

# CULTURE AS MERCHANDISE. AN APPROXIMATION TO THE *NOVÍSIMOS* FROM THE ADORNIAN PERSPECTIVE OF THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

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**Abstract** || A critical investigation into the literary field necessarily implies an approach employing analytical tools that highlight the political, economic and domination implications often prevalent in the configuration of the canon and accompanying cultural models. In this sense, this paper proposes an approach to a publishing phenomenon of great relevance in the Spanish panorama, the poetic anthology *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles*; this analysis departs from the perspective of the Adornian concept of cultural industry, not only taking into account the theoretical meaning proposed by this German philosopher but also considering its specific uses in the national panorama of the late Francoist regime.

**Keywords** || Spanish poetry | Cultural critic | *Novísimos* | Theodor W. Adorno | Cultural industry

## 0. Introduction

Reflecting upon the present requires us to engage in a memory exercise to understand the underlying causes of certain phenomena and, above all, the structures that define and legitimize them. This clarification effort is particularly hard when dealing with matters related to literature, given the plurality of meanings acquired not only by literary works but by the theoretical systems set forth to study them. At the same time, this investigation about literary discourse should be incorporated into the study of the democratization process in Spain, since the icons of reconciliation during this period, in addition to its myths about the regeneration of a new culture, hide the connection to past processes which in many cases they have not only surpassed but perpetuated. Thus, studying literature from the culture critic perspective would enable us to fathom certain mechanisms of the exercise of power, whether explicit or implicit, which shape the canons and functions of the official literature and of the national self-conception. In this sense, a careful approach to the Spanish culture in the last years of Francoism reveals the existence of a solid structure of creation, circulation and consumption that has begun to be described and criticized as a cultural industry, in spite of frequent assertions regarding the radical transformation that the Transition entailed for the world of culture. In this context, the case of the poetry anthology *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles* can be approached as a canonical example of a new formulation of deeply commodified power relations, which would ultimately configure the cultural production lines to a great extent in the future.

## 1. Culture industry in Spain

The concept of culture industry is a good example of theoretical concepts that lose their value through time and, as a consequence of moving from one context to another, thus fail to perform the critical tasks for which they were originally conceived. Because of this, it is vital to explore this progression in order to, firstly, be able to understand how, why, and when this loss of meaning occurs and, secondly, to try to establish whether this concept can still be operational from its original perspective. This endeavor would be particularly well-suited to the concept of culture industry, given that it has become a commonly used term by institutions and representatives of different cultural areas alike when discussing current cultural situation.<sup>1</sup>

In Spain, the use of this concept has become relatively common since the late 1960s. This would mean, on the one hand, that the Spanish authors had, at that time, a good theoretical knowledge not only of Adorno, but of other thinkers' use of the concept (such as Umberto

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1 | The vital role this concept plays within the *Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte* (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports) can be seen in its website: <http://www.mcu.es/industrias/> (last accessed 4/12/13).

Eco and Dwight McDonald).<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, we could venture that the existence of at least certain elements within that cultural context that are susceptible to description and analysis under this theoretical framework. The Spanish reflection about culture industry is accompanied by a broader political and economic analysis, which would authorize the use of this concept focusing, above all, on those two aspects. Firstly, whether Spain at the end of the sixties can be defined as a neo-capitalist society and, secondly (closely related to the first aspect) whether it can be considered a consumerist society.<sup>3</sup> The motivations that relate both presuppositions (neo-capitalism and consumer society) to culture industry seem clear. If we follow Adorno exclusively, the culture industry concept was coined in 1944, while he was exiled in the United States and as a result of his contact with a society immersed in the first stages of generalized consumerism set in motion by Ford's economic doctrines. These conditions are fundamental for culture to be understood as yet another consumer product, as part of a complex mechanism that would encompass both all forms of cultural expression as well as the various levels where those who consume these forms of cultural expression would be classified into. Adorno and Horkheimer describe the process by which this operation was firmly established in 1944:

Movies and radio no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce. They call themselves industries; and when their directors' incomes are published, any doubt about the social utility of the finished products is removed. (in Adorno and Horkheimer 1994: 4)

