disability studies in relation to both literary and archival documents of Latin America.

APRIL KNUPP Grove City College

DAVID ARBESÚ, ED. Sendebar: Libro de los engaños e los asayamientos de las mugeres. Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2019. 152 pp.

The Sendebar or Libro de los engaños de las mugeres, a collection of framed tales translated by the Infante Fadrique, brother of Alfonso X the Wise, in 1253, is among the first works of prose narrative in Castilian. It is now available in a new edition by David Arbesú published by Juan de la Cuesta. The collection of twenty-three tales is framed by the story of King Alcos, whose son, returning to the court after years with his tutor, Cendubete, has been falsely accused by a member of his father's harem, one of his ninety wives, of raping her. In reality, the son has rejected her advances. While the court waits for the son to finish his week-long vow of silence, members of the court tell a series of tales to pass the time and to show the trickery of women and thus convince the king that he should at least wait before executing his son. When at last the son is able to speak, King Alcos realizes that he is wise and educated, and that his wife has betrayed him. She is punished and the prince is saved. The Castilian text was translated from Arabic and the text is of Indian and Persian origins. Versions of it circulated throughout Europe in a wide variety of languages under different titles into the sixteenth century. Like the Calila e Dimna, translated in the same decade and of similar origins, Sendebar sits at the crossroads between Eastern literary traditions, carried to Iberia and the rest of Europe through Arabic, and the beginnings of Castilian prose narrative. Arbesú's edition of Sendebar is a useful, accessible version of a very rich text and should be of interest to researchers, and also students from the advanced undergraduate to graduate level.

The editor includes a detailed introduction to the text and its textual tradition. Since the work is conserved in a single manuscript, MS 15 of the Real Academia Española, the so-called *Puñonrostro* manuscript, a fifteenth-