
Looks that Kill: Ana María Moix's "Las virtudes peligrosas"

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The only female author included in José María Castellet's 1970 anthology of Spain's most interesting and promising young poets of that moment, *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles*, Ana María Moix also was the youngest among her fellow artists in the Barcelona-based intellectual group who baptized themselves the *gauche divine*.¹ Born into a literary family in Barcelona's postwar bourgeoisie, Moix created an innovative personal aesthetic against the backdrop of good manners and conformity expected of young women of her social standing in Franco's Spain. Her collaboration in the *gauche divine*, "whose members were known for intellectual and artistic innovation, unconventional sex and gender roles, and a mixture of political liberalism and indifference," gave her an early outlet for her ideas as well as a group of peers to comment on her early work (Stovall 89). Moix's prose often voices her disgust with the limitations imposed upon girls and women of her generation while employing disruptive narrative techniques which broke with the conventions of her literary predecessors, the Social Realists. A regular contributor to the influential journal *Vindicación feminista*, she is the author of several novels recognized for their technical and thematic complexity, including *Julia* (1970), *Walter, ¿por qué te fuiste?* (1973), and the more recent *De mi vida real nada sé* (2002).

Much of her writing explores trauma and human psychology, especially with respect to identity development in the adolescent female. Silences, secrets and the unnamable figure prominently in Moix's works, and the discovery of what has been kept hidden often is expressed in visual terms of unveiling or illumination, bringing to light what had been held just below the surface. In this study I examine the socially disruptive and erotic power of the female gaze in Moix's story "Las virtudes peligrosas," the title piece of a collection of stories published in 1985.

Moix's tale plays with both visual and narrative perspectives, as a narrator whose identity is unknown until the work's end confronts the narratee, named Alice, ordering her to re-view strange events and fleeting impressions associated with two elderly blind women to whom she read during regularly scheduled visits when she was younger. The forceful tone of the narrator's orders and the partial information he reveals contribute to the story's overall sense of mystery and menace. The narrative voice lays out before Alice and the reader the fragments of a tale which we must then work to piece together. He begins by commanding Alice to rewind her memory as if it were a film reel:

Proyecta el filme que . . . ruedan nuestros sentidos a su no siempre voluntario contacto con la realidad; que el motor de la consciencia lo haga retroceder hasta los diez, doce años de su protagonista, tú Alice, y contempla una y otra vez la secuencia (Moix 39).

Concerning the use of cinematic motifs and filmic terms in relation to memory, Margaret E.W. Jones comments the following in the afterword of her translation of Moix's stories:

Moix borrows filmic techniques to unfold the characters' obsessive reappraisal of the past. The written word metamorphoses into film clips, snapshots, freeze-frames, or other pictorial devices; the characters watch their own past as a spectacle that memory puts into motion and that they can view and review (145).

Objects such as opera glasses, binoculars, mirrors and lifelike portraits figure prominently in this story, and in fact become the tools with which the two women at its center subtly sever the patriarchal ties that bind them within societal roles and expectations. Among these artifacts, the most striking are two portraits painted by the narrator as a young man, one of his mother, and the other, of a second woman we come to realize is her true love. These works are ultimately displayed facing one another, and appear to be looking into one another's eyes, long after their subjects have supposedly become incapable of doing so. The love story that develops on the screen of our imagination is that of two blind women to whom Alice read as a child, two women who had managed to carry on an affair right before the eyes of high society figures who would have deemed it wholly unacceptable if only they had been capable of actually seeing it develop.

The story repeatedly calls our attention to appearances and the sense of sight, underscoring the notion that the women's erotic relationship is of a visual rather than physical nature. There is no evidence that the lovers had ever touched one another except with their intensely intimate, yet brazenly public, shared gaze. Spying, watching, reading and gazing are activities central to the women's story, both in terms of the plot and its transmission, because the events recounted to Alice and to us as readers have been organized and reconstructed by the narrator based upon his voyeuristic activities. In addition to a discussion of the portraits, mirrors, and other objects associated with the women's visual relationship in the story, my analysis will examine the repercussions of Moix's ironic use of a male narrator and dominant narrative discourse in this story. In "Las virtudes peligrosas" the women's subversion of patriarchal norms of behavior also calls into question and ultimately topples the traditional paradigm of the male viewing subject and the female object of the gaze.