The broad characterization of this concept, which due to space constraints we cannot elaborate on, would thus imply a dynamic inherent to a certain level of capitalist development, not only to the consequence of introducing industrial forms of production and circulation. Rather, it would entail a dismantling of the cultural fabric in all its levels: from the so-called serious art in its highest spheres to the more basic socialization forms determined by the use of mass culture products.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, culture industry would entail, broadly speaking, the complete disarticulation of the cultural product's use value in favor of its exclusive exchange value. Culture industry becomes, in this way, just another element in the exhaustive organization of an individual's life as part of the capitalist system of production; this process begins, obviously, during the period of paid work. Thus, the culture industry would carefully configure a fundamental parcel of time apparently opposed to it, free time, so that its dynamics (the frantic and irrational activity, the active contribution to consumption as an inherent complement of production) would be firmly established in all the stages of the worker's life. Through all this process, then, everything that had an emancipatory, reflective, critically conscious power, as well as a lucid approach to reality in the culture begins fading away to become a network of buying and

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2 | The serious editorial difficulties of the time also caused the different texts about the concept to begin appearing during the period of the slight openness of the sixties (see Maiso, 2009). This means that the Spanish reader is presented simultaneously with, for instance, Adorno's concept of culture industry (and not even as it appears in the *Dialéctica de la Ilustración*, which began being published in 1994, but also conceptualized in a more disperse manner in *Prismas o Notas sobre la Literatura*, both published in 1962) and with the characterization made of it by Umberto Eco (Eco, 1968) as "apocalyptic". In addition, the rapid influence of the lowbrow, midbrow and highbrow concepts, made popular in our country thanks to Dwight MacDonald's translations (VV. AA., 1969a), also conditioned this reception. In this regard, it must be kept in mind—when evaluating the use of the term "culture industry" among the Spanish authors of this period—that the term intertwines different perspectives of various thinkers in an imprecise and unlimited manner.

3 | The study of these concerns is made obvious in, for instance, the different volumes of compiled works *Reflexiones ante el neocapitalismo* (VV. AA., 1968) and *España, ¿una sociedad de consumo?* (VV. AA., 1969b).

4 | In the thirties, Adorno theorized the acceptance and identification mechanisms operating in mass culture music (Adorno, 2012) in a way which even today can be applied to various cases.

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selling undifferentiated products whose purchase offers, on the one hand, a status confirmation and, on the other, the development of socialization forms clearly defined and classified by the market.

For all these reasons, a big part of the first uses of the concept in Spain were associated with these reflections, in many instances assuming a false dichotomy between the artisanal and industrial in order to find out whether there is a general context in which a culture industry may develop in Spain. Valeriano Bozal, in his introduction to the compiled volume *La industria de la cultura*, which appeared in 1969, asserted that:

Hasta hace poco tiempo un libro como “La industria de la cultura” carecía de sentido en nuestro país o poseía sólo el de responder a un prurito de erudición o de información. No había industria de la cultura, ésta era obra artesanal y como tal se enjuiciaba. La operatividad del concepto “industria de la cultura” parecía nula. Sin embargo, de un tiempo a esta parte las cosas han cambiado: el auge de la televisión, la ediciones populares, las enciclopedias por fascículos, las fotonovelas, etcétera, son fenómenos de cultura popular producidos por una actividad industria. (VV. AA., 1969a: 8)

From that moment on, a series of critical texts began to appear, which dealt with the changes mentioned by Bozal, and with their repercussions in the workings of culture. Even if we will not elaborate on the use many Spanish authors make of these arguments and analyses, we can mention some of the most important names that critically discuss these matters: Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Valeriano Bozal and the *Equipo Editorial Comunicación*, Eduardo Chamorro, Pedro Altares or Antonio Martínez Sarrión. As a further proof of how the concept has been understood, we can mention the 1972 publication of a special issue of *Cuadernos para el Diálogo*, number XXXII under the title: “Que trata de los libros y su industria, las censuras, las culturas –la establecida y la por establecer– clases sociales, ideologías, y algunas cosas más que también tienen que ver con la actividad editorial”.

