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# The Challenges of Multilingual English Speakers Learning Catalan as a Third or Additional Language

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## Abstract

This study investigates the crosslinguistic influence (CLI) of various linguistic backgrounds of L1 English speakers on L3/Ln Catalan learning to better understand the acquisition of Catalan by English speakers. We analyzed 52 texts of learners from three different linguistic backgrounds: English-Spanish-Catalan (n=18), English-Spanish-Romance Language-Catalan (n=22), English-Spanish-Multiple Other Languages-Catalan (n=12), in order to explore the learners' written production in the target language (errors and tendencies). We analyzed different aspects of language production in writing: the linguistic aspects of errors, the modification types, intralinguistic causes, interlinguistic influences and communicative consequences (James 2013; Corder 1971; Ellis 2008). Results show various tendencies in terms of error types (linguistic aspects and modification types) depending on the learning path and previously learned languages. These results shed new light on the challenges of English speakers in the acquisition of minority languages such as Catalan.

## Keywords

multilingualism; crosslinguistic influence; minority languages; L2 learner corpora; Catalan

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## **Introduction**

Multilingualism can be perceived as an advantage in learning a third or additional language. However, in order for multilingualism to be beneficial, learners must be aware of and use their pre-existing linguistic and language learning knowledge (Haukås 2016). We know that in class, teachers tend to systematically correct all errors, while continually seeking more effective ways to support their learners (Arntzen et al. 2019). How can teachers prompt learners to use their linguistic background when learning a new language? Recent research has suggested that greater awareness of the associations between the languages learners already know could help them and their teachers to make more conscious, appropriate, and effective connections among languages in the classroom context (Orcasitas-Vicandi 2019). As a curriculum should be designed based on a needs analysis (Richards 2007) defined by the learners and situational needs, gaining more knowledge about the areas of language on which teachers could focus would be helpful. Furthermore, materials considering the learner's background in terms of languages previously learned are almost nonexistent for minority languages such as Catalan as opposed to other languages such as English and recent studies have highlighted a need to support minority language learners efficiently (Behney and Marsden 2021; Gujord 2021; Tracy-Ventura, Paquot, and Myles 2021). Considering all these factors, there is a need to support teachers in multilingual contexts in making effective decisions regarding aspects of the language they could focus on to increase their learners' level of proficiency and support language learning (Ferris 2008, 2010; Ferris et al. 2013). Therefore, this paper first describes the impact of multilingualism on

learning and the notion of crosslinguistic influence (the influence a known language may have on another language) on learning a third or additional language. Using the written production of intermediate learners of Catalan from different linguistic backgrounds, the study aims to better understand the acquisition of Catalan by English speakers with various linguistic backgrounds by exploring the different aspects of language production in writing, such as the linguistic aspects of errors, modification types, intralinguistic causes, interlinguistic influences, and communicative consequences (James 2013; Corder 1971; Ellis 2008). Teachers and minority language learners may be better equipped to face the challenges of learning in multilingual contexts by having a greater understanding of how previously learned languages can impact instructed learning settings.

### **The Impact of Multilingualism on Learning**

Knowing multiple languages can be advantageous when learning an additional language (Ln). A growing number of studies suggest that when learning an Ln, multilingual learners can take advantage of the direct transfer of prior knowledge and skills and the indirect influence of their multilingual backgrounds, such as metalinguistic awareness or orthographic network (Hirosh and Degani 2018).

In countries where a significant percentage of the population lives in a bilingual setting, there is a growing trend of multilingual school programs in which various languages are used to teach content (Lasagabaster 2017). Recent studies have highlighted an increasing interest in learning minority languages such as Catalan (mostly as a third or additional language) in the international academic community (Manuel-Oronich, Repiso-Puigdelliura, and Tudela-Isanta 2021; Tudela-Isanta et al. 2020). In bilingual settings, learning an additional language implies considering the linguistic background of learners. We also know that second language (L2) and third language (L3) learners differ significantly in terms of prior knowledge, that they have a different learning experience and that these factors will affect their acquisition processes (De Angelis 2007). However, in the field of second language acquisition, other factors may come into play and the study of the influence of a person's other known languages (crosslinguistic influence), as well as if and how the previously learned languages affect production in the target language when learning a third or additional language remains an under-researched area. This is especially true for the acquisition of minority languages such as Catalan. Supporting teachers' decisions regarding pedagogy and feedback in writing would promote learning, but more

research is needed to establish the links between research and practice as such studies are lacking in second language acquisition (Gironzetti and Koike 2016; Haukås 2016). In sum, there is a need to gain more insight into Catalan learning to support Catalan multilingual learners and teachers (Comajoan-Colomé 2021), especially in multilingual settings, considering that these learners are often multilingual learners. Recent research shows that university-level learners of Catalan master an average of 2.4 languages before learning Catalan (Tudela-Isanta et al. 2020).

### Crosslinguistic Influence and Third and Additional Language Learning

The concept of *crosslinguistic influence* (CLI) has been widely investigated in second language research. The notion of CLI between a speaker's languages refers to "the influence of a person's knowledge of one language on that person's knowledge or use of another language" (Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008, 1). According to this definition, CLI implies that the influence of language can occur in any direction as the L1 may potentially influence the L2 or an additional language. It also means that another language (Ln) known by the speaker may influence another Ln. Therefore, we can consider that the influence of a previously learned language may occur in any direction. As a result, in terms of CLI, we may suppose (1) that there is no transfer from previously learned languages, (2) that there will be transfer only from the L1, (3) that transfer may come from the L2, the L3, or (4) that transfer can come from any previously learned language.

Traditionally, the L1 has been identified as a factor that may influence or interfere in second language acquisition. Recently, Gujord (2021) identified three views of CLI in SLA research. The first view is known as "The traditional view." In this case, CLI involves transferring knowledge from one language, generally a previously learned language such as the L1, to the second language. The interlingual connections made by learners are generally considered unconscious mental associations between features of languages (Ringbom 2007). The second view considers CLI to be a communicative strategy. CLI is perceived as a tool that learners utilize temporarily when they lack knowledge of the target language (Alonso Alonso 2002; Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008). The final view defines transfer as "inert outcome" (Jarvis 2000, 250). Within this view, the "transfer effect arises from the learner's exhibition of a specific knowledge base when the learner has not made any

interlingual identification or conscious comparison of the languages in question” (Gujord 2021, 346). This knowledge base refers to the linguistic structure and information organization found in the language’s structural properties, such as organizing, conceptualizing, and verbalizing in the target language.

In sum, there are different views on investigating the role of previously learned languages in language learning. CLI can be positive or not; it can cause errors; the transfer can be facilitative or non-facilitative, as a new language may also influence a previously learned language, and the influence can occur in any direction (Herdina and Jessner 2002; Jessner 2008).

### Errors and Crosslinguistic Influences

Errors in the target language are used to better understand the underlying cognitive processes in language learning. Errors are sometimes associated with CLI of previously learned languages. As a result, error analysis (EA) has been used in second language learning research to investigate CLI and identify learners’ underlying mechanisms and strategies to understand the cause of errors to support learning.

The concepts of *errors* and *mistakes* have been distinguished in second language research by Corder (1967). He defined the concept of *errors* as deviations from the norm and *mistakes* as non-systematic errors due to various factors such as fatigue. Selinker (1972) coined the term *interlanguage* to refer to learners’ linguistic system when expressing meanings in the target language. The interlanguage would be distinct from the L1 and the target language while simultaneously being related to both systems. Classifying errors would help researchers to understand CLI. Díez-Bedmar (2021) suggested that the classification of errors can be done by using an error-tagging system and a combination of four-way classification: (1) the linguistic category of errors, (2) the taxonomy of errors (omission, addition, misselection, and misordering), (3) the taxonomy of the cause of errors, and (4) the communicative consequence.

In second language learning research, various models have been used to explain CLI, such as the Absolute L1 transfer, suggesting that the L1 would be the primary source of transfer in L3/Ln language learning (e.g. Bley-Vroman 2009; de Bot 2004; Hermas 2010). Another model called the L2 status factor hypothesis suggests that the second language would be more active in L3/Ln language learning as it would share more features with a third or additional language than the L1 (e.g. De Angelis and Selinker 2001; Falk and Bardel 2011; Williams and Hammarberg 1998). On the other

hand, the Cumulative-Enhanced Model (CEM) claims that all previously learned languages would be available for transfer to facilitate the acquisition of an L3 feature (e.g. Berkes and Flynn 2012; Flynn, Foley, and Vinnitskaya 2004), while the Typological Primacy Model (TPM) (García Mayo and Rothman 2012; Rothman 2011; Rothman and Cabrelli Amaro 2010) suggests that typological proximity will influence the transfer. In the last decade, new theories such as the Scalpel Model of Third Language Acquisition (Slabakova 2017) and the Linguistic Proximity Model (Westergaard et al. 2017) consider typological proximity to explain the CLI as well as the influence of all the other languages a learner knows. As a result, recently, there seems to be a consensus to consider the CLI of any previously learned language in subsequent language learning, highlighting the influence of transfers from both the L1, the L2, or from any previously learned language for L3/Ln acquisition. Assuming that the influence of language can occur in any direction, in this study, we consider that L1 may influence L2 or another language, but also that any previously learned language (for example, L2) may also influence subsequent language learning.

### **Crosslinguistic Influences and Multilingualism**

Studies on CLI of previously learned languages to support teachers' pedagogy and feedback in writing are scarce. Studies have shown that third or additional language acquisition differs from second language acquisition (De Angelis 2007) as learners do not rely only on one but on several systems of linguistic representation when learning an L3/Ln. Studies in the last decades have also shown that the interlanguage, the cognitive space between the L1 and the language being learned (Selinker 2014), might be different for the L2 and the L3; the source of transfer varies in these two situations (Perić and Mijić 2017). In a meta-analysis of 71 studies by 48 researchers investigating CLI on L3/Ln acquisition, Puig-Mayenco and his colleagues found that 92.5% of studies highlighted facilitative and non-facilitative transfers from previously learned languages (Puig-Mayenco et al. 2020).

Recently, to better understand CLI, research has focused on exploring when transfers occur and which areas of language are involved in the phenomenon. Certain variables have been identified to explain CLI and their roles in L3/Ln language learning, such as typological proximity (similarity between languages), level of attainment or proficiency level (in previously learned languages and in the target language), recency effect (exposure to the language), and

learning mechanisms (González Alonso et al. 2017; Perić and Mijić 2017; Puig-Mayenco et al. 2018; Salaberry and Kunitz 2020).

Traditionally, relatedness (language families) and formal similarities (similarities between language components) have also been pointed out as factors influencing CLI (De Angelis 2007). Individual factors, such as working memory, language aptitude, the L1, or even the initial level in the target language (Gagné et al., 2022), may also come into play and influence language learning. Another aspect to consider in instructed second language learning contexts is the role of the instructed environment. Depending on the learning context in which learning occurs, the nature of input or the kinds of interactions in which learners participate may impact learning (Cremades Cortiella 2021; Ellis 2015). Some studies in vocabulary learning have highlighted that new associations that differ from established patterns are better remembered than those that do not (Bovolenta and Marsden 2021; Brod, Hasselhorn, and Bunge 2018; De Loof et al. 2018; Greve et al. 2017; Greve et al. 2019). Studies have also suggested that developing metalinguistic awareness would support learners (Ferris and Kurzer 2019; Hyland 2022; Jessner 2008; Nassaji and Kartchava 2021). However, most studies to date have targeted languages such as English, Brazilian Portuguese, Spanish, or French (Behney and Marsden 2021; Gujord 2021; Tracy-Ventura, Paquot, and Myles 2021), leaving virtually unexplored minority languages, such as Catalan, as an L3/Ln.

