Review of *Nomadic New Women: Exile and Border-Crossing Between Spain and the Americas, Early to Mid-Twentieth Century* edited by Renée M. Silverman & Esther Sánchez-Pardo (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024, 380 pp. ISBN: 3031624815).

The current global situation concerning forced displacement and outgrowing drastic immigration policies requires urgent scholarly acknowledgment. *Nomadic New Women: Exile and Border-Crossing Between Spain and the Americas, Early to Mid-Twentieth Century*, edited by Renée M. Silverman and Esther Sánchez-Pardo, dexterously attend to these matters through the prismatic lens of the arts. By approaching the life and works of early and mid-twentieth century female writers and visual artists, the contributors to this volume suggest that the period in which the modernist movement developed shares many of its traits with today's international affairs. The present raise of the liberal right in Europe and America, the new identities fighting for recognition, and the deracination of oppressed multitudes seem to mirror the turmoil of sudden changes which took place as the twentieth century unfolded. *Nomadic New Women* exudes thus actuality by presenting a radically innovative creative outcome derived from the trauma of exile.

In the introduction to the volume, the term *nomadic woman* is given to those artists who, under the influence of uncertainty, were forced or decided to cross borders and create a unique diaspora in places of refuge like Mexico, the Caribbean and the USA. All the artists considered share an intellectual restlessness, versatility, and creative fulfilment which originates in a boarding crossing framed by gender and sexuality. Sánchez-Pardo and Silverman explain that in their study they follow Braidotti's "cartographic method," "a theoretically based and politically informed reading of the process of power relations" (Braidotti 4). However, they make clear that they distance themselves from Braidotti's postmetaphysical vision of subjectivity which relies on the ontological rhizomes of Deleuze and Guattari: identity is central in *Nomadic New Women,* in which the postmodern is defined by a marked performativity and the absence of historical anchoring and identity fixing (Sánchez-Pardo and Silverman 10). The essays in the book present women *embedded in circumstances* border-crossing Spain and the Americas and occupying liminal spaces of "becoming" which shelter and develop the self in an aseptic detachment. The authors' incisive use of geographical material as both facilitator and isolator, a subjective map which renders the particularities of Anglo-Hispanic communities, reveals how these flâneuses –in order of appearance Marina Romero, Ana María Martínez Sagi, Zenobia Camprubí, Isabel de Palencia, María Zambrano, Gertrude Stein, Janet Riesenfeld, Leonora Carrington, Kati Horna, Lupe Vélez, Dolores del Río and Maruja Mallo– were to develop new, unconventional ways of seeing and being. Via uprooting and its resulting psychic trauma, these artists were to challenge gender constructions, an imposed sexuality, and the fixity of social orders, shaping a counterfigure to the well-stablished highly educated and socio-economically élite man.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2025.91.14

Divided into three different sections, the volume opens with "Part I: Women Writing (in) Exile: Art, Life, Politics," which partly focuses on how authors manage to impress homelessness –defined as the projection of home– in both texts intended for publication and private writings. The reader acknowledges that these modernist nomadic women needed to and were capable of developing particular styles which, by means of radically different experiments with language, achieved to mirror the unreal present they underwent. Ana Eire opens the discussion with her essay "The Intimacy of Distance," which comments on the poetry of Marina Romero as a representation "of the self as host of the other" (45). As many female writers associated with the Generation of 27 or the Spanish Republican diaspora, Marina Romero has been drastically overlooked by scholars and critics. Eire makes us realise how after Francisco Franco's coup d'état in July 1936, the forced displacement of poets generated a homeless literature which deserved a homecoming and went on its quest. This is the matter which guides the poems in Romero's second book "Nostalgia de Mañana" (Mexico 1943), which presents the upheaval that exiles experience. Eire states that this collection displays the problems which come out of the defensive predisposition of relying solely on personal subjectivity and understanding the other as an alien. Marina Romero employs a grammar necessary to showcase this issue, playing with pronouns, for instance, in order to delude who *is.* There are instances of symbolic union in her poetry, which, by relying on Romantic and even alchemical motifs, allows for a proper description of the dwelling for existence Romero experimented. Eire suggests that union of self and other is sought for inward reconciliation, as Romero tries to compensate the fact that for her exile is not a correlative space, but a breakage, a partition from reference. In poems like "Sin Agua" ("Without Water") Romero achieves "meaning beyond the impoverished referentiality of isolated words" (Eire 34), creating a web of semanticity which plays with the idea of being and non-being. Objects in her poetry are removed from more complex ones containing them, but the latter do not cease to be, just as the self loses apparently fixed properties but that does not stop it from *becoming*. Lines like "Without water, / the sea. / Without time / the clock. / Without air, / The sigh." prove to state the difficulty of defining reality by commenting on its possible lack of essence. The contradiction of being without a core seems to haunt Romero, whose poetry tenderly suggests that when one has been stripped from home, life in exile goes tautologically on and on "as a merry-go-round" (Eire 43) in the quest for what is lost.