## 2. The *novísimos*

A concrete application of this theoretical framework is the case of the criticism that ensued from the 1970 publication of the poetry anthology of José Maria Castellet *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles*. As it is widely known, this work was framed within the already latent debate of the time between realism and formalism in a particularly radical fashion given that, as it is well remembered, Castellet had been, through *Veinte años de poesía española* and *La hora del lector* one of the greatest promoters and advocates of realistic literature. After the publication of *Veinte años de poesía española*, however, his work focused above all on the criticism of Catalan literature, editing

works such as *Poesia catalana del segle XX* (1963) or *Ocho siglos de poesía catalana* (1969). He thus began an unquestionable work in the promotion, defense and normalization of a literature (written in Catalan) that had been, if not directly persecuted, at least questioned and brutally ignored during the first decades of Francoism. This new turn in Castellet's theoretical concerns was radically interrupted with the publication of the *Novísimos*, his new contribution to the identification of tendencies at a national level. However, as we will see below, the anthologist's previous work about literature in Catalan did influence, in one way or another, this new work: from the nine anthologized poets, four had been born in Barcelona (Vázquez Montalbán, Gimferrer, Azúa and Moix; the subsequent works of Gimferrer would, in fact, be written in Catalan). On the other hand, the inevitable point of reference of the aesthetic proposal set forth by Castellet was Barcelona, which in the late sixties was already emerging as the most open, cosmopolitan, and European city in Spain. Furthermore, this differentiation is also a reflection of the progressive centralization in Madrid and Barcelona of the most meaningful cultural movements, which were already organized from small yet intellectually powerful groups (the powerful cliché of the *gauche divine*<sup>5</sup> still resonates). These groups, just a couple of months after the appearance of the *Novísimos*, started a bitter controversy that began in the pages of *Triunfo* but rapidly expanded to other influential media of the time. This discussion, which centered on the defining power of what was already known then as *Escuela de Berceles* (and that, oversimplifying, we could locate around Barral and Castellet), sprang from a general accusation against the practices of an alleged "Catalan imperialism" (Luis, 1970; 35), moving into matters that were, in many cases, completely non-literary. However, it highlighted (and this may be important for the subject at hand) the tension sparked by the growing polarization of the centers of cultural influence, as can be seen in the following article signed by the *Equipo de Comunicación*,<sup>6</sup> where its authors try to understand the reason behind this new concept of Catalan imperialism:

En principio, existe una razón pedestre y perogrullesca (pero que en nuestro perogrullesco mundo cultural tiene su peso): los movimientos de subnormalismo, novísimos, Carnaval filosófico,<sup>7</sup> etc.; las actividades ínfimas de Tusquets, Anagrama, Lumen, Barral Editores, etc., son movimientos y actividades que aparecen en Barcelona y no tienen igual en la Meseta, aunque en la Meseta pueda haber innovadores y pretendidos novísimos, pero siempre aislados y no como grupo representativo. (...) Ahora bien, ni éste ni hipotéticas referencias al catalanismo (que ocasionalmente se producen) dan razón de los ataques (imperialismo cultural, esnobismo, etc.) que se están produciendo. (Equipo Comunicación, 1970; 55-56)

At any rate, the publication of the anthology, as stated above, sparked a major controversy by immediately establishing links with the previous works of the anthologist (one must not forget that, even

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5 | The publications of the national press surrounding the recent death of Ana María Moix have brought the concept back to the fore, as evidenced by the heading of the newspaper *El País* "Muere Ana María Moix, poeta de la "gauche divine"" ([http://cultura.elpais.com/cultura/2014/02/28/actualidad/1393608441\\_117527.html](http://cultura.elpais.com/cultura/2014/02/28/actualidad/1393608441_117527.html), last accessed 2/05/14)

if the first edition of *Veinte años de poesía española* dates from 1960, Castellet reedited—and, consequently, revalidated—this work five years later, under the title *Veinticinco años de poesía española*. In this regard, part of the controversy he generated fit in perfectly with the existing discontent about a realistic dogma that had become a kind of chain production of an easily classifiable and consumable literature, but had questionable aesthetic value.<sup>8</sup> However, we will not concern ourselves here with the literary controversies sparked by the anthology, which have already been addressed and studied extensively, but rather on other criticisms it sparked. These criticisms denounced the commercial strategy of the volume created by Castellet, as well as its status as a consumer product and, without a doubt, an obvious reflection of what was already being called culture industry.

