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## Empar Moliner



### Empar Moliner

Jordi Galves

Empar Moliner (Barcelona, 1966), once an actress, is currently a very popular journalist who contributes to *El País*, *Catalunya Ràdio* and even late-night television talk

shows. Her journalistic chronicles, written with the same corrosive style of her short stories, have been recently collected in an anthology, which has also been a success with both critics and readers.

It all began with some books. Thick, blood-coloured books that the grandfather of Empar Moliner (Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana, Vallès Oriental, 1966) would give her every birthday; as she grew and her character became more established, she would receive a new volume each year until finally she was able to fill a whole shelf with the children and teenagers' weekly magazine collection *En Patufet* (1904-1938). In the Moliner household there was rarely much occasion for extravagance and fineries, and if in cases like this the younger children were usually given the older ones' hand-me-down clothes, as the writer was the only girl and the oldest of six, she set out as a reader - more or less exclusively - through second-hand books directly from the far-off days of her parents' parents. It was an unusual luxury that was decisive in her formation both as a person and as a woman of letters. Not simply because this publication had been intended for other children in another country, during the most splendid period of contemporary Catalan culture - which went from the end of the cultural movement of the *Renaixença* to the defeat of political Catalanism during the Spanish Civil War, but it was especially decisive as Empar Moliner soon began to feel a tremendous curiosity about that unique and overflowing family heritage: thousands and thousands of pages for teenagers and children that bore no relation whatsoever to her world and even less to that of her parents. Her grandparents' days, represented by those books as old and fascinating as blood, filled with short stories and tall tales, drawings and jokes, antics and puzzles, word games and brainteasers, were an initial and decisive learning thanks to reading. Like so many others, Moliner was fired with enthusiasm by the traditional tale of *Patufet* - equivalent to Tom Thumb in English - the adventures of a tiny boy trapped, as in the myth of Jonah, in a monstrous stomach. It is no mere chance that Moliner's literature features domestic and family conflicts, everyday and cruel, repeated and as known as the back of one's hand. As in the children's world, the home is the domain of savage fears, of incestuous cannibalism, of acid frustrations, of the deaf tragedies of the person who is searching for themselves when confronted - precisely - by those they love, those they share the home with, those of their own environment. "Where are you, Tom Thumb?"

The importance of the *En Patufet* weekly magazine is clear as, on the one hand, it connects Moliner's literature to the great traditional European stories and to some of its adaptors or new story-tellers, such as the Brothers Grimm or Hans Christian Andersen, and also because, on the other, it would soon lead her to discover leading figures of Catalan culture of the first three decades of the twentieth century, such as [Josep M<sup>a</sup> Folch i Torres](#), Cosme Vidal, Joan Llaverias, Gaietà Cornet, Joan Junceda and [Josep Carner](#). The Catalan that Moliner uses in her writing, modern and bang up to date, hugely flexible - daring, even - is naturally an intuitive and personal creation of the writer's, but it has its deep roots in the curiosity for street Catalan, while at the same time its style is based on the literary - lyric but also humorous - Catalan of *En Patufet*, a Catalan very close to what would be used by the

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Sabadell group, that of [Joan Oliver](#) and Francesc Trabal. In short, a Catalan and a literature that keep a firm grip on life and on the careful observation of life - to some extent like in the model of *Pàgines viscudes* by [Josep M<sup>a</sup> Folch i Torres](#), the heir to the best school of everyday realism, that stemming from Charles Dickens. Moliner's literary origins come from popular culture in capital letters, from the artisan world of Barcelona, a culture that is also made up of the values that foster effort, hard work and personal achievement, beyond family hardships and trials and the toughness of the environment. Agile, nervy, with great instinct and intelligence, Empar Moliner would soon take charge of herself, she would seek a dedication "without looking back - as illustrator Joan Junceda stated that work should be - through fear at turning into a pillar of salt, like Lot's wife."

The writer left school in the third year of high school and, as she herself confessed, "At nineteen, I joined an ensemble, dope-head theatre group that was based in a squat in Gallecs. As we were hippies, our main activity consisted of walking around naked..." It is, naturally, a half-truth. During those years, the young Moliner devoted herself to working on her education in such a decisive way as to recall the famous statement by Irina in Chekhov's *Three Sisters* - one of her favourite characters, with whom she bears notable similarities and differences: "Just as in hot weather you are sometimes dying for a drink, that is how much I want to work. And if I am not going to get up early and devote myself to work, then deny me your friendship?" Moliner soon became independent and sought to carve out a career as a theatre and cabaret actress - with the approval of [Joan Brossa](#) - but it would be journalism, first in the news services of COM Ràdio and later in the Barcelona edition of the *El País*, where she would make a name for herself and an excellent reputation as a columnist. She soon became a very popular writer and forged a faithful public in a way not seen since the days of Mercè Rodoreda. In 1999, she published the *L'ensenyador de pisos que odiava els mims* (The Man who Showed Flats and Hated Mimes) collection of short stories, and in 2000 she won the Josep Pla Prize for the novel *Feli, esthéticienne* (Feli, Beautician). But it would be with the book of short stories *T'estimo si he begut* (I Love You if I've Drunk) (2004) and the collection of articles *Busco senyor per amistat i el que sorgeixi* (Looking for Gentleman for Friendship and Possibly More) (2005), both for the Quaderns Crema de Jaume Vallcorba - a prestigious publishing house - that Moliner would become a writer of indisputable success and one of the leading figures in Catalan literature today. A leading figure who has contributed decisively to the prestige of the quality and creativity of our literature.

