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From *Enfant Terrible* to Prodigal Son: Terenci Moix's Embrace of a Literary Tradition

H. ROSI SONG

One should either be a work of art,
or wear a work of art.
(Oscar Wilde, *Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young*)

“Desde que soy tortillera veo la vida de otro modo [...]”(Moix, *Garras* 5). So begins the trilogy of women by the recently departed *enfant terrible* of the Catalan literary scene of the ‘60s and ‘70s Terenci Moix.¹ The outrageous adventures of protagonist Miranda Boronat, responsible for the opening quote, “y todo cuanto les ocurriuvo [sic] a sus ochenta mejores amigas y sus colegas tortilleros” (Moix, *Chulas* 18), are narrated with an increasing degree of travesty in *Garras de astracán* (1991), *Mujercísimas* (1995), and finally, in *Chulas y famosas* (1999). The development of the aforementioned character and her vocational lesbianism, in conjunction with the scandalous endeavors of her highly stylized and frivolous group of female friends of the Spanish jet set (among them Princesa Von Petarden, Escarlata O’ Sanchez, and the Marquesa del Santo Copón), have come to represent in the author’s popular work a brutal criticism of the decadence and failure of the democratic and socialist aspirations of post-Franco Spain. As Moix himself put it: “He querido poner sobre el tapete todos los mitos de la derecha [...] Me he limitado a sacar a los personajes más relevantes de esta fauna que está viviendo y prosperando. Es un ataque frontal” (Mora 43).

An openly gay writer, Moix recognized the aesthetics of this trilogy to be characteristic of “una sensibilidad gay,” yet he situated his work within the literary tradition of the *esperpento*,

offering an alternative title during one interview in which he named it “Fantoques de la España de fin del milenio” (Ulled 25). According to the author, the wealthy and “sophisticated” female characters that populate these works embody an apparently modern and cosmopolitan Spain, but their excess, banality, moral shortcomings, and stupidity were only proof of a troubled society, rife with corruption within a political system still permeated with authoritarian practices. For Moix, this trilogy revealed the deformed images of Spain’s current society, no longer reflected in the concave mirrors of the *Callejón del Gato* but refracted through the multiple TV screens that saturated its present existence. These reflections were the modern *esperpentos* that the author opted to present to his readers, recycling the sarcastic attitude toward Spain and overall negative representation found in Valle-Inclán’s *Luces de bohemia* (1920). The only difference from this critical stance was, Moix reasoned, that in order to accommodate the stylish characters and reflect the country’s newfound glamour in its recently acquired democracy, he developed a sophisticated *esperpento* “al ser tan finos los personajes que lo pueblan” (*Mujercisimas* 9).

However irreverent or characteristically camp in his approach, the embrace of a canonical aesthetics in Castilian literature by Moix is noteworthy.² Born Ramón Moix in 1942 in Barcelona, and later adopting the more exotic name of Terenci, this writer has made a career out of presenting himself as an antagonist of his social and cultural background both in Catalonia and Spain.³ He spent most of his youth obsessing about the celluloid world of Hollywood and fantasizing about Egypt. By embracing pop culture, he was able to reject his bourgeois experience and Franco’s asphyxiating education system. This shaped his understanding of the word and provided him with an outlet to explore his sexual orientation. Later, pop culture became a very important component of Moix’s oeuvre--fiction and non-fiction alike.⁴ Analyzing his non-traditional intellectual formation and literary career, Fernández described Moix as

“belonging to a ‘cultural no man’s land’”; he wrote in Spanish without really having full command of the language, he was from Catalonia but did not show any attachment to his cultural background, and while considered a modern classic of Catalan literature and winner of many of its literary prizes, in a somewhat baffling situation, he was a popular and best-selling Spanish author (74).⁵ Moix’s unconventionality was reinforced by his open homosexuality, which proved itself to be paradoxical. In a society where homosexuality was at one time illegal,⁶ and where homosexual visibility in a meaningful way was marginal or even inexistent, “[e]l caso es que no se puede ser más gay que Terenci Moix” (Mira 506). In fact, Moix “fue el primer escritor español que no tuvo empacho en declararse homosexual y utilizó su orientación sexual como plataforma para la provocación, sin que ello afectase su éxito comercial” (Mira 506). By all accounts Moix was, until his recent demise, a very successful writer, winner of many literary prizes, a media personality and a best-selling author. At the time of his death, in contrast to his earlier rebellious and criticized intellectual formation and literary career, Moix was recognized as one of the key Spanish writers of the twentieth century and “el escritor más querido,” capable of drawing thousands of fans to his funeral.⁷

