Thank you very much, it is great pleasure to be here today, and an honour to have been invited to give this year’s David Vilaseca Memorial Lecture. David a dear friend, but if I’m here I suppose it is more for what he taught me and what we all learnt from his work.

Today I am immersing myself in David’s territory. I will be talking about autobiography, about subjectivity and identification and hindsight, about growing up gay. I will be talking particularly about cinephilia, love for the movies, and its impact on the experience of growing up gay. I will be focusing on Terenci Moix’ memoirs.

In the late 1990s David and myself shared a fascination with the autobiographical work of Catalan writer Terenci Moix (born in 1942). Although there are autobiographical elements in some of his fiction works (*El dia que murió Marilyn*), our interest was most engaged by the memoirs, a series of volumes with the title *El peso de la paja*. Three volumes had come out at the time, *El cine de los sábados* (1990) and *El beso de Peter Pan* (1993) and *Extraño en el paraíso* (1998). The project, that could have extended for at least two more volumes, was unfinished at the time of Moix’ death in 2003. I remember David saying that the thing that fascinated him most about the memoirs was their lack of reserve, their shamelessness, we settled on the Spanish “impudor” to name this attitude. David was a very private person in many ways, but Terenci was for him the example to try to look at his own experience from the outside for his own autobiographical book. I guess he also strived to convey some of Moix’ “impudor” in his own autobiographical fiction *L’aprenentatge de la soledat*
And yet my reading of the memoirs will take me into a different path to the ones followed by Vilaseca in his great essay on gay autobiography *Hindsight and the Real*. At one point in the latter, he brings up an example from Sigmund Freud’s response to the case of the “impotent Slovene” brought to him by a colleague: because of his absolute lack of morals and his blatant disrespect for the law and its implications, Freud considers that the subject is “beyond analysis”. There is something in Moix’ extraordinary account of himself that brought to mind that example. In spite of his actual resistance to psychoanalytic treatment in life, I am not saying that Moix is “beyond analysis” (and Vilaseca produced a great essay on Moix for his last collection *Queer Events*) but the Moix who represents himself in the text (the “Terenci” beyond “Ramón”) seems to be so beyond the confines of the law of the father, so articulate in expressing his subjectivity that it encourages an analysis that engages with the literal rather than going beyond the literal through psychoanalytical codes. There was something in Moix resistant to all kinds of limitations, including notions of what a writer should be like, what a Catalan should be like and of course any cliché regarding masculinity or sexual identity. Actually, one key concept in Moix’s childhood is that of “desorden”, the intended title for what became *El día que murió Marilyn*. (p.130). As described in *El cine de los sábados*, the “desorden” can clearly be assimilated to queerness. It presents queerness as the direct consequence of lack of order and structure.

I shall focus on two issues that are often closer than they should be and shall look into the reasons of their proximity. On the one hand, there is the story of growing up (or becoming) gay and the way this is represented in the writing. Vilaseca’s notion of “hindsight” in autobiography is extremely relevant here: one’s account of growth into gayness in autobiography needs to be framed within the logic of the “future perfect”. It is the future Terenci Moix who is always already the individual young Ramón will become. On the other
hand, I will discuss a certain tendency in gay autobiography to represent such process through cinematic references and points of identification. Although I am not attempting here an answer to the question of why so many gay authors describe their growing of growing up in terms of a strong association to the movies, I’d like to look into such process in the case of Moix and place him within this tradition in gay writing.

Moix’ memoirs are undoubtedly shameless, both narcissistic and self-deprecating. When he represents himself as an ungainly kid prone to Machiavellian plots and tantrums, he loses no opportunity to suggest how irritating he may have been. His process of growing up is not represented heroically, as a straight line of self-realisation, but, on the contrary, as a series of faux pas, mistakes, loose ends and dead ends that brings to mind the difficulties for queer children to grow “straight” as discussed by Jack Halberstam in *The Queer Art of Failure*. In the context of the 1950s Barcelona, Ramón is a failure. He is not a very good student or very popular among his peers and when at 15 he starts work, he is almost immediately fired.