As vision is undoubtedly the privileged sense in the story, it is fitting that so many of the central objects in it are somehow related to seeing and reading. In the home of the first elderly woman, the narrator's mother, hang the two aforementioned portraits, their shared gaze fixed for all eternity as if from the moment of the paintings' very creation, even though their subjects posed for the paintings separately. In addition to these portraits there are also several mirrors on the walls, all draped in black fabric as one might do in a period of mourning. If the first elderly woman is literally blind, why bother with the custom of covering and draping the mirrors in black cloth? At several points in his narration, Rudolph quotes his mother's oft-repeated, mysteriously simple statement that the two women in the canvases died. Their death is certainly figurative rather than literal, for as we discover alongside Alice, they are the very same women she visited and to whom she used to read aloud. Their "deaths" may simply mark the end of the public phase of their relationship, when they literally stopped seeing one another, or "dejaron de verse" (Moix 65). This breaking of their mutual gaze, their only lifeline and connection, apparently condemned them to solitary existence.

Some critics have interpreted the end of their intensely visual relationship as an attempt to prevent any effect that the women's loss of youthful beauty might have had on the affair. This interpretation is largely based upon the text that Rudolph's mother often asked Alice to read, one which explored the desire for eternal beauty despite the march of time. Nancy Vosburg remarks that "as old age and wrinkles befall them, the two women, supposedly 'blind,' cease to engage in their specular activity" (82). Carlos Jerez Ferrán's analysis passes over the issue of potentially feigned blindness to link the covered mirrors with a fear of aging, to suggest that "la esposa del general combate su envejecimiento físico con las medidas preventivas que toma cubriendo los espejos que pudieran reflejarlo" (36). However, in a tale which focuses so directly on the importance of visual perception, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the question of the purported sightlessness of the central figures.

The women's blindness is called into question by the narrator's demands that Alice recall her impressions of details that had struck her as unusual during her visits to his mother. Rudolph insistently reminds Alice that on several occasions when she first arrived at his mother's house, Alice had noticed the woman adjusting her dark glasses, as if she were afraid that they might fall off or be removed by someone. As careful readers trained by this enigmatic text, we are aware that perhaps another possibility is that she had just put the dark glasses on in anticipation of the girl's visit, and that their purpose may in fact be concealment rather than protection. The dark glasses may have performed another function, allowing the elderly woman to observe others without having her glance met by the unknowing objects of her gaze. In addition to the woman's puzzling gesture, according to Rudolph's observations of the girl's behavior, Alice appeared to have felt as if the blind woman had been watching her while listening to her reading aloud. This unnerving sensation of being observed by someone who is reportedly sightless fuels Alice's suspicions regarding the woman's disability. Again, we must note that Alice herself is silent while the narrator interprets her earlier behavior as having been full of suspicion and doubt. The narrator plants further doubts by reminding Alice of how the elderly woman frequently turned toward the direction of the two portraits hung on the wall, as if surreptitiously stealing a glance at the images. We realize that any sensation that Alice had felt of being watched may have resulted from the fact that the narrator was indeed spying on his mother and her young visitor at the time. His remarks at the present moment of narration confirm his scopophilia, inviting Alice to join him in re-viewing the past and to participate in activities to satisfy what he assumes to be a shared voyeuristic curiosity.

The portraits of Rudolph's mother and her partner in the affair are at the center of several portions of the story. The narrator describes them in the following way: "Frente a frente los lienzos, diríase que el pintor las hubiera plasmado así, mirándose. La mirada de una se clavaba en la de la otra y viceversa; se poseían con urgencia y, a la vez, con la placidez de lo eterno" (Moix 42). In this example from the text, the narrator's equation of looking with possessing conforms to a conventional male-centered perspective regarding the power and dominance of the viewing subject over the object of the gaze. In his own activity watching the story that unfolded before him, the narrator presumably also felt himself to be empowered by his own gaze, which conferred upon him the authority to interpret and later put his reading of his mother's relationship into words and orders for Alice.