Moix’s use of camp aesthetics has been analyzed in terms of his literary significance and relationship to the literature of Catalonia.⁸ His later use of camp in his works of fiction written in Castilian, however, has remained largely overlooked. Moix’s equation between camp and *esperpento*, as I argue in this essay, questioned the formation and production of Spain’s contemporary literary repertoire. Moix used what camp reveals about the production of culture in consumer society to expose the machinations behind the manufacturing and consumption of a cultural product. For Ross, the aesthetics of camp favored the condition to understand the fluctuation of taste or the “reorganization of the capitalist bases of the culture industries” (310).

To put it differently, the employment of camp and in particular its eventual incorporation into the mainstream reveals the controversial nature of the constitution and preservation of a society's conventional culture. Moix understood the conditions that underlie the production and consumption of "art" and "taste." This understanding was evident in his final trilogy where Moix examined the relationship between artistic creation and the manufacture of its market set against the backdrop of a recognized literary tradition. The alignment of camp aesthetics vis-à-vis the *esperpento*, particularly in *Chulas y famosas*, embodies the negotiation of his cultural space as a writer, specifically as a gay writer, and as a "marketable" writer of best-selling products within the current *cultura mediática* of Spain.

Understood as a strategy of gay artists and readers to outgrow a particular historical and cultural environment of repression (Bergman 92), camp originates from the "consciousness of a role-playing activity grounded in the necessity of passing for straight" (Cleto 9). This need, explains Cleto, translated into an awareness of how appearance and aesthetics offer a transition between discourses and an understanding of the different ways of perceiving the world (9-11). From this perspective, camp's critical strength became its capacity to disturb relationships and objects that are considered normal and acceptable (Cohan 103). While camp has been considered exclusively a queer aesthetics, Moix's experience with camp did not begin with its gender politics, but rather with its relationship to pop culture and its critical capacity to challenge the status quo. From this perspective, his understanding of camp resonates with Robertson's observation that this aesthetics "must be understood as not only a means of negotiating subject positions, but also as a socio-historical cultural activity that negotiates between different levels of cultural practices" (18).

Moix, one of the first to introduce pop into Spain and to quote from Susan Sontag's now famous "Notes on Camp" (Fernández 106), was greatly influenced by her critical take on society's culture. While Sontag's attempt to grasp camp's core in her 1964 essay was denounced for mainstreaming it through pop culture, her questioning of the boundaries between high and low culture changed forever our perceptions regarding categories of value (65).⁹ Moix used camp (and pop culture) from a similar perspective, as a form of rebellion that strove for "la desacralización de la literatura como máxima forma expresiva" (Bou 196-97). If, on the one hand, the creation of an alternative aesthetics such as camp reflected the "democratización de la cultura a través de las mitologías creadas por los *mass media*" (Castellet 26), on the other, in the context of Spain under Francoism, it represented a revolt against its cultural practices. Moix, as part of the youthful group of the *novísimos* that was openly fighting the *status quo*, was decisive in the change of sensibility in literature as well as in the culture and way of life in the Spain of the 1960s (Bou 194-95). In his particular case, the practice of a marginalized aesthetics by the way of camp also served to voice and make public his sexual identity.

This new fluctuation between high and low culture, however, brought into question the contradictions inherent in their exchange and consumption. For Ross, the phenomenon of camp and its crossing of borders represented a newly founded pluralism that brought head to head mainstream and marginalized cultures and groups. The change in the pattern of consumption aided by technology, new ways of cultural circulation (i.e., the constant presence of classic Hollywood films on television) and the new power of acquisition achieved by the middle class helped break down the barrier between high and low culture (Ross 310). This realization, according to Ross, revealed the antagonistic relationship between "any single subculture to a parent culture" (313). In other words, the eventual conversion to a "dominant code" of a

previously marginalized or minor culture implied a contradiction between what it had achieved and had hoped to accomplish: instead of remaining as a challenge to the status quo, it eventually was co-opted and condemned to re-enact the same practices it once criticized. In the 1960s, for instance, this became a major obstacle for the avant-garde, which, having developed as a culture of crisis, was suddenly enjoying success and being absorbed by the surrounding culture (Calinescu 120-4). Similarly, Moix's literary trajectory suggests that the sudden commercial success of his foray into pop culture and camp eventually undermined the very marginality of the aesthetic position that he had adopted and which had granted him recognition in the first place.