While the voice telling the story guarantees the “successful” end of the story, the fact is that the story is far from reassuring and it is made very clear that it did not look like success as a writer could be achieved at the time (when Moix started working on the memoirs he had just won the prestigious Planeta award, a turning point in his career that was read as his entry into the pantheon of Spanish writers). Ramón’s childhood is hardly represented as an example to follow, a model or even a cautionary tale. Most autobiographical accounts, particularly anglo-american, of writers born in the 40s, would have some kind of common structure of struggle and coming out, a consequence of listening to one’s own desires in a context that discouraged acting on them. In a way, such struggle is present in the second volume of *El peso de la paja*, but the “coming out” is subdued, undramatic, as if there was no real threshold to be crossed given the narrative voice has been diagnosing what was
wrong with the child at every turn. The closest to a coming out moment in the memoirs comes near the end of *El beso de Peter Pan*, and rather than a clash with society or the law is presented as “accepting oneself”: young Ramón was a homosexual who was denying his truth.

Entonces me detuve y decidí hacer frente a la verdad. Yo era un idiota, no hubo imbécil mayor en toda la historia de la imbecibilidad. Era un cretino. Era un deficiente mental para ponerlo suave. Hasta mi madre me lo decía sin decirlo: “Vive, hijo, vive, que son cuatro putos días” (p.515)

This is a key moment that finds an equivalent in many autobiographical accounts: coming out as a moment of accepting oneself, reconciliation with the self. Coming out as turning point and as the moment that gives meaning to one’s life.

What does autobiography mean for gay authors? In *Gaiety Transfigured*, David Bergman surveys a strong series of examples of anglo-american literary autobiography which includes a wide range of names from F.O Matthiessen to James Baldwin, Truman Capote, Gore Vidal or Tennessee Williams. Moix is close to later figures such as Edmund White or Paul Monette. But the Hispanic landscape is particularly interesting and as close to the canon. Work by Manuel Puig, Salvador Novo, Fernando Vallejo o Reinaldo Arenas in Latin America and Eduardo Mendicutti, Eduardo Blanco-Amor, Francisco Ors, Francisco Nieva and more recently Luisgé Martín and Rafael Chirbes, to mention only prose writers, as well as Antonio Roig, Juan Goytisolo and Jaime Gil de Biedma (studied by Vilaseca) attest to the strength and centrality of the literary tradition (filmmakers like Pedro Almodóvar and Gerardo Vera could be added to this list). Stories have key common turning points and motives which are present also in Moix’ account: the strong mother and inconsequential father, childhood...
among women, narcissism, looking at sex without fully comprehending, movies, being molested by priests and assorted male strangers, special friendships, homosexual uncle as role model, all are actually conventions of narratives about the making of the homosexual in works by Edmund White, Paul Monette and in many movies about queer children. The following extract from El cine de los sábados also attests to the typical elements in Moix’s self account:

Al releer aquel diario a tantos años de distancia, descubro que definía la homosexualidad como una desgracia y, en ocasiones, como un vicio atroz. No me asombra en absoluto este detalle. Significa que no estaba tan conforme con mi naturaleza como he pretendido después. Significa que sufrí por su causa, que lloré mucho, que estuve en numerosas ocasiones sumido en la desesperación. Con qué añagazas ha conseguido la memoria borrar aquellos instantes es algo que solo puede atribuirse a mi constante necesidad de sobrevivir. Empresa que debió de resultar difícil para un niño que se comportaba como un adulto y tenía, para colmo, un padre que le prefería muerto antes que maricón (Moix, 1990, 193)