### Research Questions

To support learners and teachers in instructed second language learning contexts, this study aims to analyze different aspects of language production (morphological, syntactic, and lexical) using an error-tagging system based on a four-way classification, (1) the linguistic category of errors, (2) modification types of errors, (3) the etiology of errors, and (4) the communicative consequences of errors. By analyzing the written production of English learners of Catalan as an L3/Ln with different linguistic backgrounds, this study will explore how previously learned languages display facilitative or non-facilitative transfers in learning Catalan as an L3/Ln. As a result, the research questions are:

- What are the most frequent errors English learners of L3/Ln Catalan make in writing at the intermediate level (linguistic aspects, modification types)?
- Are there differences between learners when comparing their linguistic background (previously learned languages)?



- Which errors cause miscommunication?
- What are the intralinguistic causes of the errors?
- What are the interlinguistic influences explaining the errors?

Given that recent research has shown that previously learned languages may affect target production (Puig-Mayenco et al. 2020), resulting in positive or negative transfer, we hypothesize that English learners will vary in target language production depending on the languages they know. Considering various factors, such as typological proximity, proficiency level, recency effect, as well as learning mechanisms may have an impact on third and additional language learning (González Alonso et al. 2017; Perić and Mijić 2017; Puig-Mayenco et al. 2018; Salaberry and Kunitz 2020), we also hypothesize that all the languages a learner knows will impact various aspects of writing. The transfers will be positive or negative depending on the linguistic aspect and each linguistic path.

### **Method**

This research is part of a larger project called “BlaBla Corpus” (Joan Casademont 2020), focusing on crosslinguistic influence and learning Catalan as a third or additional language. The corpus explores various learning paths of different L1 learners to identify the learning and teaching challenges. We used the data of three different typical learning paths of L1 English intermediate (B1) adult learners of L<sub>n</sub> Catalan (English-Spanish-Catalan [n=18], English-Spanish-Romance languages-Catalan [n=22], English-Spanish-multiple other languages-Catalan [n=12]). The texts were taken from a Catalan standardized exam from the Institut Ramon Llull. Learners took the exam in the United Kingdom and in the United States between 2009 and 2018. They had to write a letter to a friend describing their habits and environment, arrival in the country, weather, studies, new friends, and the challenges of living abroad using a postcard format. This text type elicits descriptions, language structures, and verb tenses targeted at the intermediate level. The average length of the texts was 249 words.

Table 1

*Participants' data (groups)*

	SP group [n=18]	SP+Romance group [n=22]	SP+OtherL group [n=12]
<b>Gender</b>			
Male ( <i>f</i> )	4	8	4
Female ( <i>f</i> )	14	14	8
<b>Age</b>			
<i>M</i>	23	22	24
Range	20–42	20–28	21–46
Average length of texts (tokens)	239	244	264

We propose an error-tagging system based on a combination of four-way classification that includes a description of the linguistic factors/modification types and the annotation of the communicative consequences and error etiology. We used nodes associated with the different categories and tags for each error for subsequent analysis to obtain both general and specific information for each error. The error codification and nodes are shown in Table 2.

The analysis was conducted using Nvivo qualitative analysis software. Texts were thoroughly read, and nodes were created in the process of generating a general and specific analysis for each language path. We generated a data set including all the variables and calculated basic descriptive statistics. All analyses were carried out using SPSS.

Table 2

*Classification: Error-tagging system, definitions and examples for L1 English learners of Catalan*

<b>Linguistic Aspects</b> (Alexopoulou 2006; Corder 1973; Ellis 1997)	
<b>Orthographic</b> (how a word is written)	<i>aburrit</i> [avorrit; boring]
<b>Morphological</b> (word formation, affixes and root word)	<i>El pis és molt <u>moderne</u> i asolellat</i> [ <i>El pis és molt modern i asolellat;</i> <i>the flat is very modern and sunny</i> ]
<b>Syntactic</b> (related to the presence or absence of mandatory elements and their sequence in a sentence)	<i>He decidit <u>a</u>...</i> [ <i>he decidit de...; I have decided to...</i> ]
<b>Lexical-semantic</b> (misuse of a word to express a specific meaning; use of a foreign word)	<i>podrem xatejar</i> [podrem xerrar; <i>we will be able to talk</i> ]
<b>Cohesion and coherence</b> (above the sentence level, where it can affect the sequencing of sentences and the coherence and/or cohesion of the text)	<i>Som dos nois i tres <u>noies</u> vivim davant d'un forn de pa</i> [ <i>Som dos nois i tres noies que vivim davant d'un forn de pa; we are two boys and three girls living in front of a baker shop</i> ]
<b>Pragmatic</b> (in discourse; e.g. conventions, implications, innuendos)	<i>Benvolguda Katia, [...] Com estàs?</i> [ <i>Estimada/Hola Katia, [...] Com estàs?; Dear Katia... How are you doing?</i> ]
<b>Typographic</b> (conventions)	Unnecessary capital letters
<b>Modification Types</b> (Alexopoulou 2006; Fernández Jodar 2006; James 1998, 2013)	
<b>Omission</b> (a necessary element is missing)	<i>Tots els caps de <u>semana</u> són lliures</i> [ <i>Tots els caps de setmana són lliures; all weekends are free</i> ]
<b>Overinclusion</b> (an extra element is present)	<i>No <u>l'</u>has conegut <u>a ell</u> perquè...</i> [ <i>No l'has conegut perquè...; you have him not met him because...</i> ]
<b>Misselection</b> (an incorrect element is used)	<i>molt a prop <u>a</u> la universitat</i> [ <i>molt a prop de la universitat; close to the university</i> ]
<b>Misordering</b> (elements are correct but in the wrong sequence)	<i>14 Carrer Anselm Clavé</i> [ <i>Carrer Anselm Clavé, 14; address</i> ]
<b>Interlinguistic Influences</b> (Alexopoulou 2006; Dulay, Burt and Krashen 1982; Fernández Jodar 2006; James 1998, 2013)	
<b>L1</b>	<i>pot quedar amb nosaltres sense <u>*problem</u></i> [ <i>pot quedar amb nosaltres sense problemes; he can meet with us without problems</i> ]

Table 2 (cont.)

<b>Other L</b>	<i>maravillosa</i> [meravellosa; marvellous], <i>biblioteca</i> [biblioteca; library]
<b>L1 and other L</b>	<i>el <u>programa</u> de negocis és molta feina</i> [el programa de negocis és molta feina; the business program is a lot of work]
<b>Multiple other L</b>	<i>pan</i> [pa; bread]
<b>Interlinguistic N.A.</b>	No possible other language influences are detected during annotation
<b>Intralinguistic Causes</b> (Alexopoulou 2006; Dulay, Burt and Krashen 1982; Fernández Jodar 2006; James 1998, 2013)	
<b>Incomplete application of rules</b> (rules are only partially applied or not applied at all)	<i>ell <u>comparta</u></i> [ell comparteix; he shares]
<b>Non-application of exceptions to rules</b> (exceptions to rules are not applied)	<i>vivíem davant d'un forn de <u>pà</u></i> [vivíem davant d'un forn de pa; we lived in front of a baker shop]
<b>False analogy</b> (misuse of a rule when it does not apply; a word or expression that is incorrect in context)	<i>jogar</i> [jugar; to play]
<b>Intralinguistic N.A.</b>	No possible interference with what has already been learned in the target language (Catalan) is detected during annotation
<b>Communicative Consequences</b> (Dulay et al. 1982; Gozali 2018)	
<b>Causing miscommunication</b>	<i>Ella és un <u>company</u> de la universitat</i> [Ella és una companya de la universitat; she is a colleague from university]
<b>Not causing miscommunication</b>	<i>Després em va donar el seu <u>numero</u></i> [Després em va donar el seu número; afterwards, he gave me his number]

## Results

We first analyzed the entire group and then split the data into subgroups corresponding to the different language paths: English-

Spanish-Catalan (n=18), English-Spanish-Romance languages-Catalan (n=22), English-Spanish-multiple other languages-Catalan (n=12). Table 3 shows the total number of errors and the percentage for each linguistic aspect. Results show that the most frequent ones (orthographic, syntactic errors, and cohesive/coherence errors) account for 73.79% of the corpus's total number of annotated errors. As for the modifications causing errors in the texts, misselection and omission are the most common (Table 4).

Table 3

*Linguistic Aspects: Number and Percentage of Errors*

Linguistic Aspects	<i>n</i>	%
Cohesive and Coherence	337	<b>21.18</b>
Lexical-Semantic	150	9.43
Morphologic	155	9.74
Orthographic	474	<b>29.79</b>
Pragmatic	56	3.52
Syntactic	363	<b>22.82</b>
Typographic	56	3.52
Total	1591	100.0

Table 4

*Modification Types: Percentage of Errors*

Modification Type	%
Blends	6.10
Misordering	1.51
Misselection	<b>37.77</b>
Omission	<b>39.03</b>
Overinclusion	15.59
Total	100.0

A generalized estimating equation was used to determine whether there was a difference in error types between the groups. The distribution of linguistic aspects was significantly different between the three groups. Then, pairwise comparisons were carried out. The three groups did not differ significantly with regard to error distribution. However, some interlinguistic influences were found to be significant, depending on the linguistic background. For example, participants who learned Romance languages other than Spanish tend to produce fewer errors using the apostrophe (writing *l'arquitectura* instead of *\*la arquitectura* for “the architecture”; using a French structure). On the other hand, we note that participants who only learned Spanish tend to produce more errors linked to the past tense ending of some verbs, a potential influence of the Spanish language (writing *\*estaba* instead of *estava* for “I was”). For this group, we also note the omission of accents (e.g. hiatus) that do not exist in Spanish (for example, *\*familia* instead of *família* for “family”).

Next, we used a crosstab to determine the most frequent combination of errors depending on the linguistic aspects (LA) and modification types (MT). We created the LAMT categories presented in the first column of Table 5, which represent the most frequent combinations of errors for the whole group. They account for 84.29% of all errors.