In his portrait of the writer, Villena notes how Moix became "un Terenci distinto" in the late '70s and during the newly established democracy, with "una carrera literaria, aparentemente distinta de la del antiguo joven de aires malditos" (96). Suggesting that the later success of this author might be explained by these changes, Villena recalls how Moix's cultural and linguistic crossover from Catalonia to Castile produced "un personaje [...] bastante más *integrado*" in contrast to his earlier recognition as "pionero en la visibilidad de lo homosexual" (96-97). This observation, not totally free of judgment, contradicts his later defense of Moix against those who criticized "el Terenci que escribía en castellano, coqueteaba con la television," and who was developing closer ties with the world of the "*bestsellerismos* o de la [...] cultura comercial" (96, 98). Lamenting the short memory of these critics, Villena reminds them that despite Moix's eventual inclusion into their acclaimed literary group with their selective stance toward literature, this writer was from his beginning a populist one, striving to alternate between high and low culture, even serving as defender of the latter (98). The criticism of Moix's flirtation with popular culture had obviously been forgotten and erased from its assessment the earlier unconventionality that distinguished his attitude and work.

Ross observes that the function of a non-traditional intellectual involves avoiding the erasure of the mark of his or her difference. In order to avoid the removal of this sign, the intellectual has to work to express “his impotence as the dominated fraction of a ruling bloc in order to remain there (i.e., as a non-threatening presence while he distances himself from the conventional morality” (317). However, as Moix’s case reveals, maintaining this difference is difficult when attempting to negotiate a place within the dominant culture without being co-opted. In this situation, camp becomes useful because, as Ross explains it, the “explicit commentary of feats of *survival*” contained in its positioning speaks to the “world dominated by the taste and interests of those whom it serves” (315). Camp’s position, as well as the position of other marginalized cultures, could be used to simultaneously reflect the dialectic of its relationship to mainstream cultural practices while protecting its distinctiveness. On the other hand, Ross points out that this conflictive relationship between dominant and marginal culture reveals a *cultural economy* dominated by relations of power. What the experience of camp and popular culture disclosed was the extent in which the “cultural economy was tied to the capitalist logic of development that governed the mass culture industries” (Ross 326). At the end, maintaining a critical distance and preserving cultural currency had more to do with understanding the dynamics of a consumer society--what Tinkcom refers to, taking his cue from Marx’s *Capital*, as the “unstable status of value” (*Working* 9)--than with identity politics. From this perspective, it is the confrontation between the incomplete process of production and consumption that questions the critical potential of camp--its awareness of how the world works “or rather when and where the real collapses into artifice” (Dollimore 312)--when confronted with its eventual mainstreaming or commercialization.

The cultural fracture produced by pop art, Robertson observes, created a context for camp, which curiously became the “dominant code” and “camp became a commercialized taste-- and a taste for commercialism--a determinedly unguilty pleasure” (120). This observation is important because it establishes a context for camp in a consumer society, especially when, as Robertson argues, camp has always had a parasitic relation to dominant culture while revealing the conflict of a subculture’s simultaneous desire for access and preservation of its unique identity (136). Whereas this aspiration translated into the usage, appropriation, and recycling of the objects of the dominant culture by a marginal one that could suggest the assimilation of the latter, the idea of dependence is central to grasp the dialectic between camp and mainstream culture. As Ross explained, the tension, resulting from the way one survives the other, explains why they must be read jointly. Even though Moix served as a poster child for his generation in terms of his cultural tastes, his literary work, his sexuality, his rebellion against Francoist culture, and in general the permissive culture of the ‘60s and ‘70s, the negative attitude toward this writer’s later popularity was symptomatic of the contradictions inherent in the relationship between dominant and subordinate cultures in which the threat of integration results in the suppression of difference. The ambiguities that arose from this confrontation were reflected in Moix’s literary and cultural trajectory, especially in his later embrace of a literary tradition. The positioning of a subculture alongside an established and critically acclaimed one played with both difference and similarity at the same time: as mentioned earlier, while Moix’s trilogy “is” an *esperpento*, it is a “sophisticated” one. This relationship, in other words, embodied the strategy for survival of a marginalized aesthetic within a dominant culture. While this association worked to legitimize camp, it also helped to maintain its distinctiveness.