The first explicit mention of Castellet's anthology as a product of the culture industry appears in *Triunfo* magazine, before the anthology was published. At the end of 1969 Eduardo García Rico published a note in the same magazine stating that Castellet “prepara el lanzamiento de una nueva escuela literaria” (García Rico, 1969: 54). In response to that, barely a month later, a text appeared in the Readers' Letters section signed by poets Aníbal Núñez and Julián Chamorro Gay in which they state the following:

Parece que los Planes Económicos de Desarrollo también afectan, en su léxico y modelos neocapitalistas, a los más diversos quehaceres estéticos. Y así venimos observando, con sorpresa —perdón— un tanto carpetovetónica, cómo se fabrican productos artísticos con los más refinados métodos (exiliados que vuelven, inflación de premios literarios, grandes complejos editoriales...) de lo que Adorno ha llamado “industria cultural”. Vientos renovadores han comenzado a soplar, de la noche a la mañana, por todos los recovecos de nuestra literatura. La invasión de la novela hispanoamericana, con un mercado desusado de lectores, parece ser el más aparente punto de partida de esta carrera por el “nivel europeo.” (Núñez and Chamorro, 1970; 39)

## 2.1. The normalization of the cultural panorama

As can be seen from the discussion above, the authors do not perceive the publishing of *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles* as an isolated phenomenon. On the contrary, this work is located within a general framework of literature, which emerges, as it is reflected in the text, exemplified by aspects such as literary awards and the media phenomenon, as well as sheltered by the regime of the return of the exiled or the boom of the Hispano-American novel. Thus the criticism made by Núñez and Chamorro implies that a certain modernization of the cultural panorama is taking place, aimed at projecting to the outside world an image of normalization that turns out to be completely false. In this regard, it was extremely important

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6 | In 1970, the *Equipo Editorial Comunicación* was formed mainly by Valeriano Bozal, Alberto Corazón and Ludolfo Paramio, and was responsible for the works—most of them by other authors but also the collective volume signed by the team *Teoría práctica teórica* (1971)—published in the collection *Comunicación* by Alberto Corazón.

7 | The term “subnormalismo” points to the experimental work of Vázquez Montalbán *Manifiesto subnormal* (1970), which is hard to classify (and, on the other hand, with a strong critical load regarding the objectifying and alienating processes that the culture industry has in the individual). On the other hand, “Carnaval filosófico” refers to the new approaches of thinker Eugenio Triás, which would crystallize in *Filosofía y Carnaval* (1971).

8 | The following statements of Alfonso Grosso, who was considered as one of the foremost proponents of the realistic narrative of that period, allow us to see the extent to which the circumstances surrounding the debate (about realism but also about the cores of cultural power) were violent at the beginning of the seventies: “Los años han demostrado que aquello [el realismo social] tampoco podía ser el camino. Es culpa de ciertos mandarines de la izquierda. Sí, claro que existía —y existe— una dictadura de la derecha. El señor Castellet, que ahora defiende lo camp, fue el que de alguna manera se sacó de la manga aquel numerito, y era dogmático e inflexible hasta límites increíbles. Entonces, desde posturas de la izquierda, aprovechándose de lo más digno que puede tener la izquierda, se montó un tablado comercial. Ya les digo hasta qué punto existió la dictadura, que había que ser tan austero como un castellano o tan

to assume certain internationalist stances, copies of models that had already been successful in Europe and that had a revolutionary aura, in order to reflect that the situation in Spain was changing significantly, at least in terms of cultural production. Castellet's anthology would then come to be situated in this model which, far from being renewing or ground-breaking in its approach, turned out to be delegitimized by actually being an effective market maneuver to sell a necessary product for the manufacture of a pristine image of Spain. In addition, one must not forget that its very title refers directly to *I novissimi. Poesie per gli anni '60*, an influential poetry anthology published in Italy in 1961, which gathered the ground-breaking poetry that was being published in the poetry magazine *Il Verri*. Castellet's frequent contact with Italy (Castellet, 1988) and the close editorial collaboration between Barral and Einaudi,<sup>9</sup> who was responsible for the second edition of the Italian anthology, would dissipate any doubts regarding the anthologist and the editors' knowledge of the existence and importance of the work. Sot is plausible to assume that the choice of the title *Nueve novísimos* was not casual and that, in a certain way, it alluded to that other work and with it to European revolutionary processes more important and of a greater magnitude than what the Spanish case seemed to imply.

