

VICTORIA L. KETZ, DAWN SMITH-SHERWOOD, AND DEBRA FASZER-MCMAHON,  
EDS. *A Laboratory of Her Own. Women and Science in Spanish Culture*.  
Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2021. 398 pp.

In the engaging interview that closes the first part of *A Laboratory of Her Own*, Spanish scientist María Jesús Santemases candidly discusses the difficulty in addressing historical silence and forgetting, specifically citing the dearth of scientific debates during the Franco years (1939-1975) and the reluctance to revisit that silence. She affirms, "I think that there is an analysis of the history of the sciences in Spain to be completed" (136). She ponders the way this could be done: "I would like to participate in this discussion [about the historical memory related to science]. I believe that I have tried a couple of times with friends, but that hasn't been easy. Then for it to be a useful project, we really need to convene meetings and write books about it" (136). The present volume is a resounding success in addressing exactly what Santemases mentions in the interview as the coming together of like minds in the often-difficult process of gathering, editing, and publishing cutting-edge research on forgotten and silenced history. Victoria Ketz, Dawn Smith-Sherwood, and Debra Faszler-McMahon have made a huge impact with the present book in starting the conversation about women and science in Spanish culture. A very ambitious project, the book swells with historical information, transnational approaches, and personal biographies of women scientists threaded together with astute and provocative literary and visual textual analyses. The editors have brought together an impressive array of very strong essays that are exciting to read as they all point to future possibilities of continued research in the field.

The book is divided into three interrelated sections: "On Role Models: Female Scientists and Spanish Letters," "On STE(A)M: Integrating Scientific Inquiry into the Cultural Realm," and "On Gender: Using STEM to Critique Gendered Roles." Part 1 opens with an overview by Smith-Sherwood on the precarious nature of trying to fit women into both the scientific and literary canons. This section also includes studies that focus primarily on rescuing women scientists from relative obscurity. Silvia Bermúdez writes about women's health and the pioneering work of Elena Arnedo Soriano (1941-2015), Ellen Mayock studies the intricacies of text and intertext in Rosa Montero's hybrid meditation on the life and work of Marie Curie, *La ridícula idea de no volver a verte* (2013), while Erika M. Sutherland takes the reader back to the *fin de siècle* in a revision of Spain's public health history that highlights the work of Rosario de Acuña (1851-1923). Two editors of the volume, Ketz and Faszler-McMahon, round out the first part with the aforementioned interview with Santemases, a member of the Department

of Science, Technology, and Society at the Institute of Philosophy of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC).

Part 2 explores cultural representations of scientific inquiry and the chapters reveal how art and literature validate specific methodologies by disseminating provocative visual and verbal images. For example, FaszermcMahon analyzes the poetics of theoretical (meta)physics in the works of Clara Janés while Marta del Pozo Ortea studies the posthuman in scientific paintings by Remedios Varo. In a standout chapter, Leslie Anne Merced discusses subversive translation practices used by Carmen de Burgos as feminist resistance in her translation of the nineteenth century Möbius's misogynistic work on the mental inferiority of women. Also in this section, Miguel Soler Gallo studies contrasting images of women scientists in the early postwar period (1940-45) as featured in *María Elena, ingeniero de caminos* (1940) by Mercedes Ballesteros under the pseudonym of Sylvia Visconti. Rounding out the section, Maryanne L. Leone analyzes three works by Rosa Montero, *Instrucciones para salvar al mundo* (2008), *La ridícula idea de no volver a verte* (2013), and *El peso del corazón* (2015), all of which include female scientist characters.

Part 3 "focuses on the way cultural production related to science challenges traditional categories and boundaries, not only for women in STEM fields but also in racialized, colonial, literary, and other varied contexts" (19-20). Mirla González studies how the construction of utopias/dystopias upends traditional gender hierarchies in two Spanish science fiction novels, *Consecuencias naturales* (1994) by Elia Barceló and Gabriela Bustelo's *Planeta hembra* (2001). Ketz follows with a chapter that focuses on Einstein's theory of relativity and time travel in Marina Mayoral's short story "Admirados colegas" (1995). Moving to visual culture, Inés Plasencia's chapter, the most stunning and innovative in the collection, analyzes how Fernandinas (the female African elite on the island Fernando Poo) are represented in photography of the colonial period that "narrated, manipulated, and therefore constructed the social order" (316). The historical contextualization of racial politics in colonial Equatorial Guinea and the abundance of remarkable photographic reproductions make this chapter a unique and timely contribution. In the final chapter of the section that also closes the book, Raquel Vega-Durán turns to media studies, focusing on the films *Eva* (2011) and *Órbita 9* (2017) to show how narrative structure challenges gender roles and ingrained gendered categories of scientific inquiry.

A short two-page foreword by Roberta Johnson opens the volume giving a very brief overview of the often-overlooked women in Spanish literature and culture. As to be expected, Johnson's observations are astute and her writing engaging and moving, leaving this reader wishing for more.

However, as is, the book is a hefty tome of innovative and very timely research that fills a huge gap in the study of women's cultural production in Spain. The volume is carefully edited and includes translations of all Spanish citations making it accessible to a large audience. Color reproductions of Varo's work would enhance the volume (however, they can easily be found online) and there is some repetition as analyses of Montero's book (*La ridícula idea de no volver a verte*) appear in three different chapters. Nevertheless, this book is an extremely useful pedagogical tool for both undergraduate and graduate courses on Spanish literary and visual history as well as for women's studies courses. Researchers will welcome the in-depth analyses that introduce new ways of looking at art and literature and inspire future research in this groundbreaking area.

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ALFREDO MARTÍNEZ EXPÓSITO. *Disidencia e hipernormalización: Ensayos sobre sexualidad y masculinidades*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2021. 270 pp.

El propósito de este libro está perfectamente recogido en su título. Alfredo Martínez Expósito propone una reflexión sobre cómo la producción cultural reciente de España y Latinoamérica, la literatura y el cine en particular, ofrecen representaciones disidentes con respecto a los procesos de hipernormalización de masculinidades LGBTQ+ que se han estado desarrollando en las últimas dos décadas. Se trata de una colección de ensayos escritos por el autor entre 2008 y 2020, algunos previamente publicados en revistas académicas, otros inéditos. Todos ellos fueron textos escritos en principio como contribuciones individuales, y no para ser parte de un volumen. Sin embargo, una lectura en orden cronológico, que es la ordenación escogida por Martínez Expósito para estructurar la colección, revela puntos de contacto recurrentes y una sorprendente vigencia de las reflexiones planteadas incluso en los textos menos recientes.

En la introducción, Martínez Expósito explica el origen de la idea de reunir estos ensayos en un volumen con un marco conceptual unitario. El anhelo en todas las sociedades contemporáneas de alcanzar una nueva normalidad – en relación con la disrupción causada por la pandemia del coronavirus – ha venido a reforzar el proceso gradual de normalización, entendida en el sentido de domesticación y neutralización de su potencial cuestionador, de masculinidades disidentes o cualquier otra práctica que no encaje en los modelos normativos de género y sexualidad. Paradójicamente, o quizá no tanto, esta “nueva normalidad genérico-afectiva” (12) viene