However, when we move away from the tension between dominant and subordinate cultures, with its dialectics of subversion and complicity, what becomes apparent is the particular awareness that a commodity culture creates among consumers. Tinkcom argues that, in the case of the appearance of gay sensibility within a consumer society that works to erase its trace of gay labor--that of camp ironic practices--the remnant of this trace leads to the questioning of commodity's production ("Warhol" 345). Gay labor gives an insight into the working of capital and its contradictions, and in particular the value of the commodity, when, "after its initial immersion in the cycles of consumption called 'fashion' (or even more temporally constrained, 'fad'), it disproves a model of full and adequate consumption" (*Working* 9). Confronted with the changing status of value, Tinkcom emphasizes that camp's critical energy comes not from its engagement with commodity at the moment of its languishment, but "in the very forms of mass culture that call attention to their own tendency to become unfashionable" (*Working* 9). In other words, camp "comments on processes of cultural production and dissemination" and "processes of cultural appropriation work" by reversing the product, by making a "spectacle of its own condition of production" (Tinkcom "Warhol" 351-3). By passing as "esperpento" his campy works, Moix not only played with camp's awareness of the tension of the "cultural economy" but he converted them into a spectacle of Spain's consumption culture. This awareness is fully revealed in *Chulas y famosas* where the argument of the novel revolves around its own "production."

Chulas y famosas, the last volume of the trilogy, opens with the fictitious funeral of the president of the Generalitat, Jordi Pujol, where the protagonist and her 80 best girlfriends of Moix's earlier novels, *Garras de astracán* and *Mujercísimas*, get together first to be seen, to criticize each other's fashion sense for the occasion, to be photographed (with any luck with a

member of the royal family), and finally, to pay their respect to the deceased politician. During this event, Miranda Boronat notices the character of the “Autor”, who has written about her life with information from her confidences to her closest friends: “[A]cabé en una novelucha abyecta que se llama *Garras de astracán*, [...] en boca y ordenador de un mariquita barcelonés que presume de escritor a cuenta de mi vagina y de los visones de mis ochenta mejores amigas” (*Chulas* 29). While Moix denied any personal relationship with this character, the reference to his literary career and personal life proves him otherwise. Miranda shows her resentment during her first encounter with this Autor:

--Oiga usted, infecto: ¿por qué en lugar de ridiculizarme a mí no se mete con su santa madre?

Y va y me dice el vil:

--Ya lo hice en *El Peso de la Paja*, bonita.

Y yo, que tengo labia, contesté:

--Pero a su madre no la llamaba tortillera, so cabrón.

Y contesta él:

--Es que mi madre no era tortillera, en cambio usted es un bollerón y a mí me iba muy bien para mi novela. (*Chulas* 29-30)

In this and future exchanges between character and author, what is emphasized is the popularity of the novel that narrates the lives of these socialites who have become an obsession for the Spanish audience. As arbiters of taste and fashion, they were thought to embody the spirit of modern and democratic Spain, a part of which everyone aspired to be. The irony of this situation is, of course, that despite their cleansed and updated image they belonged to the traditional

conservative right, still engaged in debates about “alcurnia,” their rights, and the genealogy of their wealth.

For Valis, Spain in the 1980s, whose “[c]ritiques of perceived cultural inadequacies also disclose thinly veiled anxiety over Spain’s position with the rest of the world,” was in search of “originality” (288-89). However, she remarks, this search resulted in a “more apparent than real” culture (289). Reminiscent of the pop experience described by Ross, as a “throwaway culture, even disposable culture” (319), Spain’s current culture is marked by consumption, where “[l]a moda ya es identidad,” and “[a]parentar lo que no se es, es la norma” (Rivière 11, 13). In this pursuit of cultural appearances, Valis identifies an institutionalization of culture that accompanies the political and social changes of the 1980s in Spain: “Governments, central and regional, banks and saving institutions, municipalities, anyone with a culture budget, has gotten into the act. [...] As status symbol, culture is everywhere, particularly in the new, upwardly mobile professional class--usually connected to the party of power...” (288). It is not hard to relate this cultural practice with Moix’s alignment of his work alongside the tradition of the *esperpento*, but in his case, more than working as means of survival of a subculture, acts to undermine the country’s use of literary tradition. The production of culture as commodity becomes exposed through the critical perspective of camp, showing the process of “prissing the form of something away from its content, of revelling in the style while dismissing the content as trivial,” and turning into a weapon of demystification “by playing up the artifice by means of which such things as these retain their hold on the majority of the population” (Dyer 113). Put differently, through camp, literary traditions and all their values become only another fashion to be exploited and readily consumed.