Table 5

*Linguistic aspects (LA) and modification types (MT) and communicative consequences*

Aspect*Modification with communicative consequences (%)	Causing miscommunication	Not causing miscommunication
Other errors	4.53	11.19
<b>Cohesive and Coherence*Misselection</b>	<b>4.71</b>	1.51
Cohesive and Coherence*Omission	0.50	12.45
<b>Lexical-Semantic*Misselection</b>	<b>6.03</b>	2.58
<b>Morphological*Misselection</b>	<b>3.39</b>	3.33
Orthographic*Misselection	1.01	6.73
Orthographic*Omission	1.26	13.07
Orthographic*Overinclusion	1.32	4.02
<b>Syntactic*Misselection</b>	<b>2.77</b>	4.78
Syntactic*Omission	1.45	4.84
Syntactic*Overinclusion	0.88	4.59
Syntactic*Blends	0.88	2.20
Total	28.72	71.28

Although the groups did not differ significantly in terms of errors causing miscommunication, we wanted to explore these errors in greater depth. Table 5 shows that 28.72% of overall errors do cause miscommunication. Specifically, we can see that the errors that impact communication are cohesive-coherence misselections, lexical-semantic misselections, morphological misselections, and syntactic misselections. To illustrate the error types, Table 6 presents different examples of the most frequent categories of errors that impact communication.

Table 6

*Misselection error types and examples*

Misselection error types	Examples and explanations
Cohesive and Coherence	<i>Aquesta nit, els ciutadans van encendre fogueres per celebrar la vida del rei, i encara ho fem avui dia!</i> Use of time references and/or verb tenses that do not fit ( <i>this night vs that night citizens lit fires to celebrate the king's life, and we still do so nowadays!</i> ).
Morphological	<i>Quan trobi un vol barat compra un bitllet!</i> 3 <sup>rd</sup> person present subjunctive instead of 2 <sup>nd</sup> person present subjunctive. Use of the wrong verb ending ( <i>when I found a cheap flight, buy it!</i> ).
Syntactic	<i>Has de continuar a viure.</i> Another language's influence usually causes the use of a syntactic construction that does not exist in the target language (using "to continue + preposition + infinitive" instead of the phrasal form "to continue + gerund"; <i>you must continue living</i> ).
Lexical-Semantic	<i>Ho entenc pero no cal amargar-sa el cap sota l'ala.</i> Wrong word choice (use of <i>amargar</i> [to bitter] instead of <i>amagar</i> [to hide]) ← <i>amagar el cap sota l'ala = to bury one's head in the sand.</i>

Subsequently, to better understand the influences of other languages known by the English speakers, we explored the interlinguistic influences. The analysis shows that most of the time, the influence of the L1 (English) does not have a negative impact on the production (syntax and morphology), but that relying on other languages they know (such as Spanish, for example) may cause a negative transfer (lexical-semantic) in the target language (using *\*setmana* instead of *setmana* or *\*centro* instead of *centre*; "week" and "centre," respectively).

Finally, we wanted to understand the intralinguistic causes of these errors. Results show that errors causing miscommunication are often associated with an incomplete application of rules (for example, the non-application of gender accordance such in *\*Ella és un company*, instead of *ell* or *companya*, depending on the gender of the person that the writer is referring to; “he/she is a colleague”).

## Discussion

The objective of this study was to explore three different learning paths of L1 English learners of Catalan as a third or additional language in an attempt to better understand multilingualism and its implications for teaching writing. We hypothesized that English learners will vary in target language production depending on their previously learned languages.

First, we explored the most frequent errors English learners of Catalan as an L3/Ln make in writing at the intermediate level, namely in terms of linguistic aspects and modification types. We found that the challenges English learners face in learning Catalan as an L3/Ln are mainly related to word selection (lexical-semantic errors) followed by the grammatical arrangement of words in a sentence. These results are consistent with previous research findings showing that lexical-semantic errors are frequent and more common than grammatical ones (Bouvy 2000; Jiménez Catalán 1992; Meara 1984).

When we explored the learning paths in greater depth (Question 2), we found no significant differences in terms of errors in the target language between English learners with different linguistic backgrounds. Although the groups did not differ significantly with regard to the distribution of errors, some tendencies were found in terms of interlinguistic influences. Next, the analysis of communicative consequences highlighted four categories of misselections as being the most frequent: cohesive and coherence, morphological, syntactic, and lexical-semantic.

When exploring the intralinguistic causes and interlinguistic influences to explain these findings, we noticed some tendencies in line with previous research findings showing that a learner’s other known languages may result in a transfer that can be positive or negative depending on the linguistic aspects and modification types. As a result, the groups did not differ in terms of error categories (LAMT) when considering their linguistic background, but some interlinguistic influences were found (negative and positive transfers). These findings are consistent with the Typological Primacy Model (TPM) (Rothman 2015, 2011). Our results suggest that, at this level, CLI “will come from the background language that the



learner's internal mechanisms perceive" (Rothman 2010, 246) to be the most similar to the target language. This can lead to positive or negative transfers. Kellerman's (1983) notion of psychotypology how learners perceive differences and similarities between languages (see also De Angelis 2019) can explain that in this specific case, learners would perceive Catalan as more closely related to Spanish than to the other languages they know, likely because Catalan is mainly spoken in the Iberian Peninsula. This perception is probably rooted in sociolinguistic beliefs, as most Catalan speakers are in Spain (Diaubalick, Eibensteiner, and Salaberry 2020; Gujord 2021; Westergaard et al. 2017). For English speakers, when learning Catalan, this would result in relying on a related language such as Spanish.

Results also show that this can be an advantage for learners at the syntactic level because Catalan shares common features in terms of structure, such as morphology and syntax, with other Ibero-Romance languages such as Spanish. However, learners do not always make accurate predictions if they rely on Spanish in terms of lexicon because Catalan's lexicon is closer to Gallo-Romance languages such as French. Geographical realities may explain this phenomenon. Spanish words are usually closer to the older variety of Latin, a variety spoken when Rome conquered the Iberian Peninsula (Penny 2009). As Catalonia was closer to Rome than the rest of the Peninsula, the Catalan language evolved differently in terms of its lexicon. Therefore, it is closer to Occitan than Castilian (Argenter and Lüdtke 2020; Ferrando and Nicolás, 2011). The perceived relatedness of Spanish and Catalan may then explain some of the learners' misselections.

Current results show that L3/Ln learners do not rely exclusively on their L1 but on several systems of linguistic representation that they perceive to be related to the target language (Puig-Mayenco et al. 2020). In this specific case, relying on Spanish seems to be a strategy various learners use. This reliance on Spanish led to a positive transfer in terms of syntax but to a negative transfer when it came to lexical-semantic choices; the similarities influencing the nature of the transfer (De Angelis 2007; González Alonso et al. 2017; Perić and Mijić 2017; Puig-Mayenco et al. 2018; Salaberry and Kunitz 2020).

### **Learning and Teaching Challenges of English Speakers**

The implications of our findings can be useful at different levels when teaching a third or additional language. We know that teachers

cannot consider every factor related to previously learned languages, especially in heterogeneous contexts. However, in a homogeneous context, explicitly emphasizing similarities with other languages to strengthen crosslinguistic comparison strategies would be an interesting option. Another option would be to focus on the most frequent errors learners make at this level. Current results can provide valuable information for teachers as an emphasis on lexical selection, appropriate time reference (coherence), and morphology would benefit the learners by targeting the most frequent errors encountered at this level.

To prevent the negative influence of the L1, an idea rooted in contrastive analysis, teachers tend to use only the target language in the classroom, keeping the other languages outside of the classroom. An interesting alternative would be to exploit the potential cooperation between languages to take advantage of previously learned languages. Research indicates that learners who manipulate their languages in various contexts become more aware of the languages' formal and functional aspects (Woll 2017), suggesting that raising metalinguistic awareness would benefit multilingual learners (Jessner 2008). In applied linguistics research focusing on SLA in instructed settings, "researchers tend to conceptualize metalinguistic awareness in terms of explicit knowledge about language" (Roehr-Brackin 2018). Therefore, learners' metalinguistic ability is often considered "the capacity to use knowledge about language instead of the capacity to use language" (Bialystok 2001).

Metalinguistic awareness is an asset in terms of acquisition of various aspects of language production such as phonology (Marx and Mehlhorn 2010), syntax (Bardel and Falk 2007), lexicon (Dressler et al. 2011), as well as reading (Peyer, Kayser, and Berthele 2010) and writing (Cenoz and Gorter 2011). Teachers could ask students to manipulate the target structure to raise metalinguistic awareness. By asking them to explain or justify their choices in terms of word selection or verb tense, students would become aware of correspondences between unknown target items and related background vocabulary.

Multilingual learners seem to develop analytical abilities to infer meaning based on crosslinguistic correspondences with previously acquired languages. As a result, activities in class such as searching for semantic or syntactic cues in concurrent sentences or establishing links with other learning events would also promote strategies often associated with accurate prediction and positive transfer.

In sum, teachers should take advantage of learners' multilingual background and focus on specific aspects such as word selection and sentence structure at lower levels. This would probably help lower

intermediate students, such as the English L1 learners in the current study, to improve on significant aspects causing miscommunication.

On the other hand, research has shown that teachers do not feel competent choosing materials, techniques, and methods when planning lessons in multilingual settings (Haukås 2016). To consider multilingualism in preservice programs would be an interesting option to support teachers, especially when teaching minority languages for which very limited resources are available.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Current research is not without its limitations. Multilingualism is a complex phenomenon and many factors must be considered when exploring the impact of previously learned languages on a target language. It would have been helpful to know more about the age of onset, the learning context, and the linguistic background of participants (level of proficiency in all previously learned languages) to investigate whether these factors might impact the nature of CLI on the target language. Future research should explore the performance of learners of the same target language with different language paths to better understand CLI, as well as to address the potential impact of techniques on L3/Ln learning for learners of different backgrounds (same target language) to find effective methods that can be used daily in a classroom context.

### **Conclusion**

Current results showing that previously learned languages may lead to facilitative and non-facilitative transfers add to the overall picture of the impact of other languages on additional language learning, especially for minority languages such as Catalan. Our results show that English learners tend to rely on the language they perceive to be the closest to the target language (in this case, Spanish). Teachers need to take the learners' linguistic background into account, especially in multilingual settings. As there is an increasing interest in Catalan learning (as an additional language) in the international academic community (Manuel-Oronich, Repiso-Puigdelliura, and Tudela-Isanta 2021; Tudela-Isanta et al. 2020), this study highlighted some challenges English speakers encounter when learning Catalan in an attempt to support teachers' decisions. Although multilingual learners with the same L1 may share strengths and weaknesses in the target language, more studies are needed to better understand multilingual learning in minority language learning and, most

importantly, the best teaching strategies when learning in L3/Ln teaching.

