How Does One Escape One’s Own Simulacrum? Subjectivity and the Asceticism of Being in Terenci Moix’s Autobiography

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Memoria, literatura, presente y pasado, lo que imaginamos y nunca fue, los sueños que tuvimos y nunca se cumplieron . . . todo forma un todo absoluto.
Terenci Moix, Extraño en el paraíso

The publication of Alain Badiou’s The Clamor of Being represented nothing short of a revolution in the context of studies on the philosopher Gilles Deleuze. Badiou writes against the prevailing view among Anglo-American critics of a Deleuze refusing all systematicity, breaking with the “Western metaphysical tradition,” etc.—against what Badiou calls the fashionable doxa of a Deleuzianism which, focusing exclusively on the philosopher’s later collaborative work with Félix Guattari, makes of him the joyous champion of desire, free flux, and “the world’s confusion” (Badiou 10). Badiou’s Deleuze controversially emerges as an impeccably sober and “ascetic” thinker (13), one whose most radical contribution lies in a return to the thesis of the univocity of being or “Being as One” (20). According to Badiou, Deleuze’s most fundamental concern is not—as previous critics had tended to emphasize—to “liberate the multiple” but, quite the opposite, to submit thinking to a “renewed concept of the One” (12). What this means is that, for Deleuze,
multiplicity—crucial though this concept clearly is in his corpus—has a purely formal or modal, and not real, status and that, as Louise Burchill notes, it “is . . . ultimately of the order of simulacra” (xiv). Deleuzianism is thus provocatively posited by Badiou as fundamentally a “Platonism with a different accentuation” (26)—a doctrine which, rejecting a mimetic vision of being, nonetheless “retains from Plato the univocal sovereignty of the One” and is thus best defined as a “Platonism of the virtual” (46).

Like Deleuze, the best-selling Catalan novelist Terenci Moix (b. Ramon Moix i Messeguer, 1942–2003) is an author around whom it can justly be said that a certain critical “doxa” has in recent years started to emerge within Hispanic studies. This involves viewing Moix as one of the main representatives of a distinctively postmodernist and camp aesthetics in Spain. It is a view primarily concerned with the blurring of the boundaries between high art and mass culture found in Moix’s work and which has tended to emphasize his role as “el primer escritor español que no tuvo empacho en declararse homosexual y utilizó su orientación sexual como plataforma para la provocación” (Mira, Para entendernos 506). As I shall aim to demonstrate, though, drawing on Badiou, that camp and postmodern Moix can be as deceptive as Deleuze is in his alleged “overturning of Platonism” (Badiou 9).

Along with such figures as (among others) the writers Jaime Gil de Biedma, José Agustín Goytisolo, Rosa Regas, and Esther Tusquets, the architects Ricardo Bofill and Oriol Bohigas, the directors Vicente Aranda and Gonzalo Suárez, the singer Guillermina Motta, and the actresses Teresa Gimpera and Serena Vergano, Moix was a prominent member of the so-called gauche divine. This is the ironic name which, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, became associated with an elite constituency of Barcelona-based (though not necessarily Catalan-identified) predominantly middle-class, left-wing intellectuals, artists, and filmmakers who lived a distinctively cosmopolitan life-style in the wake of Spain’s economic growth and comparative cultural liberalization at the time, and whose most iconic, now legendary, hang-outs where the boîte Bocaccio and the Pub Tuset (Riambau and Torreiro 54).1 As Teresa Vilarós has pointed out, the gauche divine represented one of the first manifestations of a playful and provocative avant-gardism in Spain, one which through a process of “re-signification” and simultaneous

1. The name itself, gauche divine, is attributed to the critic Joan de Sagarra, who first used it in his writings for TeleXprés (Riambau and Torreiro 54).
“de-signification,” challenged the oppressiveness of the prevailing Francoist identitarian models in favor of “[la] posibilidad de invención de nuevos modos de vida” (170). According to Vilarós, in their enthusiastic, indeed militant embrace of cosmopolitism, spectacle, publicity, and performance, the members of the gauche divine not only pioneered models of identity that started to become popular at a later stage, during the Transición; they can also be seen as the precursors in Spain of the globalizing and corporative paradigm in which we are all immersed today—the paradigm which “haciendo uso de los nuevos medios de comunicación espectacular, ha producido como resultado la borradura de los nítidos límites de los ámbitos sagrados de la modernidad: el cultural, el político y el económico” (171).²