As Moix is too aware of this game, he camps up his own career through the character of the Autor to make a spectacle of what is happening the literary world. The writing of fiction is no longer a matter of creativity, but of marketing a product. As the subsequent meetings in *Chulas* between the Autor and Miranda evolve into negotiations to see her private diary, he explains to her the “production” of his literary work:

--Figúrese: la editorial ha programado *Chulas y famosas* para septiembre, estamos empezando el verano y todavía no encuentro el tema.

--Perdone, pero esto que me cuenta es como vender el aceite antes de plantar el olivo. ¿Cómo se puede programar una cosa que no existe?

--Hoy en día un libro empieza a ser posterior a los albaranes. Que después salga una obra maestra depende del departamento comercial. ¿Comprende usted ahora?

--En absoluto, pero me da lo mismo. ¿Lo comprende usted, que está en el ajo?

--En absoluto, pero me angustia. (146)

At first, the Autor only wants to “conocer” Miranda’s diary (109), since any other alternative would undermine his literary standing in the market. When Miranda wants to become more involved in the writing process, he complains that “[l]as lenguas anabolenas dirán que *Chulas y famosas* la ha escrito usted. No puedo permitírmelo. Un escritor catalán llamado Manuel de Pedrolo afirmó con muy mala uva que *El día que murió Marilyn* me la habían escrito otras personas. [...] Una execrable maricona millonaria que vive en Sitges le dijo rotundamente a Anaïs Schaaff que las novelas me las escribe mi hermana. [...] A este paso dirán que las novelas egipcias me las escribe la viuda de Sadat, que estará en el paro” (160). Despite the original intention of the Autor, the writing (or preparation) of the novel loses all meaning since the reader

finds out that the text he or she is reading is nothing more than a copy of Miranda's diary, including its kitschy font and page borders.

The final decision of the writer to use the socialite's diary in its entirety has to do with his realization that the lives of Miranda and her friends following some romance or a pregnancy are "oro, incienso y mirra para la prensa rosa" and "siendo espectáculo continuo para deleite de horteras y espejo de imitación de chorras, me veo en la necesidad intelectual de reflejarlo..." (41). His so-called intellectual responsibility, however, is nothing but a submission to the market, trying to please those who will help him maintain his literary, social, and economical ambition. As Miranda describes him: "le encontré un poco pretencioso: iba de *sport* Loewe, grado *parvenu*, y se apresuró a dejar caer que había venido en 'bisnis class', algo completamente innecesario para quienes sabemos que no es posible viajar de otra manera. Y lo digo porque no todos los aviones llevan *grand class*" (142-43). The Autor's material aspirations and his place in the literary market are camped up to emphasize the process of producing a literary text rather than the process of artistic creation. Integral to the awareness of the condition of its production is the understanding of its dependence on trends. Borrowing Tinkcom's words, the Autor plays with the "unstable status of value" in a rapidly changing society, in order to preserve his cultural currency by keeping up with society's tastes:

¿A qué novelista puede apetecerle escribir algo sobre la hija de la folclórica y su marido el bombero? Ni siquiera el peor escritor podría encontrar estimulantes las estupideces que, sobre el amor, suelta semanalmente Pamela Nóñez. Hasta los lances amorios del barón Parbleu tienen un punto de cursilería. Esta fauna y la literatura están reñidas. Por eso vivimos en la época de la subcultura. Porque reinan ellos. Porque la señorita desconocida que se acostó dos noches con el

bailarán gitano vestido de Armani tiene de pronto más predicamento que todos los sabios de Atenas en el pasado. Temas haylos, pero son de vertedero. (148)

Given the importance of trends in the production of cultural currency, it is not surprising that one of the largest bookstores in Spain is described as “aquel Emporio Armani de las Letras” (68).

Inside, the books are organized to display their colorful covers to attract the customers without any regard for their content. In this literary setting, nothing can be taken seriously, and other Spanish contemporary novels get their own share of criticisms when found, for instance, among “un volumen de decoración de Laura Ashley, una monada,” as it is the case of a novel by a contemporary writer who appears with a slightly changed name: “la última novela de Mario Xavi, *Después del cricket piensa en mi abuela de Oxford*, que me han dicho que es el no va más de la penetración psicológica; vamos, la quisicosa ideal para chicas súper que fueron reinas de curso en la universidad en los años sesenta” (68).