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# Antoni Tàpies's Catalan Turn (1962–75)

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## Abstract

During the 1950s Antoni Tàpies entered the international artistic scene as a follower of the American Abstract Expressionism and the French *Art Autre*. Tàpies was rapidly considered as the representative artist of the “materic painting” due to the support of international art dealers, but also due to his collaboration with the program of artistic promotion conducted by the Spanish regime during the 1950s and the 1960s. Participant and beneficiary of the “desideologization” produced in postwar Spanish art, from 1965 the Barcelona artist started to gradually approach a politicized position where Catalan nationalism played a fundamental role. In this paper, I analyze the construction of Antoni Tàpies’ Catalan profile during the late years of the Francoist dictatorship. As I demonstrate, while the political character of his work was still disregarded in Spain, by the late 1960s, France became the irrigator center of the ideologization of his artistic production. Thanks to the renewed image projected by the French art circles, after 1968 Tàpies was promoted in Catalonia as a fervent anti-Francoist artist and a defender of Catalan freedom. Far from naively accepting this change, this paper critically discusses how this politicization was produced. Delving into his ideological ambiguities, we will see how this politicization did not only emerge from Tàpies political convictions, but also from his strategic artistic interests

## Keywords

Antoni Tàpies; art; political art; Franco dictatorship; Catalan nationalism; Catalan artistic nationalism

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Almost a year after Francisco Franco's death, on October 25, 1976, the abstract painter Antoni Tàpies appeared on the front page of the newspaper *Treball* ("Ja sóc legal" 1976), the weekly periodical clandestinely run during the dictatorship by the Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya (Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia, PSUC). The publication announced that Gregorio López Raimundo, the PSUC's general secretary, who had been arrested on his return from exile, had been released from Police Court. Crowned with the headline "Finally, I am a legal citizen of the Spanish state," the article had a celebratory tone, echoed by the photographs it included. In one of these images, López Raimundo spoke to Tàpies at the painter's exhibition organized by the Joan Miró Foundation in Barcelona. The two men appeared in profile, looking each other in the eye, with friendly yet serious expressions that suggested the significance of the occasion. Behind them, the poster that Tàpies had made to commemorate the party's fortieth anniversary hung on the wall. Entitled *PSUC: For Catalonia, Democracy and Socialism*, the print consisted of a gouache on paper with a yellow background, the acronym of the party painted in red on top of the composition, and the four blood bars of the Catalan Senyera painted below, also in red. Handwritten words appeared in Catalan across the poster, such as "workers," "peasants," "writers," "veterans," and "Catalonia=Freedom."<sup>1</sup>

The appearance of the artist and his work on the newspaper confirmed how much PSUC had relied on its affiliated intellectuals, but also revealed the important role that Tàpies started to play in the reconstruction of the Catalan cultural scene. In June 1976, before the party was legalized, the painter had signed with other "Catalan democrats of various ideologies and political positions" such as Joan Brossa, Josep Maria Castellet, or Raimon, a statement in which they "cordially greeted" PSUC (Carbonell et al. 1976). In this declaration,

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<sup>1</sup> The original terms were "obrers," "camperols," "escriptors," "veterans," and "Catalunya=Llibertat," amongst many others. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

the signatories paid tribute to Catalan communists “whose loyalty to the working class and to Catalonia had cost them their own lives, time in prison, and exile.”

During the immediate years after the dictator’s death, Tàpies’s political positioning did align with PSUC, but after Catalonia’s consolidation as an Autonomous Community of Spain in 1980, he was approached by other political parties. Despite the ideological differences that distanced PSUC from parties such as *Convergència i Unió* (Convergence and Union, CiU) and the *Partit Socialista de Catalunya* (Socialist Party of Catalonia, PSC) — by then the governing parties of Catalonia and Barcelona respectively — Tàpies’s relationships with different political organs intensified. These collaborations, regardless of their diverse nature, contributed to his consolidation as the most important living Catalan artist of the moment. As early as 1981, Catalonia’s Autonomic President, Jordi Pujol, in a speech at UNESCO headquarters, referred to Tàpies as the youngest representative of a long genealogy of Catalan avant-garde artists (Jenkins 2017, 228). That same year, the Barcelona City Council commissioned Tàpies to create a tribute to Picasso, which further reinforced such lineage.<sup>2</sup> In 1983, some months before Joan Miró’s passing, Pujol put aside his personal distaste for contemporary art and awarded the Golden Medal of the Generalitat — the Catalan government’s highest cultural distinction — to Tàpies, in a ceremony where he highlighted “the projection of the artist’s work and his fidelity to the country” (Pujol 1983).

These recognitions would later be accompanied by other commissions such as the work on wood *Les Quatres Cròniques* (1989)<sup>3</sup> — now located in the Tarradellas Room, the Government’s meeting area at the Palace of Catalonia’s Generalitat — but also by economic contributions to the Tàpies Foundation in Barcelona when it opened in 1990 as a private organization. According to Joan Rigol, culture secretary (“conseller de cultura”) to Pujol’s government, from 1984 to 1985, Tàpies, who was an artist with a certain public standing, was “instrumentalized to support the Catalan political institutions” (“Katalanii” 2022, 30:40min). Beyond the accuracy of such allegations

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<sup>2</sup> Despite Pablo Picasso’s Andalusian origins, the formative years the painter spent in Barcelona, his later visits to Horta de San Joan and Gósol, and the opening of the first Picasso Museum in the Catalan capital in 1963 have all contributed to his being considered part of Catalonia’s cultural heritage. Nowadays, this understanding of the artist as Catalan is openly put forward by the Generalitat, as can be appreciated, for instance, on the institution’s official cultural patrimony website. See:

<https://patrimoni.gencat.cat/en/collection/picasso-museum> [accessed 4 November 2022].

<sup>3</sup> Due to copyright restrictions, images of Tàpies’s artworks will not be reproduced in this article. When possible, links to reliable online sources with images of cited artworks will be provided. If such sources are not available, all the mentioned artworks are listed at Tàpies’s catalogue raisonné. For an image of the mural, see:

<https://mdc.csuc.cat/digital/collection/afceccf/id/3428> [accessed 4 November 2022].

and Tàpies's awareness of his instrumentalization, it is true that all through the 1980s and 1990s, the artist was institutionally recognized as one of the most representative figures of post-war Catalan art, heir to a century of national tradition. His proximity to the Catalan political establishment allowed him to inherit the role of the "universal Catalan" that Joan Miró, who Tàpies considered his master, had occupied until then a position that was key to Catalonia's national restoration project. This interpretative trend endures today, offering a naive characterization of the painter as the quintessential embodiment of the region's cultural and social spirit.

In this paper, I propose to read Tàpies's categorization as a Catalan painter through a theoretical framework that departs from and complicates the official political discourses on the artist. Based on Benedict Anderson's conception of nationality as a historically constructed and determined "cultural artefact" (2006, 4), I decouple Tàpies's interpretation as Catalan from its cooptation by Catalan politics during the 1980 and 1990s. Following Arjun Appadurai's invitation to think culture "beyond the nation" (1996, 40), I analyse Tàpies's "catalanitat"<sup>4</sup> as an interpretative process that exceeded the painter's nationalist convictions and Catalonia's political arena. I call this process Tàpies's "Catalan turn" and understand it as a response to three entangled problems that developed during the 1960s: the rise of new objectual trends in the Western art scene; Tàpies's dismissal by the art world in Spain; and the change in galleries representing him in France, with the necessary rebranding of his profile entailed by such a shift. Without disputing the artist's political commitment and his ideological convictions, in what follows I show how Tàpies's "catalanitat" was the result of a transnational process that cannot be reductively circumscribed to the painter's committed battle, along with his allies, for the preservation of the "Catalan Spirit."<sup>5</sup>

### **Collector of the Ordinary**

The beginning of Tàpies's Catalan turn can be dated back to 1962, when his image as one of the most important Spanish painters of the time was internationally recognized, and he began experimenting with the objectual trends that, almost a decade later, in 1973, would consolidate his "catalanitat." In the early 1960s, Antoni Tàpies was

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<sup>4</sup> Due to its untranslatable quality, I have decided to keep the Catalan version of the idea of "catalanitat." By "catalanitat," I am not referring to the painter's possible nationalist convictions, nor his defense of Catalan culture, but his quality of being Catalan. A similar use of the term has been recently used by Mercer and Song (2020).

<sup>5</sup> For more information on Tàpies's definition of the "Catalan Spirit" and his commitment to "fighting for it" please see the article he published in 1971 entitled "L'art d'avantguarda i l'esperit català" (Tàpies 1971).

one of the most important young abstract painters of the Western art scene. During the 1950s, he had been able to take advantage of the regime's cooptation of abstract art as a tool of cultural diplomacy by navigating the international paths that the Spanish *Dirección General de Relaciones Culturales* (General Direction of Cultural Relations, DGRC) opened for him. He had soon jumped to the Parisian art scene, where he joined critic Michel Tapié's *informalist* art circle, and began to be represented by the *marchand* Rodolph Stadler in 1956 (Tàpies 2010, 234). Around the same time, Tàpies also started a commercial relation with the American art dealer Martha Jackson, exhibiting at her New York gallery as early as 1953, although he would not sign his first contract with her until 1959 ("Official contract" 1959).

The market speculation of the Parisian art scene of the moment (Verlaine 2012, 477), and the USA's desire to spearhead avant-garde art after the Second World War, allowed for a fast increase in the economic and cultural capitalization of Tàpies's work. On both sides of the Atlantic, his Spanish origin was an important asset for his notoriety. In Paris, it allowed him to stand out among the wide range of international painters that Tapié and Stadler amalgamated under the category of *Art Autre* (Tapié 1959). In New York, he was labeled the "young Spaniard" who created "matter paintings" where the Iberian atmosphere and the austerity of Spain's pictorial tradition resonated (Burg 1953; *Antonio Tàpies of Barcelona, Spain* 1957).

As soon as 1962, Tàpies was holding his first international retrospectives in some of Europe and the United States's most important museums: the Kestner Gesellschaft in Hanover, the Kunsthaus in Zurich, and the Guggenheim Museum in New York. In all these exhibitions, Tàpies showed works that represented his finest matter abstraction, although the Guggenheim exhibition was particularly successful. He ended up exhibiting almost seventy works, and the show was extended due to the huge interest it aroused (Jackson 1962).

Despite the importance of such shows, these retrospectives did not showcase the most recent developments in Tàpies's work. In 1961, the artist had spent his first work period at his country house, located at Campins, and had returned to the practice of assemblage and collage. While he continued to use canvases for his matter paintings, he also started to use paper, cardboards, and newspapers as supports on which he painted the silhouettes of identifiable objects. Over the next two years, these investigations continued on an occasional basis, lasting until 1964, when he began incorporating real objects into his canvases. Throughout the decade, Tàpies would use his minor exhibitions to show these experiments with the representation of objects, while his larger shows were still populated by his well-known works.

Tàpies's renewed attention to objects happened at a thriving time for the international art scene. During the 1960s, the dominance of abstract painting was destabilized by a new wave of art trends such as Nouveau Réalisme, Pop Art, or Art Brut, which moved beyond the medium of painting and paid special attention to real objects. These trends, nowadays categorized as part of a same Neo-Dada current, problematized the referential dimensions of the artwork, blurring the limits between conceptual couplings such as representation and presentation, realism and reality, or figuration and objecthood. Artists associated with such movements countered abstraction's detachment from the real world and opted for an aesthetics that aimed, as the art historian Julie Verlaine has put it, to "penetrate life in its daily dimension" (2012, 455), frequently conceiving artworks as social or political commentaries.

The emergence of these trends in Spain was directly related to the artists' interest in finding new models of political commitment. As indicated by the art historians Jorge Luis Marzo and Patricia Mayayo (2015, 249), a large part of the aesthetic discussions that took place in Spain during the 1960s and early 1970s concerned the relative effectiveness of different forms of expression in rejecting the dictatorship. The emergence of these debates was accompanied by a "Marxization" of progressive Spanish art critics, who also drove the politicization of both veteran and young artists (Barreiro 2017).