Since Paul Julian Smith’s groundbreaking analysis of El cine de los sábados (42–52), several critics have emphasized the importance of the cult of cinema and popular culture in Moix’s oeuvre. Smith pointed out that Moix “exploits antiquity and cinema as stages for defiantly ‘flat’ images of the subject” (52), and that for him, “desire must be projected before it can be felt” (48). Robert R. Ellis expanded on this point, noting that Moix’s “personal identity . . . is inseparable from the images he saw projected on the screen during childhood and adolescence” (94) and that his autobiography “thus offers insight into the interconnectedness of popular culture and gay self-representation, positing gay sexuality not as an essence but as a gaze through which the ostensibly natural constructions of heterosexual ideology are denaturalised and rendered queer” (91). In his analyses of Moix’s Catalan novels of the late 1960s and 1970s, Josep-Anton Fernández also highlights the author’s distinctively postmodern “use of mass culture and marginal aesthetics such as Camp” (7), noting how, for example, the characters of El día que va morir Marilyn—much like Moix himself in his autobiography—“articulate and interpret their ‘experiences’ by means of mass-produced, mainly cinematic, images and narratives,” so much so that “it is mass culture, in fact, that allows the protagonists to articulate their desires” (25). Likewise, Alberto Mira lays emphasis on this aspect of Moix’s production. According to Mira, for Moix “el arte popular se presenta como fuente de inspiración y tabla de náufrago, como textos que crean modelos de comportamiento, además de ser refugio emocional en tiempos difíciles” (Para entendernos 507). Moreover, “cine y deseo

² I am grateful to the anonymous reader of Hispanic Review for bringing Teresa Vilarós’s important article to my attention, and to the author herself for kindly making it available to me.
resultan indisolubles en su imaginación’ (De Sodoma 339); ‘el cine . . . se convierte en una auténtica herramienta para clasificar sentimientos, para llenar el deseo de imágenes’ (340).

My take on this point does not so much diverge from these different claims (radically compressed here for the purposes of my argument) as much as takes these claims several steps further. Following Badiou’s understanding of Deleuze, one of my primary aims in this article is to show that there is more to the camp, deceptively postmodern Moix than critics have emphasized. Besides Moix, the champion of queer desire and kitsch performativity, or the enfant terrible who in his interventions in the media and the popular press flagged his sexual orientation ‘as a tool of provocation’ (Mira, Para entendernos 506; translation mine), there is a surprisingly classical and ascetic writer to be discovered: the writer emerging from Moix’s three-volume autobiography El peso de la paja. This is an author whose most radical and worthwhile contribution from the perspective of contemporary lesbian and gay theory may no longer lie in his apparent celebration of the world of free flux and postmodern simulacra, but quite the opposite, in a ‘renewed concept of the One’ (Badiou 12) or ‘Platonism of the virtual’ (Badiou 46).

In this article I draw on the early work by Gilles Deleuze—particularly, but not exclusively, on Difference and Repetition, The Logic of Sense, and Proust and Signs—in order to elucidate some key aspects of Moix’s autobiography. I start by looking at Deleuze’s notion of the subject as a ‘simulacrum’ of Being and as a mere ‘impersonal consciousness’ (Khalfa 64). Drawing on Badiou’s and Žižek’s respective readings of Deleuze, I analyze the philosopher’s notion of thought as an ‘ascetic’ process whereby the individual is

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3. Grouped under the general title El peso de la paja (‘‘The Weight of Straw,’’ a reference to a famous square in Barcelona’s Raval Quarter, El Pes de la Palla, also translated as ‘‘The Burden of Masturbation’’), Moix’s autobiography includes three volumes: El cine de los sábados, El beso de Peter Pan, and Extraño en el paraíso, hereafter referred to as El cine, El beso, and Extraño respectively. Cut short by the author’s death in 2003, the autobiography was originally going to include at least three more volumes, provisionally entitled La edad de un sueño ‘‘pop’’, El misterio del amor, and Entrada de artistas (El cine 5). Besides noting Moix’s initial intentions, however, it should be emphasized that both their content and even whether these volumes would have finally materialized or not is a matter of speculation. Focusing strictly on what the author did write, it is my contention that, in fact, Moix’s autobiography must be seen as a perfectly finished piece of work: as far as explaining the author’s ascetic turn away from the simulacrum and toward a domain of (virtual) transcendence—as I shall aim to demonstrate—the book in its current format tells us all we need to know, and it is difficult to see in what way any extra pages (let alone three more volumes) might have added anything substantial to this particular story.
“transfixed” by the “impersonal exteriority” that is also considered to be his or her most authentic being (Badiou 13). Against this theoretical background, I then turn to Moix in order to interpret the author’s renunciation of love in favor of literature at the end of his own personal “apprenticeship in signs” (Bogue 2)—among other aspects of his autobiography—as a turn toward a domain of virtual transcendence, one which leads Moix to attain “intellectual beatitude” conceived of, in Badiou’s terms, as “the enjoyment of the Impersonal” (39).