Leonor María Martínez Serrano has a share in this first part of *Nomadic Women*, "Words in Space," which focuses on the exile diary of Zenobia Camprubí. This essay works as a successful transition between the poetry written in Spanish of María Romero and Ana María Martínez Sagi and the texts in English which many of the regarded authors produced, setting the defining tone of the volume. Martínez Serrano develops a chapter partly devoted to a colourful depiction of Camprubí's and her husband Juan Ramón Jiménez's biographical data, which widens the volume's thematical scope. Camprubí is presented as a cosmopolitan polyglot who, contrary to the custom of the time, travelled extensively as a child and adolescent, leaving Spain for the U.S.A. in 1904 at the age of seventeen and returning five years later known as "La Americanita." In her essay Martínez Serrano considers Camprubí's twenty years kept diary and correspondence, which she regards a piece of bilingual literature that works as an ever-lasting umbilical cord connecting the writer with Spain. Language in her memoirs is taken as an escape from the reality of exile, since Camprubí wrote in Spanish while being in English-speaking spaces and vice versa. This is taken by Martínez Serrano as an instance of the author's long search for privacy, reflected widely in her diary through her obsession with single rooms: "I dream with building a large bedroom with a fire place and many windows which will be mine and free me from everyone else" (91). Home is for Camprubí a metaphor for stability and intimacy, something she looks for even after reaching emancipation by lecturing in Maryland in 1944, as she comments on the losing of intimacy after marriage. In her diaries one can admire her "sensory intellectual alertness" (92), her capacity to connect body and non-human

matter. Through descriptive catalogues such as the views from her rooms in exile –"the seashell-rose tinted opened a glorious path toward the unreal light and all of a sudden made all one's child dreams true" (93)– Camprubí, as Marina Romero, regards objects not as passive, but as a dynamic tangent to humanity. Both the natural world of her paradises of exile, Cuba and Puerto Rico, where she felt a dream had come true (Martínez Serrano 84), and the Hopper-like urban instances of Miami and Maryland prove to be the source of the adaptability Zenobia Camprubí coveted after deserting Spain in August 1936.