Although the narrator seems to think that as the artist who created the two portraits he has special insights into the lives of the women portrayed in the paintings, we see throughout his narration that what he says is just as limited by his confusion and exclusion from their experiences as his father's understanding of his wife's relationship had been. Like his father, a decorated military general (and thus in many ways the perfect representative of patriarchy and social order), Rudolph is always on the outside looking in, unable to fully comprehend what he sees happening between the two women. Blocked by confusion from successfully engaging in careful interpretation of the visual clues before him, the narrator must turn to other texts. However, using his father's journal as his main written source of information further hinders his ability to fathom and categorize the unorthodox relationship between his mother and the other woman, as the documents actually provide more information about his father's growing discomfort and obsession with his wife's affair than it does about the women themselves. After reading the journal (an unreliable source for information if ever there was one, given the fact that this is the diary of a madman), the narrator adopts a point of view parallel to his father's regarding the painted women and their living models. He explains to Alice the disconcerting effect of the portraits on their observer: "perturbaba -- ¿también a ti? recuérdalo-- la urgencia de la búsqueda en sus miradas penetrantes, hirientes pero melancólicas, resignadas pero expectantes" (Moix 42). Here Rudolph once again projects traditional

gender dynamics onto his reading of the paintings, describing the women as passive, as if they were accepting what Laura Mulvey has called “woman’s to-be-looked-at-ness,” even as their gaze itself takes on more aggressive, traditionally masculine properties of wounding and penetration in his description (Mulvey 67).

The portraits uncannily reproduce the women’s public activity, bringing it into the home and electrifying the domestic space with the energy of their unspoken, non-physical communication. With their eyes locked and holding their intense gaze, the two women had developed over the years a means of shutting out the rest of the world while enveloping themselves in a space of their own creation, in full public view all the while. The narrator describes their bond as a union that “las envolvía en una intocable e invulnerable aura” (Moix 53). It was the general’s exclusion from this very private, albeit technically public space that had so disturbed him. As a man unaccustomed to boundaries and limitations, he could not tolerate his impotence and irrelevance; his time as a successful military leader sent to retain control of the colonies did not prepare him for the jarring experience of having no authority as a trespasser in what Annis Pratt would term an “apatriarchal space” with borders marked by the shared gaze (70).

He had first discovered the apparent affair while at the opera, sitting across from his wife’s private theatre box. The narrator explains why the general and his wife never sat together at performances in the following way: “Amante de la ópera, ella prefería gozar del espectáculo (de la *belleza*, puntualizó siempre) a solas, sin la impuesta compañía obligada por el rigor social” (45). What the general (and subsequently, his son the narrator) had assumed for years to be a reference to the opera itself, “la belleza,” *the beauty*, actually seems to have had far less to do with the pieces staged by the opera company than it did with the other woman seated across the theatre from her. The aforementioned social demands, which the general had surely interpreted as the interactions typically required of the wife of a decorated military leader at court, could also easily be read in reference to marriage as an institution, and the expectation that a husband and wife accompany one another on such occasions. In either case, his wife’s attire and overall appearance would function as a reflection of his own status. Her beauty would not be for his eyes only, but rather it would serve to set him apart as the man lucky enough to possess such a woman. Bored by the performance on stage, he looks over in the direction of his beautiful wife and sees that her opera glasses are not focused on the drama but rather on another attractive woman in the theatre, whose opera glasses are likewise raised in his wife’s direction. When the lights come up, the women lower their opera glasses and break their gaze, an action that seems choreographed. Once reality dawns on the general, he is aware that the singers were not the only ones performing roles and making the best possible use of props and settings in the theatre.

Made jealous by their prolonged gaze, the general reacts in a manner in keeping with his years as a renowned military strategist in the king’s colonial service, dispatching his spies to gain information about the other woman and his wife’s habits and behavior at the opera during his long absences. He later expands his spying activities, sometimes participating as an eyewitness when his wife and the other woman take periodic strolls along opposite sides of the city’s wide boulevards. Separated by the roadway, but dressed alike and united in their activity, they keep pace with one another while he observes them from a distance. When the general learns that the women have been meeting in this way for some ten years, always in public, his reaction has far less to do with his wife’s infidelity than it does with the effects his reputation may have suffered without his being aware of it until that moment. His fears are not that he has been replaced as the object of his wife’s affections, but rather that his personal power and caché in the court have been diminished by her unconventional affair and its rejection of heteronormative sexuality: “¡con una mujer! ¡Y en la ópera, el lugar más público de la capital!” (Moix 50). Later, Rudolph states that his father would have

preferred a male rival, explaining that “mil veces hubiera deseado la rivalidad de un amante a aquella indestructible y demoníaca alianza. Mil veces alguien contra quien poder luchar, gritar, vencer, perder o morir, a la constante burla y humillación”(53). With a male rival, the danger would be the accustomed risk of physical combat in order to establish dominance; what irks him is the lack of control over his wife’s gaze and public activities which technically, break no social rules or mores. As Christine Arkininstall argues, "His preference that his wife take a male lover instead reveals the issues at stake: such a situation would not only adhere to the norms of heterosexuality and hence patriarchal society, but would also increase, through another man's desire, the figurative value of the possessed woman" (207). In her lesbian affair, the general’s wife has ceased to function as the mirror of his image.