So the arc between self disgust and self acceptance is dutifully followed in Moix’ account, as it would be in most gay autobiographies. Still, at this point, let me stop at “gay”, which I have been using perhaps too often and which is complicated when referring to many of the authors just mentioned. “Gay” is certainly the default term I tend to use when I don’t want to enter dangerous semantic territories. In my own process of becoming it was a standard, a “safe”, comfortable term equidistant of the medical sounding “homosexual” and the more radically tinged and theoretically complicated “queer”. Sometimes one just does not aspire to radicalism. Yet the term in the current context may be cause for concern among many of
you and it says more about my position than Moix’s. So let me come clean: maybe the word it’s not relevant anymore and clearly it has lost the centrality it once had. I acknowledge “gay” is, has always been, an arbitrary concept, more performative than descriptive, more effective in its implications than in its literal power of naming something, more political than referential and for that reason it has come under critical scrutiny resulting in attempts to make the supposedly more inclusive “queer” the really central category for academic study and political action. But somehow it was a key concept when Moix wrote and somehow the kid in the memoires circles around something very similar to gay identities, a very specific conceptualization. There was from the 50s on a gay need to “come out”, a gay cinephilia expressed mostly through camp readings, a gay sense of dejection and marginality, a gay identification with the mother. Generationally and literarily, Moix belongs to the generation faced with those traits. Those elements, present in the work of Moix, for me make up the gay identity which maybe has now been partially superseded: coming out is now less central and so is the need for references and community. I use “gay” as a set of mythologies, a framework to place Moix’s decidedly “not gay” voice. Less millennials will write their memoirs around these elements than people who were born in mid XX Century. It is the concept of “gayness” as generally understood until the early 1990s that seems to be the implicit framework Moix is aiming to.

A systematic use of gay in reference to Moix’ work is very problematic. The word actually does not appear in the teenage years of the memoirs and I haven’t come across it in any of his books (although that might be me). It does not seem to be a word Moix felt comfortable with even later in life. I’m told that he did not really like it on the grounds that it was reductive (Almodóvar is another artist who has problems with the word and did not really use it in films until 2009’s Broken Embraces). He had clashes with activists (I quoted one of
these in one of my previous articles on Moix) and with Spanish gay intellectual Alberto Cardín about it and even clashed on TV with younger activists who attempted to reproach him for not being “gay enough”. Although acquainted with the gay movement and gay magazines since his London years in the mid-1960s, it is not a term he easily adopted. His inspiration was on movies not on the movement. He had grown up to realise some kind of real self that did not quite fit the specific traits of the politically aware gayness that became palpable in Barcelona during the 70s. Like Ocaña, Nazario and many others who grew up in the 50s, the word gay did not seem to match their experiences.

Actually, in terms of his identifications and the way he read cinema and let the movies penetrate his sense of self, the rhetoric of “queer” reading as described by Alexander Doty in *Making Things Perfectly Queer* might provide a better framework. Even if there was a dominant logic in the period between the events described in the memoirs and the moment when they were written, that was undeniably gay, Moix’s response to this was closer to queer strategies. As Doty acknowledges, even if gay and queer are used in different contexts and to mean different things, clearly they have many points of coincidence.

No matter how we label the sexuality, what we do find in the memoirs is an unquestioned drive for teenager Ramón to become the writer Terenci and even to account for the Terenci he will become. The usual approach to this is through the concept of *authenticity*. Almodóvar has dramatized the aspiration of authenticity that may lead to sexual dissidence, very clearly in *Bad Education*, but also in the Tina strand of *Law of Desire*. Moix implicitly seems to refer to it: bad faith and excuses that wrap Ramón into darkness or indecision are regarded negatively in the two first volumes. The imperative from the present is that Ramón must come to terms with what he is. Ramón will come to regret his rejection of Roberto in
volume two and in volume one will represent metonymically his return to the past in terms of the failed reacquaintance with the Niño Rico and will reframe the meeting as a revenge plot. Although the teenage Ramón may not “know”, the writer Terenci does know, he is clear about the path that leads from the former to the latter, and in terms of growth and development it is the right path, the path to the truth about himself. Still something is odd in this search for “authenticity” and for realising the truth about himself. It seems that such truth is only possible if it feeds on images that come from outside, which are clearly distorted representations of reality and which have been thought and produced in contexts which are distant from Moix’ own.