As Badiou points out, Deleuze’s work is essentially opposed to anything that presents itself as a “philosophy of the subject” in any humanist or “psychological” sense (Badiou 80). Deleuze’s radically “anti-Cartesian” (80) notion of the subject is based upon two revolutionary premises, which I wish to present here in some detail.

The first premise is the discovery of beings as merely superficial intensities or simulacra of Being. Beings for Deleuze are “immanent production[s] of the One” and “fortuitous modalities of the univocal” (Badiou 44), modalities which (qua simulacra) far from resting on the ontological primacy of sameness over difference harbor “a positive power that denies the original and the copy, the model and the reproduction” (Deleuze, Logic of Sense 262). What this implies is that, according to Deleuze, there is a fundamental difference between the self or “oneself” as simulacrum—that is, one’s own being as a substantive deployment or actualization of the “One-All”—and the “subject” as pure virtuality—that is, one’s own existence as a function or, at best, as Badiou notes, “a network of functions, a functional space of lived experience” (81).

On this point, I should like to draw on Slavoj Žižek’s Deleuzian exegesis. As Žižek points out, far from belonging to the sphere of the actual—of distinct entities within constituted reality—the “subject,” according to Deleuze, designates the irruption of the virtual within the order of actuality (Žižek 68). In other words, subject for Deleuze designates that “unequal odd hal[f]” (Deleuze, Difference and Repetition 210) of ourselves which remains forever to be actualized, a network of “multiple singular potentialities” and “imper-

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4. Badiou notes, “From the viewpoint of the dynamic power of Being, there is no admissible reason for beings to resemble anything more essential than themselves. They are an immanent production of the One, and not at all images governed by similarity. They are fortuitous modalities of the univocal and, being as far removed as possible from any mimetic hierarchy, can only be thought in their anarchic coexistence through disjunctive synthesis” (44).
sonal singular gestures, affects, and perceptions” yet to be synthesized into “our” gestures, affects and perceptions as “pre-existing, stable, and self-identical” entities (Žižek 19–20). This is why, as Žižek explains, from a Deleuzian perspective, “subject” and “person” are two radically different categories (68). While “person” belongs to the domain of actualized reality, designating the “wealth of positive features and properties that characterise an individual,” the “subject” remains an endlessly divisible and repeatable multiplicity. Žižek thus notes in characteristically polemical style:

“[P]ersonalists” insist on the unique character of each individual as a combinatoire of features that cannot ever be repeated and that are organically woven together through an underlying, unidentifiable je ne sais quoi as the mystery of personality. The subject is, on the contrary, endlessly repeatable or divisible; it is nothing but the unending process of division/repetition. . . . [Moreover] Subject thus relates to substance exactly like Becoming versus Being: . . . the subject is a purely virtual entity in the strict Deleuzian sense of the term: the moment it is actualised, it changes into substance. (68–69)

The second revolutionary premise of Deleuze’s notion of the subject is the strictly “machinic” idea that the philosopher has not only of desire (the famous “desiring-machines,” etc.) but also of will or choice. As Badiou points out, this conception “strictly precludes any idea of ourselves as being, at any time, the source of what we think or do,” making the subject appear closer to an “automaton” than to the traditional myth of the self-present, autonomous subject of representation (10–11).