Empar Moliner is a synonym for enthusiasm, for soul, for literary strength. Critics have pointed out the impetus, the powerful personality and the inventiveness with which her texts frenetically portray the contemporary world and its contradictions. Her literature is vibrant, with rhythm, with no concessions or dead time, intelligently portraying the disorganisation of society, midway between amused and concerned by the absurd, the lack of sense and the cruelty that we wreak on ourselves. Empar Moliner is the modern world in all its plenitude, with its contradictions, concerns and benefits, with all the complexity and scant freedom. In her writings, there are no distinctions between narrative, articles or even TV critiques just as real life has no airtight compartments and will never understand theoretical considerations. Moliner's literary world is the deeply intense portrayal of our times, watchful of the new habits imposed by advertising and fashion, by the human environments and types derived from the models on TV, the noisy musical forms, the subjects that colonise our unsuspecting minds from the more common comics, newspapers and books. A real world because it is where the most commonplace situations live alongside the most extraordinary and common. Snobbery is intertwined with the coarse, the exquisite with the crude. The most profound, structured and reasoned thought, the best intentioned, is destroyed by blind inertia, the basest instincts, the most vulgar caricature.

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Fast, precise, brilliant, sensible, very funny and vital, Moliner's literature is a resounding whirlwind that sings joyfully against the deceitful games of the ideologies and emotional precariousness, the fears and the inhibitions that foment without hindrance. Or vice versa. Be it tender or ingenuous love - see "L'evolució anual de la veu humana" (The Annual Evolution of the Human Voice)- jealousy, sexual games or responsible adoption - "Carta al meu fill no biològic" (Letter to my Non-Biological Son) - be they traditional values - "Els beneficis de la lactància materna" (The Benefits of Breast-feeding) - or well-intentioned fashions such as the intrinsic goodness of dialogue in couples - "La interpretació dels somnis" (The Interpretation of Dreams) - feminism or cooperation with poor countries - "El dia de la dona" (Women's Day). Hilarious satire lives on in Moliner - "La baixa qualitat de la poesia contemporània" (The Low Quality of Contemporary Poetry) - but always alongside tenderness, as marked out by the good tradition of everyday realism, from Robert Robert to the modern ones of the 1980s and 1990s, like Sergi Pàmies - according to Josep Pla's formula "humour, candour".

Moliner's humour portrays with concern and seriousness the anguish and misfortune that overcomes humans when faced with their own stupidity and collective idiocy. As in the literature of [Quim Monzó](#) - one of her great masters - Moliner often uses a cynical, acid, sometimes even thuggish prism that jolts her readers, compels them subversively and forces them to go beyond the satisfied humour of connivance with a specific situation. Beyond the erroneous conviction that ideology will *liberate alienated* people. The literary challenge is that of penetrating the soul of things, of people, that of understanding beyond what we can see, that of behaving beyond the magic formulas of inertia or of the commonplace. Beyond mimicry and the laziness of thought and of living, the challenge of living one's own life with imagination. Of standing in front of the mirror that shows the great distance between what we are and what we say we are, between the discourse and the truth of the discourse. Between the lingering time of reflection and writing and the vertiginous fast culture that fights against being trapped, portrayed and analysed.

Empar Moliner, the gift for life, the gift of writing.

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## Bio-bibliography

### Biography



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**WEB: Fitxa al "Qui és qui a les lletres catalanes"**

<http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc/peq/FitxaAutors.asp?nom1=Moliner&cerca2=Cercar&quiform=form1&NRegistre=1&idregistre=11113>



**WEB: Empar Moliner a l'Institut Ramon Llull**

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[http://fil04.llull.cat/cat/02protagonistes/moliner\\_empar.shtm](http://fil04.llull.cat/cat/02protagonistes/moliner_empar.shtm)



**WEB: The author in the Who's Who of Catalan Literature**

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Biobibliographical note on this author on a page devoted to the Guadalajara International Book Fair.  
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**WEB: Per comprar-ne llibres**

<http://www.llibres.cat/ca/detall-autor/moliner-empar>



**WEB: Articles de l'autora (Traces)**

<http://traces.uab.cat/search?f=author&p=Moliner%20Empar&sc=1&ln=ca>



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**WEB: The author in the Congress Library (US)**

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**WEB: The author in the COPAC Catalogue (UK)**

<http://copac.ac.uk/search?&au=Empar+Moliner>

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## Comments on the author

### Criticism



**WEB: Sobre *T'estimo si he begut***

Pàgina de lletra sobre aquesta obra de l'autora.

<http://lletra.uoc.edu/ca/obra/testimo-si-he-begut-2004/>



**WEB: L'autora al Corpus Literari Ciutat de Barcelona**

Biografia, enllaços i transcripció d'articles sobre Moliner.

[http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show\\_news&news\\_id=1614](http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=1614)



**WEB: Empar Moliner on the Lletra website in Catalan**

Including more resources and reading suggestions.

<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/noms/emoliner/index.html>



**WEB: Lletra d'Or Prize**

Lletra page devoted to the Lletra d'Or Prize, which the author won for *T'estimo si he begut* (I Love You if I've Drunk).

<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/premis/premilletrador/index.html>



**WEB: Empar Moliner in the City of Barcelona Literary Corpus**

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### Comments



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**WEB: On Busco senyor per amistat i el que sorgeixi (Looking for Gentleman for Friendship and Possibly More)**

At [sincolumna.com](http://www.sincolumna.com), a site devoted to the writer and a compilation of her articles. With links of interest.

[http://www.sincolumna.com/estanteria/libros/ficha\\_0035.html](http://www.sincolumna.com/estanteria/libros/ficha_0035.html)

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