In the last essay to be commented on from this first section, "María Zambrano's Caribbean Imaginings," Esther Sánchez-Pardo effectively gives the reader a glimpse of Zambrano's extensive oeuvre by focusing on her work written in Cuba and the lesser Antilles. Zambrano's production during this period –in the form of letters, pieces in journals or bits of memories– is said to include some of her most representative pieces, allowing us to understand the crucial factors which defined her trajectory. Sánchez-Pardo rightfully speaks of a new hybrid genre tailored by Zambrano, a blending of personal data, philosophic material and lyrical instances which goes beyond the "structures of genre taxonomy" (124). Moreover, the paper swirls around the concept of the island as a liminal space where Zambrano dwelled outside the normative constructs of space and time, in a "time outside time" (131) which allowed her to wonder and meditate on loss and the hope for recovery. Puerto Rico, understood as an insular hinge between North and South Americas, leads Zambrano to reflect between daydream and dream, acting as a mirror of the solitude of the self. Her *insularism* becomes hence a concept framed under a nostalgia in which the western heritage is recalled, which somehow seems a relieving compensation for the fragile condition Zambrano bore as a leftist in exile. As Sánchez-Pardo points out, her writings on the islands explored essential themes tied to insularism –light, coastline, and sea– which she reconfigured into philosophical ideas concerning sight, awareness, temporality, and historical understanding. However, Zambrano's own utopian "liveable world" was considered by her to be a problematic realm which turns the European landscape into a mirage, a pure horizon. As Sánchez-Pardo writes by means of a lush tapestry of quotes and references, Zambrano acknowledged, only after exiting her own liminal Atlantic spheres, that encounter with time would be the awakening of the dream. In Zambrano's Caribbean texts, a hopeful future for Spain and Europe after the fratricidal wars is imagined, which proves that her individual intellect represented that of a community of selective migrants which formed a true diaspora of women philosophers and artists. Something stated by M. Silverman and Sánchez-Pardo truly resonates in this essay –dissociation and uprooting, either brutal or smooth, reveals the importance of adaptability in a completely new environment. In the case of Zambrano this takes the form of a self-aware delusional hope for the lost territory. Julie Highfill's essay "The Scene of the Firing Squad" follows this first approach to Zambrano, working as an eye-opening piece which takes up many of the motifs regarded in the previous one, such as the collective dream destiny of Republican Spain. In fact, this pair of essays lean on each other and aid to elaborate on the elegiac capacities and textual experimentation of María Zambrano's heartrending memoirs.

The second section of *Nomadic Women*, "Border-Crossing: Displacement and Creativity," consists of three pieces which cover the evolution of the style of the arts of Gertrude Stein, Janet Riesenfeld, and Leonora Carrington in relation to their experiences in exile. Anett K. Jessop's "Gertrude Stein Off Centre in Spain" is a most significant overview of the experimental literary techniques that this American writer developed in Spain between 1901 and 1916. Jessop comments upon Stein's purposes and achievements by framing the author's conflicting narratives and poems under what she names a reversal of the *picaresque*, a technique conceived in a land which offered a space free from the frenzy of the U.S.A. Through an analysis of her early novel *Q.E.D.* (1903), the central *Three Lives* (1909) and the collection of poems *Tender Buttons* (1914), Jessop pays attention to the presence of the archetype of the Spanish picaresque genre under the light of a reversal of heteronormative plots and courtly love. Concerning the modernist experimentation

central to Stein, Jessop insists on her remarkable use of blurred pronouns and homophonic puns in order to shake the long-stablished roles taking place in a relationship understood under binary opposites. This gives a lesbian twist to the chivalric tradition, which still ironically drinks from works like *Don Quixote* and *The Life of Lazarillo of Tormes.* Even of more interest are Jessop's the commentaries on the employment of a "wandering" language (119) to portray a continuous state of becoming. Stein's non-archetypal characters such as Adele in *Q.E.D.* and most notably Melanctha in *Three Lives* show the very real mistrust and misunderstanding of what partners really want. This essay denounces the recognition that Stern missed when she published her most representative pieces, which can be observed in John Reid's 1937 article in Hispania Magazine. Reid's influential text considered authors like Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos major voices that spelt out the matter of Spain in the North American sphere, reducing the figure of Stein to a side observant in a single footnote. In this regard, Jessop rightfully acknowledges that without Stein's experimentations in her exile, central modernist works developed in the following two decades –definitely Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* and perhaps Stevie Smith's varied oeuvre– could never have been conceived.