As Badiou notes, from a Deleuzian perspective, the “figure of the automaton . . . represents the veritable subjective ideal, precisely because it demolishes all subjective pretensions” (12). For the automaton, who has realized the giving up of all interiority, Badiou points out directly referring to Foucault, “there is only the outside”; thought becomes “thought of the outside” (Badiou 86), where “the outside” cannot be mistaken for the “external world” in any simple way but represents instead the virtual “One-All” itself which, qua agency, “takes hold of a body, selects an individual, and submits it to the choice of choosing” (Badiou 12).5 “Everything always stems from

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5. The reference to “thought of the outside” is to Foucault’s notion of “la pensée du dehors,” whose most accurate rendering so that no trace of an intentional relation between thought and
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afar—indeed, everything is always ‘already-there,’ in the infinite and inhuman resource of the One,” Badiou writes (12). Moreover, “the power of the inorganic life operates in us, . . . we are traversed by an actualisation of the One-All. As a result, choice is all the more ‘pure’ for being automatic” (12).

According to this second premise, the subject for Deleuze thus becomes, in the words of Jean Khalfa, an “impersonal consciousness, without any interiority vis-à-vis the phenomena which are organised ‘in it’” (66). Furthermore, the subject is in an “absolute relation with the outside” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 177; qtd. in Badiou 12) in as much as it is the “One-All” as an “impersonal or prepersonal” field (Deleuze, Logic of Sense 343 n. 5; qtd. in Khalfa 73) which “produces” the subject as one of its surface inflections or simulacra. In this context, and this is an aspect which I particularly wish to highlight at this point, the condition of thought, according to Deleuze, is best defined as fundamentally ascetic (Badiou 13).

Given that thought is the deployment of the “One-All” and that its element, as Badiou points out, “is never of the order of an internalised relation [or] representation” (21), consciousness, according to Deleuze, cannot constitute the starting point for an investigation of thought. In fact, to begin to think, for Deleuze, it is necessary that one turn away both from consciousness and from “oneself” as a psychological entity.6 As Badiou points out, “Thinking is not the spontaneous effusion of a personal capacity. It is the power, won only with the greatest difficulty against oneself, of being constrained to the world’s play” (12). Individuals furthermore “are seized by their preindividual determination and, thus, by the power of the One-All . . . We must, through the sustained renunciation of the obviousness of our needs and occupied positions, attain that empty place where, seized by impersonal powers, we are constrained to make thought exist through us” (12).

What this implies is that, in order to attain their veritable being, individuals, according to Deleuze, “must go beyond their limits and endure the . . . disintegration of their actuality by infinite virtuality” (Badiou 13). Renouncing the “simulacrum” of their own selves in order to reach their proper “subjective” (i.e., virtual) status, individuals must “ascetically attai[n] that

the outside remains, Badiou argues, is not “thought from the outside” (as Massumi’s English translation has it) but either “thought of the outside” or simply “thought-outside” (Badiou 86). 6. Deleuze thus notes, “While it is the nature of consciousness to be false, problems by their nature escape consciousness” (Difference and Repetition 208).
point where [they are] transfixed by the impersonal exteriority that is equally [their most] authentic being” (13). The highest achievement for us as individuals, according to Deleuze, is thus to reach a point where what appears most intimately related to our own psychological self and what is in a relationship of absolute impersonality or exteriority to that self (i.e., our own subjectivity) ultimately coincide. This result is characterized by Badiou as attaining “intellectual beatitude,” defined in Spinozist terms as “the enjoyment of the Impersonal” (Badiou 39).

We can now turn to Moix’s autobiography and see how what has been noted so far sheds light on its narrator’s representations of subjectivity. Those moments abound in El peso de la paja when Moix points at the absolute relation with the “outside” that characterize him as a subject. In agreement with the second premise of Deleuze’s theory as explained above, these moments in the autobiography are conceived in terms of the overall network of social and symbolic relations. At different points, the narrator notes how (particularly, but not exclusively, during his childhood and adolescence) his identity is determined by those around him or otherwise by agencies beyond his control, such as the city he happened to inhabit and the languages he happened to learn, so that, far from being the source of “his own” thoughts and deeds, he appears like a Deleuzian automaton with no interiority to speak of. “Aquí está inesperadamente la vida . . . ,” Moix writes; “Estoy en una dimensión que no he solicitado . . . La vida me ha elegido, no yo a ella. La ciudad, la calle, la época, los idiomas, han decidido por mí. Yo sólo soy un accidente” (El cine 63). Moreover, “Ese pedazo de carne al que llaman . . . Ramón Jesús César Montserrat se exhibe en su bautizo como algo que no es nada, al no ser mío ni siquiera yo” (67).