For all these reasons, Núñez and Chamorro argue that the publication of *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles* is a consequence of the Stability and Development plans and of the project of turning Spain into a neo-capitalist country (or, at least, giving the impression of doing so). Indeed, they seem to adhere to the position that relates the so-called Ley Fraga (the Press and Print Law of 1966) with a more general project led by the minister, which intended to promote an image of Spain that could be exported abroad, fostering tourism up to the point of making it one of the country's economic driving forces. It is interesting to note that the concept, which is still widely used in the present day, of *marca España* appears already tied to that of the culture industry.<sup>10</sup>

Besides this explicit relationship between political interests and the phenomenon of the *novísimos*, another interesting aspect of these criticisms is one related to aesthetic aspects. The issue that will be questioned is what, or who, dictates literary trends and the cataloguing of authors which appear in the market as undisputed and which guide the reader-consumer towards the products that should interest him or her.

## 2.2. Genesis and legitimization of cultural trends

Incorporating certain legitimizing theoretical elements would thus become relevant, both in Castellet's preface and in some of the poems. It is through these elements that the new editorial phenomenon would

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decadente como un catalán, para que un andaluz pudiera hacer literatura en Castilla o Cataluña, porque toda esa floritura nuestra, de Andalucía, igual de la que tienen los latinoamericanos, entonces no pegaba en absoluto" (Tola de Habich, 1971; 186).

9 | A good example of this relationship is the newly restored international Formentor award, which in the beginning (between 1961 and 1967) was accorded to works by international authors which were automatically translated and published by prestigious convening publishing houses. According to a note which appeared on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1960 in the 200<sup>th</sup> issue of *La Estafeta Literaria*, the conveners of the first edition would be the following: Giulio Einaudi, Heinrich Leding Rowohlt, George Weidenfeld, Barney Rossett, Carlos Barral, Víctor Seix, and Gallimard.

pretend to constitute itself as a “modern” product; however, given that they were assimilated quickly and uncritically, these models would be emptied of their true content.

In the preface to the anthology, the critic José María Castellet sets certain guidelines from which he will build the legitimizing discourse of the new poetry, highlighting Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, Umberto Eco or Marshall McLuhan. By taking some of the authors’ concepts out of context (such as elements of camp, mass culture and tactile culture) and trying to incorporate them, unarticulated, to a different context, the Catalan critic limits himself to the appropriation of certain clichés that in the European publishing market had already become consolidated categories, which he pretends to adapt to a Spanish context. Speaking of Barthes, Castellet claims to take from him the concept of “myth” in mass culture, but he dispels its critical potential by stating that it is both alienating (following the French critic) and liberating at the same time. This confusion (not so much a contradiction) between opposite terms repeats itself throughout the preface, and it seems to be the result of the difficult equilibrium that the critic seeks to establish between a modern and cosmopolitan posture that he thinks should be frivolous and depoliticized and the critical content of some of the authors he uses to sustain it. Another good example is his use of the *camp* in Sontag, from whom Castellet takes the idea of the non-distinction between a unique object and a mass-produced object (something that can actually be found among the anthologized poets). However, assuming this uncritically also entails accepting a depoliticized pop sensibility (Sontag, 1996: 372) that can hardly be attributed to authors such as Vázquez Montalán or Panero.

If we take into account the publishing catalog, first of Seix Barral and later of Barral Editores, and consider the foreign authors they published, we can easily see how Castellet adheres to a canon of authors he (or his closest circle) had helped introduce and disseminate in Spain. As a result, everything is framed within one single commercial strategy, in which the authors hired in the preface would satisfy a previously configured market demand.

As for the poetries and the poems of the anthologized authors, the cultural references may be understood from two differentiated perspectives. On the one hand, there are those closest to the camp, as was previously mentioned, whose use would have the same objective seen with regard to Castellet’s preface: transforming the work in an attractive product according to the prevailing canons. On the other hand, there are literary models such as those of Kavafis or Pound, through which one can acquire intellectual prestige, equal the European production and, most definitely, legitimize oneself through quotation. Félix de Azúa ironically expresses this as follows:

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10 | In this regard, one may draw a parallelism between this political function of culture and well known the process of export and acceptance of the Spanish pictorial avant-gardes during the fifties (Marzo, 2007). Differences aside, in both cases we would find the regime’s interest in legitimizing itself externally through an apparent artistic and cultural normalization.