The presentation of the social atmosphere in which the preparation of the volume of this trilogy takes place, and by extension, the whole trilogy, responds to what Rivière describes as “*pretensiones* de modernidad,” and which responds to the following circumstances: “el nuevo *look* moderno de los españoles se correspondía con el milagro de hacer la revolución tecnológica desde la nada [...]. Es más, [...] para conseguir la impunidad certera, las deudas no debían bajar de miles de millones o hacer alguna hazaña que garantizara la aparición en ¡*Hola!*, biblia del pastel rosa, modelo que el periodismo español exportó con orgullo a las islas británicas” (253). Moix reflects this phenomenon in his campy take on contemporary Spain, where he recognized that “la intimidad se ha convertido en una industria” (Mora 43) and happily responds to the demands of the current Spanish popular culture with a literary version of ¡*Hola!* in his trilogy. At one moment of the novel, the character of the Autor talks about his pseudo-epiphany about what

the purpose of his novel should be--"navaja carnícer" --planning with serious intention to emulate the style of Valle-Inclán and produce a meaningful work, but he quickly decides "no pienso introducirme en la impostura literaria erigiéndome en predicador" (*Chulas* 410-11). There is no space for such discourse or critical position in modern society, and he is right to conclude so.

After the book is published and Miranda buys one from the bookstore, it is not the content that matters, but its packaging and presentation:

Allí, entre un sinfín de objetos religiosos, destacaba un volumen de *Chulas y famosas* situado entre unos modelitos de rosarios digitales y la última moda en escapularios *pret à porter*. [...] A mí me encantó. Representaba a Myrna Lamour, guapísima [...]. Las perlas del cuello y la muñeca eran una divinidad. [...] Me gustó la contraportada. Reproducía al Autor en batín de seda, un Yves Saint-Laurent grado *parvenu*. [...] Me consoló descubrir que el prólogo venía firmado por don Pedro Gimferrer, miembro de la Real Academia. Esas cosas siempre dan empaque. (436-37)

The fact that the novel is a copy of the private diary of a socialite, packaged by publishing and marketing companies as a great literary work, is really not important. Taking into consideration that the work of the writer is "nonexistent," his cultural contribution null, the reinvention of the *esperpento* an illusion, the only thing left is a product--with appropriate finishing touches like a legitimizing prologue by a member of the Real Academia Española--destined to be a best-seller and massively consumed. At the end, however, the fictionalization of the preparation of this product does help to question the state and future of literature in a commodity culture, especially when managed by what Miranda calls "la reconocida avidez de esa editorial tan famosa, la que da

el número de los ciegos, quiero decir el premio literario de los millones” (*Chulas* 29).

Recognizing books as products of marketing plans determined by financial incentives, the reader cannot but wonder about the work he or she is holding (and probably purchased). While this awareness does not allow either the reader or the writer to step outside of this market, this consciousness might facilitate a more critical understanding of his or her cultural surrounding.

* * *

The camp mania of the mid 1960s--which was channeled, in part, by Moix in Spain--mirrored the craze for the pop scene and its icons, and the terms *camp* and *pop* were a reflection of that time, “with its complex aesthetic of the transient, the disposable, and the endearingly ‘poor’ taste turned into a sign of (new) cultural capital” (Cleto 303).¹⁰ The reassessment of the 1960s mainstreaming of camp, according to Cleto, rather than rooted in the “reclaiming” enterprise that is grounded and justified within gay identity politics (i.e., Moe Meyer), should be “an archeological effort to map the queer circulation of the camp discourse within both gay and heterosexual settings: to map its uses as means to different ends, and to assess its logic of circulation [...] and its intersections with issues of sexual and cultural politics” (304). This viewpoint dovetails with Moix’s initial incursion into camp, since his preference for popular culture reflected his rejection of the official culture under Francoism and his alienation from heterosexual society. In fact, as Fernández cleverly analyzes, it was this task of cultural and sexual perversion that first made him a key figure within the project of the formation of a Catalan literary canon. Later, his continued deployment of camp while relating it to a literary tradition found explanation within the “banalization and consensualism,” to borrow Valis’s phrase, of post-Franco Spanish society (288). Finally, this cultural and social location became in this

writer's campy works the epitome of a society and culture made for consumption deserving of criticism.