With remarks such as, for example, “la infancia es un terreno que pertenece a los demás, nunca a uno mismo” (El cine 67) and “[e]s siempre la infancia una voz prestada por otros que me reflejaron y acaso desfiguraron . . . Existo en una memoria ajena” (68), Moix appears to limit quite specifically the period in which one’s subjectivity might be considered properly “machinic” (i.e., without interiority, strictly dictated by the network of symbolic relations) to the somewhat anomalous circumstances of childhood. Indeed, on other occasions the narrator speaks of “la callada angustia del hombre por no alcanzar todavía la autoridad sobre sí mismo” (167) and of “aquellos años, que no llegaron a pertenecerme como no me pertenecía mi propia vida” (170), suggesting that according to our narrator—unlike De-
leuze—adulthood is a time in which reaching that much-coveted “ownership” over oneself and one’s own deeds and thoughts is indeed possible.

A look at the implications of Moix’s discourse in other sections of El peso, however, quickly dispels such an impression, showing the author’s “Deleuzian/machinic” concept of the self as fundamental to his representations of subjectivity as a whole. In the third volume of the autobiography, for instance, the narrator acknowledges his overall biographical debt to his immediate social milieu in terms which, once again, emphasize the crucial role of the “outside,” directly challenging any notion of the subject as an autonomous entity characterized by interiority and self-presence. “Todos somos herederos de las pequeñas cosas . . .,” Moix points out, “Mi barcelonismo es el producto incontrolado, salvaje acaso, de la experiencia ajena: soy el heredero de un matrimonio judío de la calle de Ponent, de las vecindonas de la granja, de un padrino homosexual y de una familia decididamente surrealista” (Extranño 137–38).

Moreover, the many occasions throughout the book in which Moix refers to his adult identity as the eclectic result of the great variety of cultural and subcultural products to which he was exposed and which influenced him in his apprenticeship years in Barcelona, Paris, and particularly London, can be cited as further evidence of the author’s challenge to the notion of the subject as an autonomous entity, ultimate “owner,” and “origin” of himself. “Chelsea, donde nací, donde aprendí las mejores ecuaciones de mi vida,” Moix notes, “no que dos y dos son cuatro . . ., sino que Henry James y Scott Fitzgerald harían Ramón Moix . . . [y] que Ramón Moix sería un extraño conglomerado de melodías, pinturas, esculturas, obras teatrales, modas, ismos, periodos, visiones y augurios” (Extranño 295).

Furthermore, Moix notes in a similar vein:

\[\text{R}ecorro los días cargado de cancioneros baratos y discos de la Callas, películas americanas y novelas de Gide, versos de Shakespeare y poemas de Sagarra, todo mezclado, todo en inglés \textit{so so}, en francés \textit{comme ci comme ça}, en latinórum macarrónicum y en italiano catalanizado; \ldots Clitemnestra y Medea contra Marilyn, Faulkner contra Platón y ambos contra James Dean, el alma en el Peso de la Paja y los ojos en la Academia, un oído en el Liceo y el otro en las coplas del callejón. (388–89)

The second premise of Deleuze’s theory of the subject relates to the philosopher’s discovery of beings as mere simulacra and his fundamental distinc-
tion between the category of the self (the “person”) as substance and that of the subject as pure virtuality (Badiou 81)—a premise which also finds a direct parallel in Moix’s autobiography. In order to demonstrate this point, we can examine a number of instances in El peso in which the narrator expresses the rather counterintuitive idea that one can have memories and even harbor a nostalgia for events and experiences one has in fact never lived. For example, writing about the effect that listening to the traditional Catalan songs called caramelles used to have on him as a young man, Moix notes, “Eran las canciones que me inspiraban la nostalgia por un tiempo no vivido y que, sin embargo, presentía como algo propio, inseparable de todas mis sensaciones” (El cine 316). In a similar vein, Moix writes of “mis recuerdos de la Barcelona que no viví” (166) and of “la misma nostalgia por el tiempo que no viví” (169). The narrator explains such a nostalgia and such nonbiographical memories as the result of having been at the receiving end of his parents’ oral legacy and their so-called “educación sentimental” (316). The fact, however, that in other sections of the autobiography similarly counterintuitive ideas are expressed about what constitutes the narrator’s memory and identity, having nothing to do with familial ties, quickly alerts us to the fact that something else must be going on here.