Although Tàpies's attention to objects arose while such changes in the Spanish and international art scenes were happening, he never openly admitted their influence over his work. In a 1988 interview, the French art critic Barbara Catoir asked Tàpies if he had been "impressed" by Pop Art artists like Robert Rauschenberg or Jim Dine (1988, 124). The painter answered:

I don't know. There was a Neo-Dada current that revalued objects. But the idea of the object had already existed for a long time in my paintings. I have always considered the painting as an object, not as a window, as it is normal in painting. This is the reason why I give relief to the surface, and sometimes I even work on the back of the painting.

(Catoir 1988, 125)

Indeed, Tàpies's aesthetic takes on painting possessed an objectual component that he had developed by altering the limits of the canvas, as well as its component parts. Since the beginning of his career, he had experimented with various materials. As early as the 1940s, he was using glued papers, ropes, and boxes, such as those in

*Capsa de cordills* (1946)<sup>6</sup> or *Fils i argolla* (1946),<sup>7</sup> and often showed an interest in non-traditional techniques like collage and assemblage. During the 1950s, his work with unusual materials focused on the use of marble powder and sand, which he mixed with oil painting and other chemical solutions to achieve his renowned matter paintings, best exemplified by some of the works he sent to the 1964 Kassel Documenta like *Relleu negre per a Documenta* (1964).<sup>8</sup> However, it was not until the second half of the 1960s and the early 1970s, during the triumph of Neo-Dada art, that Tàpies systematically used recognizable daily objects in his artworks.

The objects in which Tàpies showed most interest were those that belonged to everyday life and that, according to the artist, possessed a residual quality (Tàpies 2010, 331). Pieces of cardboard, boxes, trays, dirty clothes, old furniture, sheets, napkins, threads... joining his fellow Neo-Dada colleagues' interest in exploring the ordinary, Tàpies used what he considered the remains of our daily existence in multiple ways. He assembled and employed them as the main support of the artwork, as in *Taula capgirada* (1970).<sup>9</sup> He attached them to canvases, while manipulating, cutting, and painting them, as he did with the pants in *Pantalons sobre bastidor* (1971).<sup>10</sup> He glued other elements such as wood, straw, or clothes over them, and even stamped them on the surface of his paintings. Some of his most renowned objects-assemblages, such as *Cadira i roba* (1970)<sup>11</sup> or *Armari* (1973),<sup>12</sup> were the product of these experiments.

As Tàpies stated in the introduction that opened the catalogue to his exhibition with the fiber artist Josep Royo at the Sala Gaspar in Barcelona in 1971, the carpets they had collaboratively created, as well as any other misunderstood daily object, were “a way of connecting us with the essential things” (*A. Tàpies: Tapissos* 1971). For Tàpies, these elements were important because individuals did not usually pay attention to them, and, when deteriorated, they were usually forgotten and detached from any significant use. By incorporating common, unimportant objects, the painter aimed to bring the traces of lived stories into his canvases, without necessarily telling them through a narrative or figurative format. In terms of the art historian Valeriano Bozal, those objects functioned as “an extension of the human skin” (Julián 1977, 10) and connected the

<sup>6</sup> <https://fundaciotapies.org/es/la-coleccion/obras/?o=34> [accessed 4 November 2022].

<sup>7</sup> <https://fundaciotapies.org/es/la-coleccion/obras/?o=31> [accessed 4 November 2022].

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/beyeler-collection/work?tx\\_wmdbbasefbey\\_pi5%5Bartwork%5D=106&cHash=f09128ee9ffbo95ee45db80be9b82cdc](https://www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/beyeler-collection/work?tx_wmdbbasefbey_pi5%5Bartwork%5D=106&cHash=f09128ee9ffbo95ee45db80be9b82cdc) [accessed 4 November 2022].

<sup>9</sup> <https://fundaciotapies.org/es/la-coleccion/obras/?o=130> [accessed 4 November 2022].

<sup>10</sup> <https://fundaciotapies.org/es/la-coleccion/obras/?o=133> [accessed 4 November 2022].

<sup>11</sup> <https://fundaciotapies.org/es/la-coleccion/obras/?o=132> [accessed 4 November 2022].

<sup>12</sup> <https://fundaciotapies.org/es/la-coleccion/obras/?o=146> [accessed 4 November 2022].



artworks to their immediate context, which at the time indexed the histories of poverty, repression, and violence that were kept in the collective memory of Catalonia.

The inclusion of detritus and poor objects also made a statement in the face of Pop Art's use of modern commodities. As Tàpies declared, his art participated in the idea of the popular, but not the conception stemming from the new consumer's society (Julián 1977, 83). His works' popular character did not correspond to the new Pop influences coming from London or New York, but to his long-lasting inclination towards a conception of the popular rooted in his homeland, Catalonia. The art historian Glòria Moure would later point out that Tàpies's humility evoked a certain tone "of accusation against the alienating degeneration of the object in modern society" and proposed a radical exercise of authenticity (1994, 95). His objects denounced the limited individual liberties imposed by the new global capitalist society, and revindicated tradition, forgotten values, and obsolete objects.

Despite the artist's reluctance to associate his objectual turn to any contemporary art trends – including *Arte Povera*, whose artists were guided by very similar artistic ideals (Catoir 1988, 177) – he did affiliate his works to a particular genealogy: that of the early twentieth century Catalan avant-garde artists. Beyond mentioning Joan Brossa as one of his main influences regarding his takes on objecthood, Tàpies also identified Joan Miró as his predecessor (Julián 1977, 83; Tàpies 2010, 184). Miró's work had stimulated him to experiment with daily objects in a pictorial way, specially using deteriorated pieces of wood and furniture. Ascribing to Miró's self-designation as an "International Catalan" (qtd. in Jenkins 2017, 183), Tàpies considered him the ultimate embodiment of Catalonia's spirit. He had been a constant witness to his country's hardships and uniquely expressed the anguished cry of its people by projecting "their exuberance, their rage, and their blood" (Tàpies 2010, 185).

Tàpies's positioning regarding the Catalan artistic tradition and contemporary reality through the artistic embrace of objecthood would constitute the ground on which his "Catalan turn" was to be erected. Yet, the process did not occur without certain resistance from the Spanish art field. While Tàpies's attention towards objects increased, his involvement in politicized public events would also become more frequent, a fact that did not prevent certain Spanish art critics from questioning Tàpies's social concerns.

### The Elitist Activist

On October 31, 1963, Tàpies signed, together with other Spanish intellectuals, a document protesting against the abuses inflicted by the police on the workers and women involved in the Asturias miners' strikes ("Intellectuals' second letter" 1963). The letter was addressed directly to Manuel Fraga, who at the time was Spain's Minister of Information and Tourism, and it denounced the forced shaving of Asturian women's hair, the physical violence against male workers, and the detention of various intellectuals involved in the cause. On Christmas Eve, Tàpies and other signatories were summoned to the Captaincy to sign the appeal. The artist would remember this occasion as his first confrontation with the Spanish police (Tàpies 2010, 312).

Yet, Tàpies's anti-Francoist standing was a gradual process that began ambiguously with his distancing from the regime's cultural activities in the late 1950s, and which matured throughout the 1960s. While in 1959 he realized DGRC was using his work as political propaganda in the Venice Biennale (Julián 1977, 62), in 1960 he still appeared at the New York MoMA exhibition *New Spanish Painting and Sculpture* co-organized by the Spanish institution. As Tàpies stated in his autobiography, in 1962 he also filed charges against the Spanish government for lending works to the Tate Gallery in London without his authorization (Tàpies 2010, 201), although the reasons he officially invoked to justify his refusal eluded any political causes and referred to a lack of valid artworks that could be shown at such an important museum (Judicial Declaration).

In this way, while Tàpies's aesthetic practice increasingly refocused on the objects he considered most connected to the Catalan reality, his political stand shifted as well, sporadically joining actions in which the participants' Catalanist claims were immediately signified as anti-Francoist. One such event would be the famous *Caputxinada* of Sarrià in 1966, the same year that Tàpies possibly ended his relationship with the Francoist art critic Carlos Areán, with whom he exchanged letters frequently, and who praised his oeuvre. Together with other Catalan intellectuals, Tàpies attended the voluntary students' confinement at the Capuchin convent in the Barcelona district of Sarrià to protest against Catalan culture's repression and the students' lack of freedoms. When the police evicted the participants, most of the attendants were arrested, including Tàpies. In 1971, the Court of Cassation found him guilty, issuing him with a large fine. The painter donated drawings and etchings to the auctions organized to pay for the students' fines, to which artists such as Picasso, Miró, or Chillida among many others also contributed (Szulc 1966).

After the *Caputxinada*, Tàpies did not join many other gatherings of this nature. Excluding his involvement in the 1970 Confinement of intellectuals celebrated at the Montserrat Monastery to protest against the Burgos Process – an event he convinced an old Joan Miró to attend with him – Tàpies did not show his opposition to the regime by appearing in politicized events. It was through the more modest and popular version of his work that he contributed to the Catalan resistance. From 1968, the painter produced a remarkable quantity of graphic works dedicated to events whose purpose was to support Catalan culture. The First Popular Festival of Catalan Song (1968), the Third International Festival of Cadaqués (1972), the XXIII Old and Modern Used Book Fair of Barcelona (1974), or the ceremony commemorating the five hundredth anniversary of the first book printed in Catalan (1974), were amongst such occasions. Tàpies's contribution usually consisted of the design and donation of a lithograph used as the official poster, associating his oeuvre with the restoration of Catalan culture and language after years of Francoist subjugation.

The painter filled such works with iconographic references to Catalonia: the color combination was predominantly red and yellow, the four stripes of the “senyera” appeared recurrently, and the words “Catalan” or “Catalunya” were also frequently repeated. In a similar line, he also composed them through formal elements like black crosses and grids or gray squiggles, invoking the political oppression that had suffocated Catalan culture since the beginning of the dictatorship. After Franco's death, Tàpies's graphic work acquired a much more explicit denunciatory tone that went beyond the defense of Catalan culture. For instance, in 1975, he made a colored lithography which was mainly exhibited in churches supporting the campaign in favor of the abolition of the death penalty promoted by the religious associations *Justícia i Pau* (Justice and Peace) and *Pax Christi*; and in 1976 he created an engraving to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the founding of the Assembly of Catalonia and the poster of the March for Freedom, a group of pacific marches that happened all around Catalonia to defend the release of political prisoners.

Tàpies's growing political engagement was received dryly in Spain compared to on the international art scene. While in 1966 the jury of the XV International Congress of Artists, Critics, and Researchers of Art awarded him the gold medal for the “moral commitment of his artistic oeuvre” (*D'Arts* 1966, 52), Spanish art critics, especially the most conservative ones, turned a blind eye to his political inclinations. Tàpies's commitment might have been at odds with the Spaniards' political convictions, but the artist was also

an internationally celebrated painter whom the regime could not afford to take against for political reasons. Instead of openly attacking his political engagement, the Spaniards would question Tàpies from a different angle. By disapproving of his recent artistic production, they did not oppose him, but simply rejected two aspects of his work: its lack of realism, and its everlasting affinity for an individualistic model of the artist. Both criticisms allowed the Spaniards to deceptively align with the modernization of the Spanish art scene, which, during the 1960s, would see the flourishing of new forms of realism, as well as a sharp hostility towards the figure of the traditional avant-garde painter, considered synonymous with Western neoliberalism (Barreiro 2015).