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Pero de repente entré un cenáculo literario. Era en Madrid y yo era mayor de edad. Sucedió que todos éramos estudiantes mal cobijados en pensiones de barrio de Salamanca y solíamos almorzar en el mismo lugar. Yo oía, hacia el fondo de la tasca, un canto de sirenas que consistía, sobre todo, en una letanía de la *kulchur* –”¡Octavio Paz, Wallace Stevens, Paul Jean Toulet, George Eliot!” me decían aquellas voces–, de modo que un día me acerqué al lugar con un ostentoso “¡Lezama Lima!” bajo el brazo. Fui inmediatamente adoptado. (Castellet, 2007: 134)

The constant appeal to the authors mentioned by Azúa, as a way of aesthetic legitimation and as a proposal to abandon the recalcitrant Spanish literary panorama, becomes almost more important in these poets than the reference to mass culture media, something that for Castellet plays a central role in the preface. This is true up to the point of incurring more than once in the contradiction of stating, on the one hand, the absence of intellectual references in the *novísimos*, being substituted by icons or myths from mass culture, while, on the other hand, ascertaining the presence of names such as Eliot or Fitzgerald. However, and it seems that in spite of the Catalan critic's efforts, the references quoted by the poets followed the line suggested by Azúa, that is, in the configuration of an intellectual prestige “the European way”, and in detriment of realism's old schemes and referents.

The marked normative character of Castellet's anthology seems clear from the moment García Rico spoke, as we have seen, of a “new school” before the volume was even published. Núñez and Chamorro's complaints also center on the idea that the criteria for making the *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles* were completely extra-literary, and that they would be delimited and configured from top to bottom, serving interests defined by Chamorro Gay in a review published in the magazine *Álamo* as “bien económicos o de conservación de poder aristocrático-intelectual” (Chamorro Gay, 1970: n. pag). Antonio Martínez Sarrión, one of the poets featured in the anthology, also warned as early as 1970 against these manipulations of the aesthetic criteria, this time addressing the very same writers incorporated to the *novísimo* trend:

En el caso de los novísimos, ya que parece obligado, por ahora, esta etiqueta para referirse a un grupo que jamás lo fue y en todo caso estaba desintegrándose antes de lanzado, lo que pienso es que algunos de ellos, no necesariamente recogidos en la antología, no sé hasta qué punto son conscientes de una manipulación del gusto a través de los modelos propuestos o, mejor, impuestos por mediación de la industria cultural de una incipiente sociedad de consumo bastante desarrollada en los niveles sociales y urbanos en que se mueven estos poetas. El sistema tiende a implantar, a niveles muchas veces subliminales, pautas ideológicas y de comportamiento que le favorecen, y el escritor tiene que ser consciente de esto lo más posible, so pena de perder de vista la totalidad y, por tanto, de ser inauténtico con su época, de no expresarla válidamente. (Martínez Sarrión, 1970: 58)

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The fact that one of the poets in the anthology criticized its publication the very year that it came out is significant. The significance lies in the fact that not only does he cast doubt (as most of the anthologized authors would do) on the existence of a poetic group, but he assumes as inevitable, in such a short period of time, the *novísimo* category. At the same time, the quote by Martínez Sarrión refers to the poets who had already adopted this newly coined label, exemplifying the editorial power not only of *Nueve novísimos*, but also of the already existing market niche that this anthology seemed to legitimize.

One last aspect related to these issues is the link between these tendencies that can be applied to literature to those that would be defined by other areas and that have significant features in common. This evidences the programmatic character of these tendencies. In this regard, Chamorro Gay would go on to state what follows in the already mentioned review of the magazine *Álamo*:

En otro sentido es evidente la revalorización del modernismo y los procedimientos surrealistas que, válidos en su tiempo, su mimetismo actual resulta nostálgico y sospechoso, sobre todo por la existencia de un enorme tinglado mercantil que desde la moda femenina hasta la decoración administra en su beneficio gustos y objetos tan “camp” como la sensibilidad a que responde este tipo de poesía comentada (Chamorro Gay, 1970: n.pag).