This second section closes with Javier Martín Párraga's "From British Sorcery to *El Mundo Mágico de Los Mayas*: Leonora Carrington's Cultural Hybridity." The title of this piece does pretty much explain its content and purpose: to trace Carrington's literary and visual evolution across the different cultural areas she fostered herself in. In this essay, she is considered by Martín Párraga not only a worthy member of the surrealist movement and André Breton's sect, but also one of its most representative and a central one. As is the case with all the nomadic new women presented in the volume, and despite of her pioneering techniques, the importance of Carrington has been through the years minimized under the shade of Max Ernst (her partner for a time during her stay in France), André Breton and Salvador Dalí –like many female writers of her movement, she was patronizingly reduced to a "femme-enfant" (238). Martín Párraga illustrates her family background, particularly the importance of the Irish myths ever-present in her household and how she would develop a personal mythology by blending her Celtic influence with those archetypes she found wherever she travelled to. Moreover, the essay works as a delineation of her movements across United Kingdom, France, Spain and Mexico, with Martín Párraga insisting on the traumatic experience she underwent during her time in Madrid. Being raped by a group of requetés in Madrid after fleeing from the unstable conditions in Paris, she suffered from a breakdown and was taken to a mental asylum in Santander. After being released she went directly to the Mexican embassy, finally arriving to Mexico in 1942 after living eighteen months in New York. The place was for her as Wonderland for Alice (251), an environment in which she experienced an emotional and intellectual journey which led her to produce her most stylistically personal paintings and culminated with the production of her 1974 novel *The Hearing Trumpet*, to which Martín Párraga illustratively comments on as a way of closing the final pages of his contribution to *Nomadic New Women*.

The third and last section of the volume, "New Women, New Art Forms," compiles three essays which cover the visual works of photographer Kati Horna, actresses Lupe Vélez and Dolores del Río, and painter Maruja Mallo. The closing essay, Reneé M. Silverman's "A Double Exile," guides us across the influences and final experimenting creations of Galician painter Maruja Mallo. We are reminded that Mallo firstly presented her work in a 1928 solo exhibition lead by Revista de Occidente, founded by philosopher Ortega y Gasset. Silverman insists on how Mallo's work transcends the feminine, fitting into a new art and new production separated from the masculine objectivity of Ortega. Moreover, her potential "shortcomings of abstraction" (325) became acute after having to flee Spain as a consequence of war. She claimed that cubism is a subjective style for a minority, which is not employed merely to represent but to create a new reality in perspective. After her journey to South America, Mallo introduced certain motifs in her art, as can be seen in the series *Naturalezas Vivas* (*Live Nature*). She distanced herself from the multitudes of her early

works such as the surrealist painting *La Verbena* (1927), and focused on a detailed taxonomic function oozing, as Silvermans put it, sensuality, consciousness, and oceanic motifs. Lastly, Silverman considers the 1941-1951 series *Cabezas de Mujer (Heads of Women)*, with special focus on the solemn *Cabeza de Mujer Negra* (*Black Woman Head*) and the theriologic *El Ciervo Humano* (*The Human Deer*). Through these works, Mallo aims to portray the "polyethnic nature of South America," (337) guided by the perspective of her exile and a longing for a just and harmonious coexistence among humanity.

Nomadic New Women stands out for its ability to intertwine the development of diverse art forms with biographical and geopolitical contexts, resulting in a rich and insightful volume supported by meticulous research. Through a tapestry of vivid perspectives on literature and the visual arts, the collection compellingly explores how the trauma of deracination shaped and informed the creative output of women artists and intellectuals. In addition, while some essays offer accessible and comprehensive introductions to the lives and works of the figures they examine, others –such as those focusing on Marina Romero, María Zambrano, and Gertrude Stein– delve into more intricate theoretical frameworks, offering readings that will appeal particularly to the specialized public. This balance of accessible narrative and scholarly depth makes the volume a valuable resource not only for academics and researchers but also for general readers and students interested in the intersections of exile, identity, and artistic production. The contributors keenly deal with the fact that via uprooting, the deconstruction of gender roles, new identities and queer existence find their impression in a wide range of arts. Ultimately, *Nomadic New Women* stands as a testament, a fruitful dialogue which offers a nuanced and thought-provoking contribution to the fields of gender studies, exile literature, and transnational art history, ever resonating with today's fragile global situation.

Reviews sent to the authors: 23/4/2025
Revised paper accepted for publication: 12/7/2025

Antonio Jiménez Hernando
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

WORKS CITED

Braidotti, Rosi. 2011. *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti*. Columbia UP.

Silverman, Renée M., and Esther Sánchez-Pardo, eds. 2024. *Nomadic New Women: Exile and Border-Crossing between Spain and the Americas, Early to Mid-Twentieth Century*. Palgrave.