Then there are the people. Heterosexual dynamics are presented as failures in Ramón’s world: he lives surrounded not just by his parents, whose marriage is precarious and clearly failing, but also by single or widowed relatives. But Moix’s attitudes towards sexuality are not only described in terms of the unattractiveness of heterosexuality. Terenci also sets little Ramón against the background of gay men of his period, in particular his uncle Cornelio and the latter’s lover Alberto. Still the role they play in Moix’ self representation is not identification. Cornelio is an important influence for Moix, but is also derided as something “not to become”. Cornelio leads a subcultural gay life in the 50s and often is described in negative terms: even if Moix recognizes the link, he does not want to be “like” him, he rejects that way of being a homosexual. As for his uncle’s partner Alberto, he becomes a much more attractive figure, but more in terms of an object of desire than as someone to emulate. No, there are no homosexuals Moix wants to emulate. The world of references young Ramón wants to become, real identification, appears in the memoirs in terms of film plots, stars and characters. It is through fiction that Moix acquires a sense of selfhood, it is through fake images that he achieves authenticity.
Little Ramón, the queer child in *El cine de los sábados* is therefore simultaneously within and outside gay history, he simultaneously appropriates the transgressive potential of growing up queer in the 50s and dismisses queerness as a shared issue. In this sense it is at least understandable that relations with the gay movement were, to say the least, strained. But at the same time he shows the way for an understanding of sexuality that also collides with received notions of heteronormative development. In this sense, putting Moix at the center of our concerns about queerness has a relevance that maybe some of the issue-led policies the movement was demanding has not.

The range of objects of desire and affection in these volumes is also interesting. The key significant other in the first volume is the Niño Rico, who will reject his (innocent, maybe chaste) advances at one point calling him a faggot. In the second volume, *El beso de Peter Pan*, he has a crush on straight “Niño inquieto” that turns bitter when the latter starts dating girls, and then as he attends drama school he has a relationship with Roberto, a handsome actor. The friendship between them is intense until the moment Roberto makes advances on him. Moix’ rejection of Roberto at this point (an echo of the niño rico’s rejection of him in the previous volume) marks a turning point in the memoirs I quoted above, and can be considered the climax of the second volume. When he reviews the situation and finally attempts to say yes to Roberto, it will be too late. This is one of the ghostly moments that will haunt his attitudes for the rest of his life.

In terms of subjectivity, I take the point that one “becomes” through identification. As we can see none of the real models provide, in Moix’s diagnostic, strong identifications for the queer child. They are, no doubt, experience, but experience that is to be rejected, which does not fulfil the need for the kind of selfhood little Ramón aims for, the selfhood that is
represented by the space represented by the “future perfect” Terenci Moix (a concept linked to Stockton’s ghostly child). This is where culture, and in particular the movies come in.

QUEER CINEPHAGIA

I said earlier that authenticity was a key notion to understand the process of growing up as represented in *El peso de la paja*. But it is indeed a queer authenticity that is composed of fragments of shockingly inauthentic texts. Escapist films of the 50s, which constitute the basis of Moix’ cinephilia, were indeed among the least “authentic” ever made. Technicolor adventure, family melodramas, musicals and epics are at the heart of the writer’s taste (whereas westerns and war movies are systematically dismissed). Here is the moment the link between self and the movies is introduced in *El cine de los sábados*.

*De repente, la homosexualidad, palabra que el pequeño Ramonet desconoce por completo, adquiere los tonos brillantemente sofisticados de las películas que le gustan. No se detiene a pensar que todo el oropel de Cornelio y su exquisito amigo corresponde a una condición que sus compañeros de escuela empiezan a denigrar con palabras malsonantes. Todo lo contrario: desoye la vulgaridad de los demás, se olvida de su antigua tendencia al taco, y arrebata a la pantalla las imágenes idóneas para sublimar a los dos primeros homosexuales de su vida. Este niño ya es todo un experto en transferencias.”* P. 370

Displacement of experience into movie plots and images: this particular approach is especially typical of queer autobiography. The movies are presented as a source of selfhood and self construction. And this is even truer in Moix’ generation. Several volumes have also been published to explore the links between the movies and queer growth (see especially
Patrick Horrigan’s *Widescreen Dreams*. In more strictly theoretical terms, Kathryn Bond Stockton and, particularly Jack Halberstam have investigated the role of popular culture in the formation of queer subjectivity. They both see the queer child as someone who picks up the “wrong” references to become “different”. In her book, Stockton introduces the concept of growing sideways as an alternative to growing up. Growing up is only one aspect of growing and basically stops when the child becomes an adult. Growing sideways, she suggests, includes other aspects germane to grow and describes more the way a child (a queer child) develops. Movies have a central role in this particular approach to growing. One could argue that the fantasies of the movies also affected straight teenagers in the 50s. The main difference may lie in centrality. Whereas the fantasies that produced a heterosexual imaginary were produced and enforced at all levels of society, for the queer child the imaginary had to be cultivated through the movies through plots, emotions and attitudes mined from films. In the absence of real images to represent what one “was”, the movies produced substitutes almost as vivid. Moix’s *El cine de los sàbados* is an excellent example of growing sideways as a rhetoric used by Moix to explain how he became Terenci.