Moix's journey within Spain's literature and culture reflects the constant transgression of a writer who understood the shifting of cultural practices taking advantages of its own instabilities. This understanding becomes clear in Fernández's analysis of Moix's relationship to Catalan culture and identity and the negotiation of his position within a determinate culture, social and sexual class. For this critic, the reworking of Catalan history and the construction of national identity under the officially imposed one by Francoism to create a "para-official yet subaltern version of Catalan nationalism" also showed the tensions that existed between homosexuality, popular and institutional culture (6). This tension stemmed from putting into motion the mechanisms that were essential to the continuation of an endangered literary tradition--that of Catalonia--that at the same time "tended to exclude women, gays and lesbians, and other minorities" (Fernández 102). Moix's response to this non-position of gays and lesbians was a camp use of straight culture, recycling and reversing cultural products in a way that they became not only empowering but also pleasurable (Fernández 110).

While Fernández concludes that Moix "distances himself both from the legitimate culture," he also sees the practice of sexual, cultural, and aesthetic transgression designed to "breaking the rules of the cultural game, or even refusing to play the game altogether" (125). However, quoting Bourdieu, Fernández agrees that "there is no way out of the game of culture," and that "any transgressive moves immediately become part of the game or are subsumed into a new game whose rules incorporate them" (125). Whereas this inescapability applies to Moix both in his relationship to Catalan as well as Castilian literature, as well as straight and homosexual culture, this inescapability should not be seen in terms of his limitation, but rather in terms of

what it allows to question and expose, especially within the game of capitalism. Even when the use of camp aesthetics by Moix is political in the Catalan sense, since he “[was] the queer at the head of cultural normalization” occupying simultaneously a place inside and outside of Catalan literature (Fernández 125), Moix’s deployment of camp should not be seen as merely subversive in terms of identity politics. Instead, I would like to suggest, it should be understood within a larger context that allows a shift in its use and purpose within a cultural market. First, within the context of pop culture and camp production of the 1960s and 1970s in Francoist Spain when the objective was to break boundaries while at the same time, dealing with its assimilation by mainstream culture from the perspective of regional politics. Second, his crossover to Castilian literature negotiates between two cultural economies while keeping a constant movement between them in order to focus on the “incongruities, dissonances, and excesses of a text with the goal of interrupting its cultural pre-texts [...]” (Cohan 103). This movement through normalized culture to create points of tension reveals, in a way, the previous reference about the impossibility of escaping it. The recognition of this situation could be understood as a constant readjustment of strategies to keep up with culture while plotting new ways to maintain a visible critical presence. In other words, it is perhaps because of the awareness about the inescapability from culture that camp practice does not end with debunking gender codification, but that it keeps on pressing its critical capacities to read its surrounding culture, and in the process, becoming an object of consumption for both straight and homosexual audiences.

Villena used the term “integrado” to describe the Moix’s success. But the criticism surrounding his popularity reflected camp and pop’s tension with mainstream culture when he recycled this relationship back to the ‘80s and ‘90s in Spain. With the advent of democracy and in full embrace of capitalism, Spanish society had become the cradle for disposable objects, in

constant motion and change toward a full Europeanization and democratization, engaged in a crazed effort to shed the weight of the past. If at one time the use of pop culture by camp meant the “*re-creation of surplus value from forgotten forms of labor*” (Ross 320), it was now used to detect the currency of cultural practices. Instead of a nostalgic recovery of a collector of the past, camp is a tool used to understand mass culture. Moix used camp’s critical energy to detect commodities’ own tendency to become fashionable. Having been assimilated into mainstream literature and canonized as one of the foundational writers of his generation, as the numerous eulogies after his death demonstrated, he presented himself and his work as instances of just another cultural trend. As one of the characters of *Chulas*, Adusta, declares, “[n]o digo que no tuviese mérito cuando empezaba. Después se comercializó al ganar el Premio Planeta. Es cierto que puede ser honesto y lo demuestra cuando habla de sí mismo, pero en cuanto sale al exterior se pierde completamente. Estoy convencida de que ahora tiene que entregar una novela con urgencia y no vacilará en escribirla a toda prisa. Dudo que consiga hacer una crítica en profunda” (120). Moix presented his own adaptation of what was popular and avidly consumed, by camping up the obsessions of a commodity culture, and rendering them absurd. As he himself recognized during an early interview: “la finalitat de l’escriptor és publicar la seva obra i que la gent la llegeixi. I primer s’han de comprar els llibres, que ja vol dir consumir, si no m’erro. Són les regles del joc. Dir el contrari fóra enganyar-nos” (*Preguntar* 21). In this process, however, he did manage to keep a critical finger on the pulse of the dominant mode of cultural consumption and its predictable and inevitable dismissal as another cultural fad.