Ironically, in what may be interpreted as an attempt to regain possession of his wife, the general had commanded his artistic son to paint a portrait of his mother while the family vacationed at their country home; this is the first in the pair of portraits analyzed earlier in the present essay. Rudolph’s skill in capturing his mother’s beauty also allows the painting to faithfully reproduce her intense gaze, thus unknowingly robbing his father of his anticipated triumph, and making the very source of his discomfort even more present in his daily life. His failure to control his wife and her gaze is further underscored when the second portrait unexpectedly appears on the wall of the home. The second painting depicts the other woman, who Rudolph explains suddenly had appeared one day, dressed in a gown nearly identical to the one worn by his mother when she posed for her own portrait. Oddly, the woman who commissioned the piece never returned to claim it, and since the two portraits seemed to belong together, the artist decided to display them facing one another. Thus captured, the women’s images maintain their models’ agency and self-determination, even in two-dimensional form. Any spectator observing the paintings is automatically excluded from interaction with them, becoming an interloper, just as the general was always an outsider in the situations in which he caught his wife with the other woman. The exclusivity of the female gaze denies the general the power that his own look would normally confer upon him. Once he has lost his wife in her function as his metaphorical mirror, he can no longer effectively exercise his authority and reaffirm his identity through control of the world around him and his own carefully constructed image and identity. If his wife’s public activities had been enough to initiate his descent into madness, the presence of the women’s shared gaze, so faithfully and powerfully reproduced in their portraits, prevents the general’s return to sanity and the status quo of gender dynamics.

His jealousy, anger and shame eventually turn to dread as his son the narrator relates how, after years of spying and seeking information, combined with his impotence to end his wife’s affair and his own suffering, the general began to characterize the mutual gaze as a weapon capable of inflicting physical wounds upon him. The narrator applies his father’s metaphor to describe the gaze’s metamorphosis into something much more identifiable to a military man: the gaze takes the form of a "punzante y desconocida arma" (Moix 47). As he sinks further and further into the depths of his incomprehension and insanity, the physical effects of the women’s mutual gaze grow still more intense: "si interceptaba sus miradas las sentía como látigos golpeándose impíos, una y otra vez, para alejarlo de ambas mujeres" (54).

Eventually the look sustained between the two women transforms into something far more threatening than whips, as the general imagines the energy of the gaze assuming the form of a serpent. Christine Arkininstall’s analysis of the use of serpentine literary imagery in association with female narcissism and representations of the dangers of female sexuality uncontained within the boundaries of masculine influence and control helps us to see how the snake is an apt image in the context of this story (208). The wounding nature of the female gaze paired with snake imagery

likewise calls to mind the archetype of Medusa, whose gaze could turn a man to stone. Susan Bowers explains the relationship between masculine fear and Medusa's power in the following manner:

Patriarchal males have had to make Medusa--and by extension, all women-- the object of the male gaze as a protection against being objectified themselves by Medusa's female gaze. The defense against having their own free subjectivity ignored, their vulnerability and fragility revealed, and their world shared was the destruction of female subjectivity (220).

I would also add that the image of the serpent, so closely associated with temptation and the subsequent fall from grace and exile from Eden, signals the power of hidden knowledge and transgressive crossing of boundaries drawn by patriarchal authority. The general's nightmares and waking moments become dominated by images of a snake wrapping itself around his neck and strangling him. Out of the desperation to escape his tortured existence in his wife's presence he decides to resume his military career in the colonies, the one place where his identity and authority had been unquestionable. However, his nightmares follow him overseas, and the journal entries from his final months document the general's progressing insanity leading up to the day of his death. Rudolph summarizes that the reports from those around his father testify to his constant fear of being choked by a hideous snake, and they end with the events surrounding his demise. Asphyxiation was indeed his fate; the general hanged himself one night, finally driven to suicide and literal self-annihilation by the disintegration of his identity and authority.