It is not surprising that authenticity is constructed from cultural materials. In Almodóvar’s *All About My Mother*, trans performer Agrado insists “one is more authentic as one realises what one dreamt about herself”. And given dreams were ready made in the movies, it makes sense that authenticity has cinematic roots. It deserves looking into, however, that those cultural materials tended to be the same whether we are reading memoirs of someone from New Jersey or from Barcelona. The movies were not, it bears repeating, an ideal treasure trove of gay friendly images. Actually most images of sexuality in the movies are very negative. It is just that these literal images do not really matter to the queer kids, because they partake of a particular approach that does not read literally. Alexander Doty
has insisted on the essential queerness of certain movies and how, in spite of claims from more “activist” positions (for instance the work of Vito Russo), queer cinephilia is not about literal representation, but about identification and appropriation:

classic texts and personalities actually can be more queer- suggestive than “openly” gay, lesbian, or bisexual texts. That is, the coding of classic or otherwise “mainstream” texts and personalities can often yield a wider range of non-straight readings because certain sexual things could not be stated baldly—and still cannot or will not in most mainstream products—thus often making it more difficult to categorize the erotics of a film or a star.

It is Doty’s proposal that helps to account for Moix’ cinephilia.

The word cinephilia is often taken to account for an excessive passion for film. Still, when I hear about cinephilia there are two different definitions which, in my understanding, can coexist, but have very little in common. Cinephilia, as defined by key anglo American proponents like Jonathan Rosenmbaum or as taken for granted by Susan Sontag, is a particular cultural practice that originates in attitudes and tastes of certain Paris audiences in the late 50s. A cinephile was a spectator endowed with “distinction”, in the words of Pierre Bordieu. These are the people who “understand”, who have the right taste for the right directors (both young turks like Godard or Rivette or classical heavies such as Hitchcock or Ray), who share an approach and are authorized to have canonical discussions within that approach. But in reading about such academic definitions, I tend to feel disengaged and a bit removed from the kind of phenomenon at hand, the kind of love for the movies that I experienced and that is at the heart of work by Mendicutti or Moix. The truth is that the cinephilia of Moix and many queer writers does not quite work in the same way. Where cinephiles seek prestige and intellect, Moix (who on the other hand was as obsessed for cultural prestige as anybody else) sought something closer to real life and the body. As
Marijke de Valck and Malte Hanger discuss in their introduction to their collection *Cinephilia. Movies, Love and Memory*, there is another side to cinephilia that encourages pleasure, experience, collection of images, identification, which is not characterized by distinction, and displays a passion which is not detached and intellectual, quite the opposite. I like to call that cinephagia, so distinguish it from the more mature concept. And Moix is indeed a central figure of European cinephagia: not just a man who saw and remembered thousands of film, but also someone who fetishistically collected images and attitudes and plots.

Numerous examples can be found on such attitude on books by Horrigan, Farmer and Doty, but the more precise description of what’s at stake in such queer reading is to be found in D.A Miller’s wonderful essay on the Broadway musical *Place for Us*. Miller’s queer child reads the shows he loves “a tergo”, from behind, finding in them traces of himself, answers to questions. Somehow the musicals become part of what Miller is, what Miller does and provide expression to the queer child’s confused feelings about himself. Musicals in this case, as the movies do for Moix, communicate secret emotions in intimate situations. 14 year old Miller explores the Broadway musical in the basement of his parents’ house. Moix insists on the small moments in which something in a movie, in a cheap novel, in a comic book, seems to grab him.