Notes

¹ A trilogy “of” women rather than “on” women since all three books are, as the author playfully explains, “interpreted” by women. The books that comprise this group were not conceived as such but later came to share, in addition to the characters, the characteristics of a “literatura descriptiva, analítica, psicoanalítica, literatura de sentimientos,” and even if not originally planned as a trilogy, Moix has referred to them as following a certain logic or continuity (Villora 21). The author passed away in April 2003 after a long battle with emphysema and an unrelenting nicotine addiction.

² Taking into account the critical recognition received by Valle-Inclán’s work, I am purposely being redundant when referring to “esperpento” as an established, recognized, accepted and celebrated part of Spain’s literary history and tradition, to emphasize its difference from the marginalized aesthetics of camp that is offered by Moix as similar in its critical spirit and, by extension, as part of this national literary tradition. For this writer, “en las Españas de 1995, la comedia todavía deriva hacia el esperpento,” calling it an “esperpento sofisticado” (*Mujercísimas* 9). He repeats this idea in *Chulas y famosas* through the character of the “Autor”: “Aspiraba a reinventar los espejos deformantes de Valle-Inclán sin comprender que cada derrumbe tiene sus propias reglas, que los espejos cóncavos del callejón del Gato son hoy los espejos de la televisión. Creo haber escrito esto antes de ahora, pero me importa un bledo. Es posible que los escritores nos repitamos, pero eso es inevitable cuando la sociedad no deja de repetir sus aspectos más nefastos” (410-11).

³ The presentation of Moix as a controversial and antagonistic writer prevailed in his description, from the blurbs for his best-selling novels to the recent accounts of his death by friends and colleagues. For a detailed explanation of why Moix is the *enfant terrible* of the literary world, see Lucio and Forrest. An analysis of the influence of Hollywood cinema in Moix's texts and his experience as a gay youth growing up under Francoism can be found in Smith, Ellis, and Marí.

⁴ The importance of popular culture in the intellectual formation of this writer is evident in the three volumes of his autobiography, *El Peso de la Paja* (1990), *El beso de Peter Pan* (1993) y *Extraño en el paraíso* (1998). Moix has written books on comics, film, and pop culture in general. He has published *Introducció a la història del cinema (1885-1967)* (1967) and *Los 'comics': Arte para el consumo y formas 'pop'* (1968).

⁵ Among the literary prizes, he won the Premi Victor Català in 1967 for his book *La torre dels vicis capitals* (1968); the Premi Josep Pla in 1968 for his *Onades sobre una roca desierta* (1969); the Premi Prudenci Bertrana in 1971 for his *Siro o la increada consciència de la raça* in 1972; and the Premi de la Crítica Serra d'or in 1976 for his *La caiguda de l'imperi sodomita y altres històries herètiques* (1976).

⁶ Garlinger reminds us about the legal opposition between homosexuality and the Franco regime: "in 1970 Franco approved the 'Ley de Peligrosidad Social' which made homosexuality illegal and allowed for the detention of suspected homosexuals by the state" (373).

⁷ His recent death in April of 2003 was covered in Spanish newspapers such as *La Vanguardia*, *El País*, *El Mundo*, among others, with headlines like "Adiós a un escritor querido,"

“Querido,” “Terenci, un funeral de masas,” “Más de diez mil personas despiden a Terenci Moix,” “El ultimo faraón,” etc.

⁸ Fernàndez has studied extensively Moix’s contribution to the formation of Catalan modern literature in *Another Country*.

⁹ Meyer interpreted Sontag’s essay as a typical bourgeois cultural move to recover the dissident and subversive effects of a specific queer cultural critique (9-11). However, as Robertson observes, Sontag’s work legitimized camp as a serious object of study (120). The constrictive identification of camp with queer praxis has been criticized as a move that counteracts its main attribute, namely its conceptual fluidity devoid of ontological foundation (Cleto 18-19).

¹⁰ Whereas Cleto refers to Anglo-American society’s reception of pop culture, it is obvious that the shifting of the cultural tide also affected the repressed Francoist society of the late ‘60s and ‘70s. Bou’s essay--as well as Moix’s autobiography, *Extraño en el paraíso*--describes this influence in Spain.

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