In 1966, after an exhibition at the Biosca Galleries in Madrid, Tàpies was discredited as a painter for the elites. Even the most favorable reviews recognized the poor nature of the show (Nuño 1966). In a survey of art critics such as José Camón Aznar, Enrique Lafuente Ferrari, and Manuel Sánchez Camargo, it became clear that the exhibition's "poor selection of artworks" was interpreted as one of the elements that demonstrated the artist's commercialization ("Encuesta" 1966). For the Spanish art critics, Tàpies had decided to send his best works to galleries where sales were assured and therefore could no longer be considered representative of artistic novelty in Spain (Figuerola-Ferreti 1966). Compared to artists such as Juan Genovés or Rafael Canogar, his works were not connected to the concerns of the contemporary world, a world where considering the artist a prophet and his art a hermetic subjectivism had started to expire. Tàpies was now seen as "the explorer lost in the Pole, who just turns around himself" and even Juan Eduardo Cirlot, one of his most faithful critics, recognized a development problem in the painter's career ("Tapies, Villagómez" 1966; Cirlot 1967, 5).

Although the artist did not directly respond to these criticisms, the statements he made to the press in 1967 are quite revealing about the attitude he adopted thereafter. Following his exhibition at Biosca, the painter defined himself as a "non-conformist and ideological artist, carried away by a dash of constant revision" (García-Soler 1967). He described the Spanish art panorama as provincial and qualified the intellectual level of Catalonia as "fabulously superior" in comparison to the rest of the peninsula. In his opinion, Spanish art movements followed, at best, the fashion trends dictated by Paris, London, and New York, while only artists who had left Spain – even "spiritually" or for a single year, as he had – could truly stand out in an artistic field that had been falsely presented as sublime by Francoist patriots (Juez 1967). As the attacks on Tàpies progressed, characterizing him as an outdated and snobbish artist, the painter staunchly reaffirmed his political position.

One of the most notable attacks that allowed Tàpies to elaborate on the use of his Catalan nationality as an equivalent to his anti-Francoist and, therefore, socially committed stance, came from Luis González Robles. In 1968, the DGRC's appointed curator during the 1950s and 1960s published an extensive article in the *ABC* newspaper where he targeted the social disposition of Tàpies' art (González Robles 1968). Tàpies was one of the painters who had moved "away from society and locked themselves in their ivory tower" (González Robles 1968, 10), the curator declared. Rather than a people-oriented painting, Tàpies's abstraction was seen by González-Robles as an elitist estrangement that played a key role in an art system privileging private economic benefits instead of social integration. The artist was one of the "big cows" who, together with art dealers and gallerists had seen the opportunity to take advantage of the collector's systematic exploitation of the art scene. To reinforce this idea, a photograph of Tàpies was placed just above one of the headlines that asserted: "Pronounced divorce between society and art."

Unlike other critics that had attacked Tàpies, González Robles received a very direct response from the painter through the magazine *Destino* (Tàpies, 1968a). Besides denouncing the "total extermination" by Francoist art platforms of the social validity of abstract painting during the first years of the dictatorship, Tàpies used the debate with the curator to position the Catalan people as a society that understood true artists. Maybe because of their "moderate *seny*" or their "Gaudí-style madness," Catalans had been taught "to see all those artists, suddenly asocial and greedy, differently" (Tàpies 1968a, 6). Amid dissimulated rhetorical references to his motherland, he stated that, in Catalonia, one could not forget that *Guernica* had been created as an elegy for a wounded people, nor that Joan Miró, with his creative force, had contributed to helping the Spanish people during the Civil War. All the gestures that old or young artists had made to "disinterestedly contribute to the peoples' fight against lies, war, rottenness, oppression [...] and in favor of justice, peace, purity, and freedom" were understood and deeply felt (Tàpies 1968a, 7).

Just as it happened with his object-based plastic production, Tàpies's Catalan self-identification was used as a response to those accusations that defined him as an artist who ignored society's problems. While in 1967, the painter had already stated that his Catalan roots were the main cause behind his painting "If I paint as I do, it is because, first of all, I am Catalan" (Tàpies 2011, 58) one year later, he brought this claim to the next level. Making an art devoted to, integrated in, and referencing Catalonia and its culture, was a way of positioning himself in the political debates of the

Spanish art scene. However, due to the still repressive censorship that the Francoist government extended all over the country, France would be the location where Tàpies's role as the new representative of the Catalans was originally devised. It would be in the revolutionary Paris of 1968 that his Catalan turn would be established.

### The Catalan Witness

In 1967, Tàpies landed at the Maeght Gallery, which had represented the greatest idols of his youth, including Miró (Tàpies 2010, 249). Maeght radically changed the image Stadler had promoted of the artist up till then, centered on a metaphysical and existentialist version of his matter paintings. By broadening the painter's stylistic profile and adapting it to the contemporary scene while preserving the label of modern artist, the Maeght Gallery proposed a new Tàpies: one that was more intrepid in the plastic domain, and tougher in the political dimension. Regardless of the Spaniards' reluctance towards Tàpies, the painter's turn towards objecthood and his recently acquired political stance were two key assets that his new French gallery relied on and amplified.

Through a series of three Parisian exhibitions in 1967, 1969, and 1972, Maeght would gradually emphasize Tàpies's turn towards objects and the political dimension they possessed. In 1967, after the first individual show where Tàpies's national identity was announced through collages and graphic works displaying Catalan symbols, the French art critics discursively enlarged his rebranding. In November of that same year, intellectuals like the communist Raoul-Jean Moulin read his matter paintings as "walls of misery, leprous facades, torn with cruel cracks, in which Tàpies isolates his deserted and anonymous extensions" (1967). Already including contextual references, these walls showed "everything that is felt today in Barcelona: suffering, adversity, prison, a gesture of revolt that today joins that of the painter." As the art critic Jacques Michel stated, some of the painter's most recently exhibited works encapsulated "the memory of a stay in a Barcelona prison after the students' demonstrations" (1967, 11). The painter's reference to the immediate Catalan reality allowed him to acquire a very clear position that contested the title Spaniards disputed: "Antoni Tàpies says it without flinching: *I am a realist*" (Michel 1967, 11).

The heated environment of 1968 promoted the development of this interpretative path, and the painter's political re-semanticization continued to gain traction in Paris. From the pages of *Le Monde*, Michel insisted on considering him a "a Catalan painter and an activist in a Spain that honors him and holds him in suspicion at the

same time,” and his painting as a “symbolized act of protest” (Michel 1968). Contrary to what some of the Spanish art critics believed, for the French, Tàpies’s painting was both social and poetic, retaining an “acrid and strong taste, sober and poor” that revealed everything it rejected. Important Parisian journals such as *Le Figaro*, *L’Art Vivant*, and *La Galerie des Arts* filled their pages with articles where the political readings of Tàpies echoed the uplifted revolutionary mood that invaded the city. In these newspapers, Tàpies was able to openly answer questions he could not have answered in Spain. In November 1968 *L’Art Vivant* published the following: “So your political opinions are legible in your works? Someone asked Tàpies. Yes, he replied without hesitation” (“Tàpies, un silence criant” 1968). One month later *La Quinzaine Littéraire* printed a translated version of Tàpies’s response to González-Robles (Tàpies 1968b).

Hence, when the second exhibition at Maeght opened in 1969, Tàpies had proven to be “deeply Catalan in his sense of violence, of the daily drama, and of the dark forces that subjugate us” (Abadie 1969). Considered by Catherine Millet to be the introducer of Art Pauvre at Maeght, the way he borrowed elements from his immediate reality made him the perfect example of a “transition towards a greater, and stronger expressiveness” (Millet 1969). In the eyes of the French, Tàpies had joined the lines of Art Pauvre, considered as an “art of contestation,” while he also preserved his unique and abrupt universe of loneliness, silence, and death, now enriched by the desperate realities he presented (*Nouvelles littéraires* 1969).

French criticism’s significant contribution to Tàpies’s Catalan turn would come to a head in his third individual show at Maeght, in 1972, *Objects and Large Formats*. The exhibition showed a vast collection of objectual works and mixed-media canvases that created a semantic network based on the plastic representation of Catalonia as a repressed and suffering nation, deprived from its freedom of expression. Already on the cover of the catalogue, a volume of the magazine *Derrière le miroir*, the Catalan flag and the inscription “Visca Catalunya” (Long Live Catalonia) announced the political point of view guiding the exhibition (*Objets et grands formats* 1972).<sup>13</sup> But the presence of easily recognizable Catalan symbols such as the Senyera was not limited to the cover of the catalogue. Red bars appeared in the form of rags sewn to canvases *Esquinçall* (1970) or *Quatre retalls vermells* (1970) fingerprints *L’Esperit Català* (1971)<sup>14</sup> or brushstrokes of different sizes and shapes painted over objects,

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.maeght.com/editions/article.asp?id\\_selection=8&id=1341](https://www.maeght.com/editions/article.asp?id_selection=8&id=1341) [accessed 4 November 2022].

<sup>14</sup> <https://coleccionmun.unav.edu/objects/70494/lesperit-catala?ctx=a66c6ab3a2678e2833c81a448871957869f42ec1&idx=6> [accessed 4 November 2022].

lithographs, and canvases, such as *November 7* (1971),<sup>15</sup> which referred to the date when Catalonia's Assembly first met. The Catalan message also materialized in works that Tàpies had recently made as direct references to concrete historical events or figures. For instance, *Tres escombres* (1970) or *Pila de plats* (1970)<sup>16</sup> evoked the life of the monks who had taken part in the Caputxinada.

Next to such referentially direct pieces, Tàpies's use of everyday and residual objects accomplished a testimonial function that evoked the atmosphere of a Barcelona affected by the Civil War and post-war poverty. Free-standing or attached to canvas, the artist showed packets and bags such as those of *Gran collage amb sacs* (1969), where expatriates could have carried their personal belongings while running away from the war; dirty mattresses like *Matalàs* (1971) that would have been used for the barricades; objectual traces of people's confrontation with the authorities, like the handcuffs of *Pintura amb manilles* (1970)<sup>17</sup>; or the rubbish that would have been found in the streets of a dirty city and that people reused as packages of hidden goods, such as the box of *Capsa i bola de paper de plata* (1970) or the cardboard package of *Petit paquet* (1970). By including deteriorated objects that belonged to private spaces, Tàpies indexed the alteration of everyday life provoked by the instability of war and the subsequent period of repression. The reused clothes, dirty due to the impossibility of washing them regularly, or the old, broken furniture abandoned after people left their homes, also exposed how Spanish politics had impacted people's intimacy.