What Castellet’s anthology represents in poetry would be, for Chamorro, little more than a decorative object, inspired by the same clichés that prevailed in modern consumer goods. This idea, also defended by Claudio Rodríguez (García Rico, 1970: 61), is another element characteristic of the culture industry, given that it equates every cultural product to the rest of expendable goods driven by market impositions. Following this argument, it could be stated that Castellet’s anthology in fact lacks this content<sup>11</sup> given that, setting the value of the anthologized poets aside, the anthology as a cultural product came to fill a place of consumption that had been previously generated. The fact that a great deal of the anthologized authors were Catalan also contributed to the powerful reinforcement of this idea: the openness represented by the city of Barcelona opposed a Castilian and austere model<sup>12</sup> that had been associated to the realistic model (it must not be forgotten that during this period these authors were quickly dismissed as the “*generación de la berza*”), facing the more bourgeois and industrialized example which was configured as a reflection of European influence. In this regard, what was being sold was not so much poetry as it was a sense of modernity, openness and achievement to its proto-consumerist readers who were eager for a new sense of cosmopolitanism, which was already beginning to emerge and be established as a commercial category.

As Jenaro Talens (Talens, 1989: 17) would point out years later, the

anthologist's authoritative figure was essential for the success of the project. José María Castellet had enough media coverage in 1970 to legitimize any literary proposal. Coupled with the fact that the book was published by Carlos Barral in his new publishing house, there were other elements that would make this a canonical work from the very moment (or even before, as we have seen) it became available in bookshops. In this regard, it is worth mentioning here a letter that Franco Fortini wrote in 1970 to José María Castellet, which was included by the publishing house Península in its reissue of the anthology in 2007 and taken from the personal archive of the Catalan critic:

Si hay algún error —y, sinceramente, no puedo juzgar el fondo de la cuestión—, no está en lo que usted piensa, es decir en no haber llevado lo bastante lejos la visión crítica; está, quizá, en haber aceptado *desde el principio* una categorización (de edad, de tendencia, de grupo) que es precisamente la más apetitosa para esa *Kulturindustrie* que, como editores o colaboradores de la edición, conocemos demasiado bien. Eco, por ejemplo —cuya amplitud de conocimientos y cuya lucidez de inteligencia respeto—, y otros muchos menos inteligentes y preparados que él han optado por alimentar a la bestia, es decir por participar de su poder. ¿Pero nosotros? ¿De qué poder tenemos nosotros derecho a participar? ¿De dónde nos vienen los sufragios mudos —los más severos, los que no perdonan— en cuyo nombre declaramos, hace veinte o treinta años, nuestro derecho a la palabra? (Castellet, 2007: 273).

Even if the previously mentioned text of Martínez Sarrión drew attention to the responsibility of the authors when assuming, or not, the purely commercial use their works might be subject to, Fortini's letter indirectly takes up this issue when considering the role of the editor. The direct accusation of the Italian poet and critic sheds light, at the same time, on the meaning of Castellet's use of references to legitimize the novelty of and need for his anthology. The use of the term (here in German, which may dissipate some doubts regarding its origins) *Kulturindustrie* underlines the commodified character of an anthology that, by appropriating foreign theoretical models) and of revolutionary resources, acquires a self-colonizing character, in the sense that it imposes foreign elements onto its own culture which, without being adequately processed, only function as an artifice, a modernizing and legitimizing varnish. As a result, a future path is clearly exemplified in national culture where the production, distribution and use of cultural products will be increasingly governed by market criteria.

## NOTES

11 | The irrelevance of the concrete content of culture industry productions is one of the key aspects in the characterization of Adorno and Horkheimer "The assembly-line character of the culture industry, the synthetic, planned method of turning out its products (factory-like not only in the studio but, more or less, in the compilation of cheap biographies, pseudo-documentary novels, and hit songs) is very suited to advertising: the important individual points, by becoming detachable, interchangeable, and even technically alienated from any connected meaning, lend themselves to ends external to the work." (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2003: 177). If we apply this statement to our context, the real, advertising meaning, alien to the anthology's concrete content, would be charged with the promotional values promoting an openness of culture and the production of commercial spaces that has been explored all through the text.

12 | One might remember, regarding the local connotations of realist literature, the quotation of Alfonso Grosso in footnote number eight.

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