Rudolph's role in the story obviously is not only that of narrator but also of editor. After his father's suicide, while reading through his journals and the reports of the other military personnel privy to the events of the general's last days, Rudolph decided to excerpt segments related to his father's personal life in order to create another set of documents. He spies on Alice as she in turn rifles through those redacted papers related to the general. Reading is akin to spying, and as readers of a text directed not to us, but to Alice, we too are forced to participate as voyeurs and interlopers. Just as Alice has to reorder and reassemble the fragments she reads, combining new textual information with what she remembers observing, we likewise struggle to piece clues together. Since we never are given direct access to the circumstances which comprise this complex story within a story, as readers and voyeurs ourselves, we are painfully aware of the limitations we face as we attempt to decode and evaluate Rudolph's biased and partial interpretation of events and situations. As Linda Gould Levine observes,

more than a haunting tale of elusive love, Ana María Moix creates a tale about a tale, a story about a story. She adeptly fuses together her narration about the obsession the two women feel for each other with the other narration about the obsession the general feels toward his wife's relationship, and the third narration about the obsession the general's son feels toward both his father's diary and Alice's reaction to it (98).

Despite the disproportionate representation of the masculine voice and androcentric point of view, what is clear is that at the heart of the piece are the unnamed women, both in their youth, which is eternally preserved in painted form, and in their old age, at the present moment of Rudolph's narration. The female characters are essentially voiceless except for the narrator's repetition of some of his mother's words, and his own projections and conjectures as to what he believes Alice must have been thinking at certain moments when he was observing her without her

knowledge. It is this enigmatic silence that makes our work as readers so much more difficult and therefore exciting, as we must look directly into the silences, reading between the lines and beyond the level of words to try to comprehend the bond between the two women at the tale's center, and Alice's role in their story. By not carrying out their relationship through spoken or written language, they resist confinement within the norms of verbal communication. As simultaneous subjects and objects of sexual desire expressed through the gaze, the women create their own closed system of meaning and agency from which others are excluded.

Apparently without her ever realizing the extent of her importance in the relationship, it seems that Alice had played a central role in the later stages of the two women's love affair, serving as a point of contact between them and as a key figure in their development of a unique means of communication. When she used to read to them on alternating afternoons, she was not aware of any connection between the two women. Every day, Alice took part in an exchange which she found amusing, if puzzling. Before leaving the house of one woman, she was always given a small gift as an apparent token of appreciation for the visit, usually in the form of ribbons or similar pretty things that a young girl might enjoy. During her visit to the second woman, those items were carefully removed by the second elderly lady and replaced with similar adornments. In truth, the gifts were never meant for Alice; she was merely the vehicle for their transmission. Alice essentially became the means by which the two lovers communicated, through the dainty gifts exchanged, since they were no longer in direct visual contact with one another. What the young girl never saw was what the women did with the gifts that she brought back and forth between them on her own person. Rudolph describes one end result of this ritual exchange by summarizing his mother's actions after Alice's departure:

presa del llanto y la nostalgia las estrujaría con ardor y desesperación en un intento de posesión de quien antaño las vistiera; las besaría y pasearía por todo su cuerpo, entre las cuatro paredes de su habitación de anciana, presidida por los retratos de dos mujeres jóvenes y hermosas que, al contemplarse, se poseían para siempre (Moix 64).

Rudolph depicts his mother's mixture of sorrow and desire in terms of possession, continuing to project conventional masculine amorous discourse onto an affair that he, like his father before him, fails to understand. By kissing the objects and caressing her body with them, the woman's masturbatory actions are the one direct, physical expression of erotic passion that we see, and again we must recognize that we see it through the mediating lens of Rudolph's voyeuristic narration. Andrew Bush summarizes the exchange process in the following way: "Alice believes herself to be the purveyor of texts, when it is in fact her own body, sealed with ribbons they pass from the one to the other, that becomes the wordless letter they lovingly exchange" (155). As they "read" each other's messages in the objects placed on Alice's body, they again innovate, contriving a form of communication beyond language, beyond the control and comprehension of the male narrator. No longer seeing one another, whether by choice or due to actual or metaphorical blindness, their nonverbal, look-based language is channeled into a tactile conversation. María Dolores Costa points out that "since the central concern of Moix's masculine narrator is the utter exclusion of male participation in the woman-to-woman reading process, his discourse proves to be wholly dependent upon a dialogue to which he is denied access" (89).