The cinephagous spectators can be critical (hyper critical really) about the movies but the critical categories are not the same that define the more earnest cinephilic taste. Cinephagia tends to be a lonely activity, less socialized than cinephilia. The cinema itself is a physical space, and there is something in the enjoyment of movies that always brings back ideas of childhood. In *Spectacular Passions*, Brett Farmer emphasizes the link between the cinema
space and the mother in the discussion of a brief survey of gay spectators. And even when focusing on the film text, cinephagous audiences seem to be engaging with it from the margins: costumes, elegance, or muscles, to mention three points of attraction in *El peso de la paja*, are key nodes of attention to spectators. Cinema also becomes a way of life in a different way to that of the cinephiles of the French traditions. One imitates transgressively. We find this in Eduardo Mendicutti, in Manuel Puig, and of course in Moix. Although the two former writers don’t express their cinephagia in autobiography, there is more than a tad of the self in characters of Mendicutti’s *Mae West y yo*, as well as in Kiss of Spider Woman’s Molina and *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth*’s Toto.

Queer cinephagia is specific and it has a long tradition. It has worked both in terms of subjectivity and community. I am now following proposals by Doty, but also Janet Staiger, in defining how gay cinephilia arose out of cinemagoing practices in New York in the mid 1960s as a shared activity that developed into conventions, a canons and myths. For Doty, the movies lend themselves to this kind of appropriation. He resists the idea that such appropriation is “perverse” because it is as legitimate as any other reading. But he finds threads, meanings and ideas in the films that can only be labelled “queer”. Moix develops this idea in more radical terms: the movies become not a complement to community, but a replacement for it. He puts this idea very blatantly in *El cine de los sábados*:

> Mi sexualidad era de papel en 1969. Mi sexualidad era de celuloide desde muchos años antes. Y acaso no disfruté nunca del acto sexual porque mis orgasmos quedaron oscurecidos por la tinta china, mediocre y barata, de algunos tebeos. Porque mis besos más auténticos sólo existían cuando devolvían los besos de la pantalla, con la indiscriminada seguridad de que allí todo vale (...) Ningún cuerpo
Some of his strategies for reading movies are close to those described by Doty in *Making Things Perfectly Queer* and have to do with camp (Maria Montez and the bitchy divas of péplum) and appropriation (the now legendary homoerotic subtext in *Ben Hur*). In general, the attitudes towards the movies in the first two volumes of *El peso de la paja* are very typical of queer spectatorship. In his book *Spectacular Passions*, Brett Farmer identifies four areas of male queer spectatorship which constitute central tenets of cinephagia as defined for these authors: the musical, camp diva worship, the mother, and homoerotic male performers.

Although music is mentioned often in the memoirs (Moix’s range of formative musical influences include Disney tunes and French chanson, for instance), the musical as a genre seems less central than in the Anglo American tradition as insightfully engaged with by D.A Miller’s *Place for Us* or in texts by Alexander Doty or Horrigan. Music theatre in *El peso de la paja* appears more in the form of opera and it has two functions. One of them is social. In Barcelona during the Franco years opera meant el Gran Teatre del Liceu, and el Liceu had a strong history intertwined with taste and the higher classes. On the other hand, the use of opera has to do with self dramatization, an element which is barely hinted in the childhood and teenage years of the memoirs but will constitute the heart of a later novel such as *Amami Alfredo!*
Closer to the queer cinephile tradition is his camp reading of certain films, often based on the figure of the strong female performer. Camp reading, central to Doty’s cinephile-scholar approach, consists of making films work following a queer logic. Doty finds it in The Women or in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. The example mentioned above in which Moix and his friend Roberto re-read homoerotically the classic Ben Hur is an example of such perspective. And of course so is his approach to the wicked women in sword and sandal films.

Las perversas del género peplum constituieron un arquetipo que me encandilaba. Solían ser emperatrices libidinosas, cortesanas podridas de ambición o hetairas traicioneras. Eran lobas cuyas garras se disputaban a los musculosos de turno, prendados a su vez de virgencitas ingenuas, que siempre me caían fatal. Nadie estuvo más cerca de la perfección de la villanía, ni más alejada del arte interpretativo, que Gianna Maria Canale, sublime maggiorata que ya había hecho de Teodora con todas las consecuencias. Por su acreditada perversidad tenía que morir al final de cada película, pero yo la consideraba una pobre despistada, que se mataba por error, clavándose el puñal destinado a la ingenua.