This brings us to an aspect of Moix’s work that Paul Julian Smith has commented upon (42–52), though in a different critical context: the author’s nostalgic fascination with the cultures of the ancient world and, in particular, with Egypt, to which he claims a genealogical relation (over against his far more recent Iberian roots). Thus Moix notes:

Al igual que en mi infancia, el origen estaba en el mensaje de los milenios. Así Egipto, la tierra soñada desde la infancia, la nostalgia permanente, el reclamo de una eternidad revelada en una imaginaria pintoresca que no dejaba de convulsionarme. Siempre ha sido así. Lo que puedo tener de catalán, y de español, es demasiado reciente: viene de hace mil años como mucho . . . ¡Casi una posmodernidad en la anchura de lo eterno! Lo que tengo de nilótico vaga hacia tan lejos en el tiempo que casi lo asesina. (El beso 202)

Likewise, Moix points out elsewhere that the impact of the ancient world on his life preceded by a long time the moment when he actually went to Egypt: “[e]l impacto de la Antigüedad . . . [aparece] mucho antes de que el hastío de Barcelona y el sueño de Alejandría se fundan en un mismo deseo de
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huida” (El cine 243); and he even goes so far as to claim that Alexandria is his actual birthplace: “tendría que esperar algunos años para descubrir que Alejandría es mi lugar de nacimiento y el alejandrismo la única doctrina que me define” (Extraño 128).

Now, if these sorts of remarks by Moix make any sense whatsoever, it is because they implicitly rely on a Deleuzian distinction between the narrator’s “self” as a contingent “substance” and his own “subjectivity” as a pure virtuality. That is, Moix’s remarks rely on a distinction between his identity as a “person,” characterized by certain positive features and properties, and his existence as “a network of functions” (Badiou 81) comprising, besides those actual features, an infinite wealth of other potential ones as expressed in memories, fantasies, dreams, or literary productions. Thus, while as a person Moix is somebody born in Barcelona in 1942 who, empirically speaking, would have been quite unable to feel any nostalgia for previous times and who could not, without being nonsensical, claim that his origins lay in ancient Egypt, let alone that he was actually born in Alexandria, as a subject (i.e., as a network of potential “singular gestures, affects, and perceptions” [Žižek 19–20] yet to be synthesized into the gestures, affects, and perceptions of anyone—anyOne—in particular) all these things suddenly become possible. From this perspective, from which the narrator’s self qua simulacrum is but one side of an identity (and the most contingent and superficial at that), whose deeper, underlying side remains virtual, the caramelles traditional songs and ancient Egyptian culture can indeed be as much our narrator’s “property” (“algo propio” [El cine 316]) and as “inseparable de todas mis sensaciones” as any actual/biographical experience of his could ever be.

“Memoria, literatura, presente y pasado, lo que imaginamos y nunca fue, los sueños que tuvimos y nunca se cumplieron . . . todo forma un todo absoluto” (Extraño 40), Moix writes in a remark whose impeccable “univocity” is reminiscent of Deleuze’s own in Badiou’s reading. Indeed, for Moix as well as Deleuze, the subject is precisely such an “absolute whole,” a totality in which what we are as actual “people” (let us say, in Moix’s case, working-class Catalanians from the post-Civil War period) represents but a simulacrum, a “fortuitous modalit[y]” of our being (Badiou 44), while our Being proper is found in our subjectivity as an endlessly repeatable virtuality (i.e., in what makes us, structurally speaking, the descendants from ancient Egypt as well as from Henry James, William Faulkner, Maria Callas, Hollywood film, etc.). This being the case—and with this we now address the final point of the Deleuzian theory of subjectivity as explained above—in order to attain
our veritable existence, according to Deleuze, we must go beyond our limits and ascetically “endure the . . . disintegration of [our] actuality by infinite virtuality” (Badiou 13). In other words, we must transcend our own selves qua simulacra in order to attain the “impersonal consciousness” (Khalfa 66) of our (virtual) subjectivity—an ethical and ontological project that Badiou defines as reaching “intellectual beatitude” (39) and which gives us the final key to the narrator’s uses of subjectivity in Moix’s autobiography.