The title "Las virtudes peligrosas" is perhaps almost as enigmatic as the piece itself, as we are forced to ask what virtues might be characterized as dangerous. I would suggest that there is a possible link between Moix's story and Pierre Choderlos de Laclos's 1782 novel *Les Liaisons*

dangerouses, if seen from the masculine perspective of Rudolph and especially that of his late father, who would certainly characterize his wife's extramarital activities as cruel games that would ultimately triumph in his own humiliation and self-destruction. On the other hand, from the perspective of the female characters in the story, the most dangerous virtues might very well be those values celebrated by patriarchy and the accompanying conventions observed in order to maintain decency and the integrity of the family, the very virtues that necessitated the decidedly unconventional nature of the women's relationship and communication in the first place. Their silence and the lack of direct physical contact through which to share expressions of sexual desire underscore the unorthodox means of defining and carrying out their relationship.

By giving a male narrator the literal power of the word and nearly complete control of language in the story, Moix would appear to grant him an advantage over the women at its center. However, looks can be deceiving, as we have been trained to realize by carefully reading between the lines of his voyeuristic narration, observing the flaws and limitations that result from Rudolph's need to impose order onto something that lies beyond the scope of his logic and reason. The women's story takes place not only at the level of the memories recorded in the general's journal, nor at the level of Rudolph's spying and observations. It develops most fully in our own act of reading the women's silence as resistance, and in the women's creation of an alternate reality. Elaine Showalter has explored the idea of a "wild zone," using terms borrowed from the work of anthropologist Edwin Ardener. Showalter describes a cultural space established through a double-voiced discourse which permits the transmission of meaning by a muted group whose discourse eludes the grasp of the dominant social group (262). Linda Gould Levine employs Showalter's concept of the double-voiced discourse in reading this story, and refers to the fact that the lovers "seem to exist in a sphere which defies the laws of conventional reality" (98). Her analysis also posits that the silences in the text reflect "the subordination and silencing of women" (99). This is certainly the case, but I would take the concept of silence a step farther by suggesting that in adopting a code of silence, the women at the heart of "Las virtudes peligrosas" occupy and draw power from a space of their own creation, beyond the linguistic and semiological reach of the male characters who try to comprehend and put order to the women's story. Rudolph's apparent authority over the text we read in reality serves to highlight the lacunae in his understanding, repeatedly calling into question the validity and efficacy of androcentric discourse in framing events and interactions that took place within an exclusively female domain. According to Christine Arkininstall, "the eroticism inherent in the relationship between the two women protagonists serves to undermine a dominant patriarchal imaginary by subtly indicating another unacknowledged reality" (204-5). The general was driven to insanity by the need to control something beyond his grasp, and he fell prey to the power of the gaze passing between his wife and her lover, becoming the victim of looks that kill.

The nameless women's private act of gazing, taking place in the most public of locations and in front of the eyes of the man who believed himself to be publicly humiliated by it, destabilizes the conventional paradigm of a male subject interpreting a female object. In her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Laura Mulvey points out that "pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly" (62). Unlike the traditional power dynamic in which a male subject sees, identifies, and names a female object of desire, the two women at the center of "Las virtudes peligrosas" are both active subjects, and they recalibrate the balance in the act of looking and seeing. Their appropriation of power by means of the shared gaze shatters the conventional lens through which identity and eros may be viewed, and their silence, in turn, speaks volumes through a patent refusal to participate in patriarchal systems of signification and communication.

Notes

¹ Poet, essayist, novelist, and short story writer Ana María Moix (1947-2014) was the youngest member of the Barcelona intellectual circle known as *la gauche divine*, a group whose leftist political and cultural leanings in the middle to late 1960s seemed at least initially to contradict their solidly middle or upper-class upbringing and status. Within this cohort of artists and writers that included her older brother Terenci, she was nicknamed *la Nena*, and was considered by her friends to be something of a muse to the group. Many of those who eulogized her in obituaries and tribute essays after her death on February 28, 2014 called attention to her quiet but important presence in *la gauche divine*. Although she did not seek the spotlight or attention, Moix's artistic voice did not demur to the status quo either artistically or socially at any point in her career. Her most recent publication, 2011's *Manifiesto personal*, defies easy categorization in terms of genre. What is undeniable about the work, however, is that it leaves us with the author's indictment of changes in cultural values in Spain brought about by the lack of participation in real democratic processes and most recently, by the country's financial situation. She observes that the notions of culture and of values have come to be defined according to market pressures rather than human interactions. Her concern for Spain's youth in particular inspired her to write this piece as an indignant call for real social, political, and economic responses to the financial crisis.

² The story first appeared in print in 1982 as part of Ymelda Navajo's anthology *Doce relatos de mujeres*; it is this earlier publication that the present study uses.

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