Without falling into simplistic and fashionable interpretations of Tàpies's adscription to Art Pauvre, French critics strengthened the connection of his objectual works to Catalan culture and resistance politics. Tàpies's work responded to "a need for freedom" and a revolutionary spirit, that, in his search for truth, joined "a kind of primitivism specific to the masters of Romanesque art, of which Catalonia is so rich" (Warnod 1971). As Raoul-Jean Moulin asserted, Tàpies had finally abandoned metaphysics (1972). The new artworks he presented at Maeght tended towards a more materialistic conception of existence, focused on Catalonia's suffering at the time. In this way, his abstract painting was also re-signified, and a canvas such as *L'Esperit Català* (1971) was interpreted as a "painting-manifesto," a "wall stained with the imprints of bloody hands, quivering with the last hastily engraved inscriptions, wounded,

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<sup>15</sup> In the following article you can find multiple images of the artwork's current location: <https://www.ccma.cat/324/7-de-novembre-el-quadre-de-tapies-que-ocupa-un-lloc-dhonor-al-parlament/noticia/3128179/> [accessed 4 November 2022].

<sup>16</sup> <https://fundaciotapies.org/es/la-coleccion/obras/?o=131> [accessed 4 November 2022].

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.pacegallery.com/journal/antoni-tapies-how-art-can-operate-as-soft-power-hyperallergic/> [accessed 4 November 2022].



lacerated, tortured through pain,” a wall of “execution,” “insurrection,” and the “song of a whole people marching” (Moulin 1972). Together with this portrayal of Tàpies as the representative of Catalonia’s cry, other art critics also defined his work as a “penitentiary painting” that anyone who knew about “the human context of the Catalan Tàpies’s work and personality” could understand (Conil Lacoste 1972).

The Galerie Maeght was the space where Tàpies presented his “Catalan temperament,” as Georges Boudaille named it (1972), and his “intellectual anarchism,” as Alain Jouffroy put it (1973). In 1972, the gallery would present a second version of the 1971 Parisian exhibition in their Gallery in Zurich, following the same emphasis on the bond between Tàpies’s “catalanitat” and his politics, an interpretation that the painters at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris in 1973 would also ratify. Regarding a knotted sheet that Tàpies had suspended from the museum’s ceiling for the exhibition, Jouffroy underlined “its accusing presence, because the most ignorant viewer of things in art still knows that a knotted sheet can only be used for prisoner escapes” (1973). The artist was responsible for “the double articulation of an aesthetic language and a coherent subversive ideology” that Maeght curated, and the French press put into words. Years later, Tàpies would endorse such interpretation, by stating that the practice of his own art had “made him gradually realize its social implications” (2010, 160).

### **The New Catalan Prometheus**

As the art historian and critic Catherine Millet stated in 1969, Tàpies had always remained faithful to a metaphysical “universe, of loneliness, silence and death” but also to the impoverished and desolate aspect of “the desperate Catalan reality” (Millet 1969). Based on this double conception of his art – both aesthetically and socially concerned – the Catalan interpretation of the painter created by the Parisian curators and critics would soon travel back to the peninsula. During the years of Tàpies’s reinterpretation in Paris, certain Catalan media and art critics started to recognize the social aspect of his work. His works were seen as “fragments of a social context,” or denunciations of the “aspects of existence overly commercialized” (Ribalta 1968, 5; Vallés Rovira 1969). In 1969, the important Catalan art critic Alexandre Cirici Pellicer even saw in Tàpies’s objectual work the revelation of a new historical and social dimension that was not local but universal (1969). For Cirici Pellicer, Tàpies was the prophet of a young and engaged art movement and occupied this position under the figure of the “Marxist mole,” by “opening

underground paths in a decomposed ground.” Following this interpretative line, in 1970, Cirici Pellicer would characterize Tàpies as a “testimony of silence,” insisting on how his works referenced the historical components of the Civil War, the local postwar years, and a universalist Catalonia (1970, 235).

However, it wouldn't be until his definitive French Catalanization that Tàpies's Catalan roots would be intellectualized in the region. From the Barcelona of the *Gauche Divine*, the poet Pere Gimferrer would advocate for the interpretive tension between the artist's universe of silence and the contentious character of his works. Since the early 1970s, Gimferrer—with whom Tàpies maintained a solid friendship—had begun to publish numerous articles defending Tàpies as the true fighter of Catalan culture. As the French also defended, for Gimferrer “nothing could overcome his power of liberation, and his cry for the revolution” (1971). However, beyond the hermeneutical parallels between the Catalan poet and the French art critics, Gimferrer's efforts focused instead on detaching Tàpies from the Spanishness that had allowed him to triumph internationally during the 1950s, while repositioning him within the Catalan cultural tradition. As Eloi Grasset has argued, this repositioning of Tàpies was an integrative part of Gimferrer's efforts to incorporate the discourse of modernity in the tale of Catalan culture (2020, 237).

For Gimferrer, Tàpies was part of a mystical tendency that, contrary to what had been proposed in the United States during the 1950s and fostered by the Francoist regime, was at odds with the Spanish sixteenth century spiritual climate. According to the poet, his roots were other: he was indebted to the medieval Catalan tradition of mysticism and alchemy, characterized by Arnau de Vilanova, Enric de Villena, and Ramón Llull (Gimferrer 1972). This relocation of Tàpies within the local Catalan tradition was connected, as well, with the poetic principles of the great European tradition. For Gimferrer, Tàpies's work was situated at the heart of Europe's modern art because he dealt with its core debates: the challenge between the artist and the absolute, the desire to reconcile opposites, and the will to cancel the split between men and cosmos (Gimferrer 1972).

Gimferrer would further develop his ideas about the Tàpies's Catalan and modern affiliation in his 1974 book *Antoni Tàpies i l'esperit català*. According to the poet, Catalan history was dramatic and risky, and the source of Tàpies's rebellious and, at the same time, mystical character (Gimferrer 1974, 31). His Catalan antecedents, investigators of the mysteries of the mind, could be compared to Arthur Rimbaud's poetic alchemy of the verb. The avant-garde poet, the Catalan mystic, and the plastic alchemist were successive incarnations of the myth of Prometheus: they were images of men

who wanted to steal part of the mystery of the unknown and project it onto their daily reality or inner world.

For Gimferrer, being truly Catalan and being an avant-garde artist were synonyms since they both shared the adventurous character of exploring new spiritual territories and delivering their secrets to the people. The poet situated Tàpies's work as the natural continuation of this equivalence between avant-garde art and the Catalan tradition, defining him as a new Promethean artist. Due to his tendency towards mystery and his insistence on experimenting with the expressive capacities of plastic language, pushing them beyond the ordinary, Tàpies was, like Ramon Llull or Rimbaud, a solitary figure who had explored the depths of silence. In this way, Tàpies's paintings were also "civil elegies" (Gimferrer 1974, 60) that converted the silence of the people into a plastic clamor. The artist's elegiac character derived from the "progressive" attitude of his plastic particularities combined with his work's themes, which, as Gimferrer illustrated, normally included heraldic symbols, emblems, and allusions to great Catalan poets such as Josep Carner or historical characters such as Wilfred the Hairy.

Gimferrer saw in Tàpies's avant-garde art the defense of the true Catalan spirit, an interpretation that other local collaborators would also endorse. Art critics like Maria Lluïsa Borràs joined Gimferrer's efforts to define Tàpies's diachronic modernity and used such definition as a defense against those who accused him of being a painter for the elites, removed from reality by the greedy art market. In 1969, Borràs defended the artist from the critiques he received after the exhibition at Biosca Gallery. She saw in the painter's use of humble materials an argument that questioned his supposed assimilation to the capitalist system, due not only to its poverty, but also to its Catalan cultural affiliation (1969). Borràs defined Tàpies's art as the art of "our present sensibility" and, despite attacks from Spanish art critics who criticized her for "turning Tàpies into a prophet," she would continue to insist that his work "included the new culture within the oldest and most beloved Catalan culture" (Borràs 1971a; Bonet and Rivas 1971; Borràs 1971b).

Some years later, when the polemic confrontation between Tàpies and the young conceptual art coalition Grup de Treball (GdT) broke out in 1973, the art critic was also able to use Tàpies's role within Catalan culture as an argument in his defense. In March of that year, Tàpies had published an article in *La Vanguardia Española*, in which he critiqued the pretentious position of "enfants terribles" that some members of the group had prophetically but naively shown at the exhibition *Informació d'Art Concepte* celebrated at Banyoles (Tàpies 1973a). In response to such attack, GdT pointed out how the

painter's supposed social commitment was at odds with the current exhibiting format of his works – restricted to the museum and the art gallery – and the prestigious position he held in the international art market (Portabella 1973; Abad et al. 1973). For the members of GdT, Tàpies's characterization as a socially involved artist depended on a paradoxical understanding of art's integration into the world, which was the basis of avant-garde art and which conceptualism aimed to reshape.

Beyond the series of articles that Tàpies immediately wrote reflecting on the intrinsic social integration of “true” avant-garde artist (1973b, 1973c, 1973d, 1973e, 1973f, 1973g), Borràs also stood up for the painter. In 1974, one year before Franco's death, the art critic described Tàpies as the inheritor of the creative tendency opened by Antoni Gaudí and continued by Joan Miró, using his “catalanitat” as proof of his intrinsic modernity and progressive character (Borràs 1974). As Borràs stated, despite the misunderstanding of younger generations, Tàpies was a radical artist who shared the same revolutionary profile as his masters, who advocated for the ultimate goal of the oldest Catalan tradition: freedom.

### **Conclusions: A Universal Catalan?**

The day that Jordi Pujol awarded Tàpies the Golden Medal of the Generalitat, the President was not alone. He was accompanied by Pere Gimferrer, who highlighted the “universal singularity of the painter” (Pujol 1983). While an analysis of how Tàpies's Catalanitat ended up permeating the official political structures would have to be the subject of a different article, this apparently anecdotal occasion clearly points to how much the Catalan government would build on Tàpies's Catalan turn.

As we have seen, Tàpies's reinterpretation as Catalan was a long process involving multiple debates, political circumstances, and varied conflicting interests. Through his self-declaration as Miró's inheritor and insistence on the humbleness of his objects, Tàpies positioned his objectual artwork within a Catalan interpretative frame. His reluctance to be categorized as a member of any contemporary art trend indicated his understanding of the painter as an isolated, unique figure, in the vein of the individualism fostered by postwar abstract trends. Nonetheless, this certainty also gave him enough independence to adopt a socially accusatory tone that would mark his public political stance during the 1960s and early 1970s.

Spanish critics' condemnation of the artist's most recent works critiqued his lack of connection to society but also received Tàpies's most Catalan answers. In contrast to their scorn, the Parisian art world was to become fertile ground for Tàpies's Catalanization.

Through the Maeght Gallery rebranding of his profile and the fervorous support from French art critics, Paris became the geopolitical heart of Tàpies's politicization, which soon spread towards the peninsula, legitimizing the interpretations that would start to flourish, especially around Barcelona. Thanks to the discursive apparatus with which, since the early 1970s, Gimferrer and Borràs embellished Tàpies's oeuvre, his position as a modern, social leader was protected, because, by being Catalan, he intrinsically possessed such modernity. In 1975, Tàpies endorsed this interpretation: his art was faithful to the "Catalan progressive way," with a "primordial democratic intention to receive suggestions, based on collective decisions" (Tàpies 1975). From his point of view, all throughout his career he had refused to use solemn pragmatic and triumphal declarations to address the people—a Catalan, but also universal people for whom he had stolen the fire of political and creative freedom (Tàpies 1975).