In general terms, Moix uses a camp strategy that leads him to absorb images from the movies. This comes to confound structures of desire and identification, very much along the lines of Wayne Koestenbaum:

I spent much of my childhood trying to distinguish identification from desire, asking myself, ‘Am I in love with Julie Andrews, or do I think I am Julie Andrews?’ I knew that to love Julie Andrews placed me, however vaguely, in heterosexuality’s domain; but to identify with Julie Andrews, to want to be the star of Star!, placed me under suspicion.

Here is his reaction when faced with glamour, one of the key gravitational centers of camp readings. Glamour is something that Ramón absorbs, making it a part of himself.
“Glamour. Esta es la palabra que, sin conocerla, vino a poner luces en mi vida. Este es el artificio supremo que determinó mis evasiones hacia mundos que para los demás resultarían inalcanzables y que yo sabía expresar con toda precisión en cada uno de mis actos, en mis gestos y miradas. Tanto que, siendo todavía muy niño, copiaba los aspavientos de Eleanor Parker en Sin remisión (infausta Eleanor, aferrada a las rejas de una cárcel terrorífica). Sabía anunciar histerias incipientes según la expresión de Bette en cualquiera de sus desaguisados (¡Anda que cuando le pegó un tiro a su amante por culpa de la carta!) y, si deseaba expresar preocupación, me colocaba en actitud de jarras parecida a la de Errol Flynn cuando asistía al concurso de tiro en Robin de los bosques” (p.105)

Camp reading is also used to shape his seduction attempt on his uncle’s partner Alberto:

Al plantearme la necesidad de usurpar su privilegiada posición, descubrí un tipo de maldad que no había conocido en la vida real y sí en las películas: la perversa que se entremete, la que siembra cizaña, provocando el cataclismo en el seno de familias perfectamente avenidas. Bette Davis no dictó sus lecciones en vano. Y al ponerlas en práctica, un adolescente avispado podía alcanzar un sobresaliente sin demasiado esfuerzo.

Related to the diva worship, the third pillar of Moix’s cinephagia is the centrality of the mother. Again, Farmer has discussed this recurring trait in terms very similar to those in the memoirs. My engagement with this key aspect of queer cinephagia must be necessarily superficial here, but it has a great importance in any account of the place of Moix’s autobiographical work within trends in gay autobiography. The mother/diva is a key figure in Puig and in Almodóvar (three of the great Almodóvar mothers, in High Heels, All About My Mother, Volver can be linked to gay divas Joan Crawford, Lana Turner and Bette Davis, the two former with a strong element of motherhood in their personae, the three of them central to the queer film canon). Moix’ mother is strong and fits perfectly into the homosexual myth:
Ella era, sin advertirlo, la perfecta madre de homosexual, no sólo por su talante de dominadora feroz, sino por su capacidad de encarnar todos los sueños del hijo.

Ninguno de mis amigos dejaría de adorarla a perpetuidad, ninguno dejaría de elogiar su empaque (“Señora Angelina, qué guapa está hoy”), y, en resumen, tendría que confiar en ellos para seguir comulgando íntimamente con las ruedas de molino que ella misma había creado. (Moix 1993)

Farmer has provided an argument about the role of mothers in gay spectatorship. On the one hand there are the matrocentric plots of films like Mildred Pierce and Imitation of Life (both referenced by Almodóvar). But he also places the mother as the origin of the queer child’s love for the movies. It is interesting that Moix mother is not just ghostly present in the climax of the second volume of the memoirs, but also acts as someone who accompanied the child to the movies and, in her work as a seamstress, tried to emulate the great ladies of the screen.