Toward the end of the third and final volume of El peso, Moix describes how, after the collapse of his relationship with a younger Madrid film critic named Daniel—the latest in a succession of failed love affairs that has characterized our author’s lifelong search for a companion as described in the autobiography (Extran˜o 424)—he retired from love in the guise of the Feldmarschallin in the third act of Richard Strauss’s camp masterpiece Der Rosenkavalier (1911) in order to concentrate thereafter on developing his literary career. “Hare´ como la Mariscala,” Moix points out, “Me retiraré del amor con un gesto de suprema elegancia” (458). Moreover, he notes, “Todo lo que habı´a vivido paso´ a la literatura y en ella concentré todos mis esfuerzos a partir de entonces” (626).

Even more than Der Rosenkavalier, Moix’s renunciation of love in favor of work (and specifically in favor of art) at the end of his autobiography is, of course, reminiscent of Proust’s In Search of Lost Time, in which, as Deleuze explains, the series of loves in Marcel’s life (Gilberte, Mme Guermantes, Albertine, etc.) “ultimately converges upon its law,” leading to the eventual revelation of a literary vocation which the narrator assumes “only when he has ceased to love, when he no longer has the desire or the time for love” (Deleuze, Proust 69). Rather than the convergences between Proust and Moix as regards the nature of their narrators’ respective “apprenticeship[s] in signs” (Bogue 2), however, what I wish to emphasize is the way in which Moix’s ethical choice at the end of his autobiography (like Marcel’s in Proust’s novel) entails a Deleuzian renunciation of his own self as contingent substance in favor of the subjective “law” governing it (i.e., in favor of the virtual “network of functions” whose surface deployment the self—(one)self—ultimately is). 8

7. Moix further points out, “El caballero de la rosa . . . [e]s la historia de una renuncia que sólo la madurez permite afrontar con serenidad. . . . [L]a escena final resulta como una espléndida marcha funeraria a cuyos compases avanzan . . . todos mis amores frustrados” (Extran˜o 378).
8. For an extended comparison between Moix and Proust inspired by Deleuze’s Proust and Signs, see my own “Moix and Signs.”
Particularly relevant in this regard is the fact that, at the end of *El peso*, the narrator’s renunciation of love and his declaration that from this moment on he will concentrate exclusively on his literary career should go hand in hand with an act of symbolic (self-)immolation: that of the narrator’s biographical self “Ramon” at the hands of the newly born “Terenci”—the pseudonym with which the author would choose publicly to refer to himself ever after. “[F]ue Ramón el que sufrió en Madrid,” Moix notes, “y ese Terenci que reapareció en 1971 sólo era el asesino voluntario de aquel niño que murió de amor” (*Extrano* 626). Moreover: “Yo era igual que el cine de los sábados: estaba muerto y lo sabía. [Debía huir . . .] [p]ero ¿hacia dónde? Hacia la literatura. Y, desde allí, hacia el gran espectáculo de mí mismo. Sólo en él podría desafiar a las leyes del tiempo” (630).

It is worth reminding ourselves of the crucial fact that, as Badiou suggests, dying “understood as an immanent moment of life” is, from a Deleuzian perspective, the best metaphor for the event of thought, and, one might speculate, for the event of literary creation too. As Badiou points out, since death is above all else “that which is simultaneously most intimately related to the individual it affects” and “in a relationship of absolute impersonality or externality to this individual,” in this sense “it is thought” (13). We could therefore hardly hope for a better example than these last pages of Moix’s autobiography of what Deleuze considers to be the highest aim we may have as individuals. Here the narrator’s symbolic obliteration of himself as a person and simulacrum—that is, as a biographical entity characterized by certain positive features—goes hand in hand with his newly found existence as an author—that is, as a subject wholly delivered to the “outside,” somebody who “through the sustained renunciation of the obviousness of [his] needs” has finally attained “that empty place where, seized by impersonal powers, [he is] constrained to make thought exist through [him]” (Badiou 12). Indeed, as Moix writes, “[D]ebía morir muchas veces si aspiraba a renacer otras más” (*Extrano* 631). An unexpected turn toward a domain of virtual transcendence on the part of an author who for many still remains the most frivolous of contemporary Spanish writers, this is Moix at his most profound: an author who has renounced his own self for the “enjoyment of the

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9. Along these lines, Deleuze remarks, “Death has an extreme and definite relation to me and my body and is grounded in me, but it also has no relation to me at all—it is incorporeal and infinite, impersonal, grounded only in itself” (*Logic of Sense* 151).
Impersonal,” and in so doing, has shown the signs of true Deleuzian “beatitude” (Badiou 39).

Works Cited