Finally, for Farmer, exploring erotic imagination is one of the central uses of queer cinephilia. It is also one the most obvious to non queer audiences. Following Steven Neale, Farmer emphasizes how cinema tended to be very chaste in the representation of the male body. Along the same lines, Richard Dyer, in a chapter named “White Muscles”, singles out three kinds of films that constituted the exception: Tarzan movies, peplum and boxing film. The peplum occupies a key position in Moix’ memoirs. It was in one of the proto-peplums, Fabiola, that Moix first discovered the attractions of male flesh in the shape of the actor Henri Vidal. After that he would come to enjoy the peplum and its athletes:

Pero este género constituyó un gozoso tributo al esplendor de la carne mientras se prestó al lucimiento del divino atleta Steve Reeves. En el divertido cortejo de gimnastas despistado, él constituyó una maravillosa excepción. No sólo llegó el
primero: fue superior a los demás. Su cuerpo era equilibrado, sus músculos racionales, sus rasgos poseían cierta nobleza clásica. Por pura lógica, quedaba siempre vencedor en el concurso *Le plus bel Apollon du cinema* que organizaba la revista *Cinemonde* por votación popular y, no nos engañemos, para presentar las formas más permisivas del desnudo masculino bajo pretextos que los moralistas no pudiesen reprochar. Ciegos que eran, pues Steve se convirtió en divinidad tutelar de los onanistas de medio mundo.

Desire is of course one of the main areas of selfhood for the queer child. Although there are scenes in which young Moix’s gaze is projected on erotically enticing men.

Todo jovencito anómalo tiene que acostumbrarse a buscar sus raíces, y la sobada incógnita de qué fue primero, el huevo o la gallina, nunca es invocada en vano. En el caso del adolescente soñador que yo era, justo es preguntarse si fueron primero los actores o su máscara, si los actores me seducían por su prestancia, la de sus personajes o la carga que yo depositaba en ellos. Sentí transportes amorosos sin reconocer que detrás de este sentimiento pudiese existir una inclinación culpable; en este proceso de idealismo desproveía a mis actores de todo efecto erótico, que descargaba en otros menos queridos o, a partir de un momento determinado, en los adonis de las revistas de culturismo. Desvié hacia aquellos cuerpos desnudos la burda carga del deseo. Era como si no quisiera mancillar a mis galanes, y esta maniobra de ocultación me hace pensar que tenía una clara conciencia del pecado, aunque la disfrazase bajo la aureola de menefreguismo que mi tranquilidad espiritual necesitaba. No fueron coartadas lo que me faltaba.

Of the three key male cinematic icons of the 50s, Marlon Brando, Monty Clift and James Dean, it is the latter that Moix most strongly identifies with. This is interesting to get a more precise idea of the contours of Moix’s cinematic pleasures. If Brando represented raw, brutal masculinity and Clift was the beautiful, sensitive and fragile young man, Dean was the somewhat angelic rebel that Moix relates to:
Carl Trask podía ser perfectamente yo, y lo fui. Llegué a alcanzar un estado mimético inquietante: hablaba a destiempo, comía con la cabeza pegada al Plato, caminaba con las manos en los bolsillos y los hombros hundidos. Todos mis sentimientos, reacciones y actitudes estaban inspirados por los de Carl Trask. Era a él, no a James Dean, a quien intentaba resucitar cada noche, cuando me encerraba en el despacho de la Médica para ejecutar los rituales propuestos por el club de París. Me concentraba con todas mis fuerzas y llegaba a creer que el protagonista de Al este del Edén corría por la habitación, presto a lanzarme su mensaje. No era, como en la película, un acta de reconciliación con el padre. A mí aquel señor tan perfecto, tan riguroso y puritano me parecía un perfecto gilipollas. Si algo me fallaba en aquel poderoso argumento era que un chico tan majo, tan dispuesto al amor perdiese el culo por ganarse el cariño de un viejo tan insoportable. Me parecía simpática la madre, por su oficio de ramera emprendedora y Carl por tierno y rebelde. Y la novia del hermano porque era Julie Harris y el hermano porque era un guapísimo. Pero lo que es al padre, lo hubiera dejado reventar en la estación, así, tranquilamente. Nunca vi embolia más merecida. (Moix, 1993, 181)

As we can see, Moix’s cinephagia is, more than simple love for the movies, a way of life. As the 1960s progressed, Moix will find other sources of interest, often non cinematic: Egypt, traveling, theatre, but it is cinema that remained at the heart of his identity as a writer and as an individual. Cinema informed directly many of his fictions and essays. Cinema became a part of what he was before Terenci was born, the movies created Terenci and provided the material for growing up, for finding plots about himself and for supporting the process of growing up queer as a fiction.