The transnational landscape that this paper has traced gave rise to Tàpies's consolidation as the pictorial representative of Catalan culture. The debates provoked by Tàpies's political stance during the last decade of the Francoist dictatorship and the role played by French art criticism show that the cartography in which Tàpies's Catalan interpretation originated escaped fixed national limits. Faced with hostile Spanish opinion, the artist discovered in his Catalan cultural background an opportunity to represent himself as a politically and socially committed artist. In the hectic political scene of 1968 Paris, Tàpies found the allies to trigger the reading of his work as the Catalan testimony to Franco's repression. Back home, some of his closer friends worked to root this testimonial into the oldest Catalan tradition. In this sense, the political *re-semantization* of the artist's work must be understood in terms both of his political commitment and of the social and cultural debates that emerged in the Spain and France of the moment. Tàpies, his "catalanitat," and the nationalist discourse that has increasingly surrounded his figure since then respond, thus, to a transnational, rather than universal, geography.

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# Glosses filològiques (VIII). «Reeixir postmolians sense ser antimolians»

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## Resum

Arran de l'hegemonia de la crítica crociana durant la primera meitat del segle XX a Itàlia, Gianfranco Contini va escriure el 1951 que calia «riuscire postcrociani senza essere anticrociani». Aquest article pretén fer una revisió de les aportacions de Joaquim Molas a l'edició de textos catalans a partir de dues de les empreses que va dirigir, que anaven de la divulgació (MOLC) a l'edició rigorosa (*Totes les obres* de Verdaguer). L'estudi intenta analitzar objectivament i sense apriorismes les motivacions que van impel·lir el crític a idear dos projectes en què va prioritzar la necessitat d'oferir al lector català de l'època uns textos introbables o de difícil accés (MOLC) o editats rigorosament (*TLO*). La conclusió és que l'esforç d'ara ha de ser de reeixir de ser postmolians per tal de continuar la seva tasca — la preeminència de l'obra del qual es va perllongar, grosso modo, durant la segona meitat del segle XX —, sense ser antimolians, sobretot en aquells aspectes del seu llegat més susceptibles de debat, com ara el de l'edició de textos.

## Mots clau

Joaquim Molas; Jacint Verdaguer; MOLC; edició de textos; crítica literària; història literària

## Glosses filològiques (VIII). «Reeixir postmolians sense ser antimolians»<sup>1</sup>

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### I

La lectura del recentment editat dietari de Joaquim Molas (2021a) m'ha suscitat moltes i molt variades observacions, tant sobre la feina de les editores com sobre les anotacions dietarístiques, pròpiament, de l'autor. En aquesta glossa, però, no entraré en la primera, si bé una primera anàlisi superficial i asistemàtica m'ha anat suggerint consideracions sobre diversos aspectes, com ara la tria del text base, atès que d'algunes anotacions n'hi ha diversos testimonis, els criteris d'edició del text, l'ordenació dels materials, la selecció de les qüestions a anotar i les notes mateixes. Tampoc vull entrar en l'anàlisi del text, algunes de les característiques del qual han aprofitat alguns ressenyaires, sovint de forma molt reduccionista i amb major o menor objectivitat, més benintencionats o menys, per posar en relleu bàsicament — quan no exclusivament — les omissions i els dicteris del seu contingut, i avaluar o, millor dit, devaluar les seves possibles qualitats, literàries o informatives. Es tracta d'una mena de crítica a què ja estem avesats i que podríem titllar, si se'm permet la broma, de «sinecdòquica»: la d'aquells que volen fer passar la part pel tot, vull dir, que volen fer creure al lector que els dos o tres aspectes negatius abordats en el seu discurs expliquen el conjunt de l'obra ressenyada; cosa que tot sovint s'explica per l'apriorisme de què parteix el ressenyaire en qüestió o per una voluntat de rebentada que gaudeix d'un cert crèdit a casa nostra. Aquesta mena de comentarista, però, no s'adona que un retrat pot reflectir o no la realitat retratada, però que qui sempre hi queda retratat, per a bé o per a mal, és el retratista; i si se n'adona, li és ben igual: vet aquí la talla moral i la impudícia de què fa gala.

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<sup>1</sup> Vull manifestar públicament la meua gratitud a Francesco Ardolino, Costanzo Di Girolamo, Enric Gallén i Josep Murgades, com també als avaluadors anònims d'aquest escrit, per les consideracions que m'han fet sobre la seva penúltima redacció, sobre el títol del qual faig meu el pensament de Pessoa que la gramàtica és un instrument i no una llei i que cal “darse cuenta de que es legítimo violar las más elementales reglas de la gramática — en el estilo expositivo o en el artístico — si con eso o la idea gana claridad o firmeza, o la frase se enriquece en su contenido de sugestión” (Pizarro 2022, 13).

La lectura d'aquestes ressenyes m'ha portat a rellegir, perquè les consideracions exposades a la premsa han volgut extrapolat el dietari a la dimensió pública de la seva personalitat, les necrològiques dedicades al doctor Molas publicades en el seu moment en les revistes del gremi, en les quals he retrobat diversos llocs comuns referits a la seva figura i a la seva obra, sobretot a la repercussió de la seva tasca — val a dir que pocs, ai las!, molt pocs a la seva persona —, el més significat dels quals sigui probablement el de la condició de «personatge fundacional» (Murgades 2015, 31), d'«arquitecte i constructor de gran part del sistema literari català dels darrers cinquanta anys» (Pons 2016, 606), de «sistematitzador del seu cànon» (Sullà 2016, 301).

La connexió que tenen aquests reconeixements amb l'aspecte del dietari que voldria tractar aquí m'ha fet venir a la memòria un important estudi de Gianfranco Contini sobre «L'influenza culturale di Benedetto Croce»; de fet, més que l'estudi en si, he recordat el paràgraf que el contextualitzava en la seva primera edició: Contini havia escrit l'article el 1951 amb motiu de la publicació d'una tria que havia fet el mateix Croce dels seus escrits crítics, però el piemontès l'havia mantingut inèdit fins que el va publicar al número 36 de *L'Approdo letterario*, d'octubre-desembre de 1966. En oferir-lo al públic aleshores, Contini va considerar que calia justificar-ne i contextualitzar-ne la publicació amb un paràgraf de presentació en què es referia a aquella antologia crítica amb aquests mots: «fu un evento memorabile nella storia delle letture che una raccolta e composizione di pagine già stampate, note una per una, quando non familiari, suscitasse una tale impressione di novità». I continuava expressant la seva «ammirazione» i alhora «impazienza» vers aquell «sommo atleta della cultura» i la seva voluntat de donar a conèixer l'escrit justament aleshores, el 1966, en un moment en què alguns del seus coetanis, «abbandonati a un anticrocianesimo rigorosamente postumo e *juniores* fruienti di alcuni risultati postrociani quando ormai erano trapassati in moda, senza loro sudore». Entre l'actitud anticrociana d'aquests i l'hagiogràfica d'uns altres, Contini afirmava que «riuscire postrociani senza essere anticrociani fu lo sforzo di quegli anni», amb una encertada i lúcida fórmula que expressava, alhora, reconeixement i continuïtat («senza essere anticrociani»), per una banda, i recapitulació i superació («postrociani»), per l'altra (Contini 1966, 31; v. Pupino 2004, vii).

D'aquí el títol d'aquesta glossa, justificat pel paral·lelisme de la situació de la crítica italiana de la primera meitat del segle XX amb la catalana de la segona meitat i de l'actitud antimoliana de certs crítics, punta de l'iceberg de la qual poden ser alguns ressenyaires del dietari.

Com se sap, Croce havia dominat l'escena de la crítica literària italiana durant els primers cinquanta anys del segle XX, de tal manera que s'ha arribat a qualificar el període d'«hegemonia» o fins i tot de «dictadura» crociana: «Croce è stato una di quelle personalità che la psicologia non faticherebbe a definire “autoritaria”. Egli ha esercitato una “influenza culturale” (Contini) perché il suo obiettivo era esattamente questo. Riconoscerlo non toglie nulla alla grandezza di Croce» (Peluso 2016, 1). Però aquesta «persistente supremazia» de l'abrucès de què parlava Dante Isella (2009, 9) o la versió que se n'ha volgut donar després ha estat objecte de qüestionament en els darrers lustres: «Non possiamo accontentarci tuttavia di considerare un cinquantennio di storia culturale e politica italiana alla stregua di una “favola” raccontata su Croce» (Peluso 2016).

Vet-ho aquí: no podem acontentar-nos a considerar una cinquantena d'anys d'història i crítica literàries segons la «faula» explicada per hagiògrafs o antimolians *sobre* Molas, sinó, en tot cas, segons la «faula» explicada *per* Molas. I això és el que pretenc de fer en aquesta glossa, en l'àmbit estricte i específic de l'edició de textos contemporanis.

## II

El 1968, Joaquim Molas va establir un programa, a bastament conegut i citat, en què exposava les etapes que havien de seguir els estudis d'història literària: 1) després de dur a terme, hi deia, el balanç de la bibliografia, l'elaboració d'hipòtesis i l'establiment d'extenses antologies, «caldria lliurar-se a una feina netament positivista: [2] inventariar, classificar i estudiar les edicions i els manuscrits fins ara oblidats en els arxius i en les biblioteques del país; [3] fer un despull sistemàtic de diaris i revistes; després, o paral·lelament, fer [4] edicions crítiques segons les exigències de la moderna filologia i, acompanyant-les o no, [5] estudis biogràfics dels autors i d'altres de fonts, temes i llengua de les obres» (Molas 1968, 73). Han passat més de quaranta anys d'aquestes afirmacions i aquestes etapes han anat trobant el seu camí, més fressat o menys, millor o pitjor, entre els investigadors de la literatura catalana contemporània, llevat de la quarta («fer edicions crítiques»), que no sembla que n'hagi trobat cap, de camí, ni bo ni dolent, o, si l'ha trobat, és prou escarit: «el balanç en el camp de l'establiment dels textos literaris de referència és malauradament pobre» (Izquierdo 2013, 468). Tret d'exímies i no tant exímies excepcions, flors efímeres que no han fet estiu perenne, no s'ha arribat a constituir un veritable «programa» o una «escola», i no sé si tampoc una «tendència» en aquest sector, amb una o diverses línies d'investigació: «Probablement la Universitat faria el millor servei a la societat si posés part de la seva força de treball la dels

professors investigadors i els seus estudiants, la dels doctorands i la dels grups de recerca a disposició d'un pla coordinat d'estudi i edició, amb una previsió d'una dècada o dues, dels textos que hi ha per editar» (Izquierdo 2013, 468). I diria que si aquell camí no ha estat gaire transitat és per dues sèries diferents de motius.

En primer lloc, la ferma tradició de tractament crític dels textos medievals, que en alguns casos podia haver arribat fins a textos del XIX (penso en Casacuberta i Verdaguer (v. Manent 1984 i Molas 1985) , no s'ha vist perllongada cap al nou-cents, per raons metodològiques, en tant que l'estudi textual i l'edició de les obres contemporànies demana un enfocament divers del de les obres medievals i no sembla que les disciplines que més han aportat en aquest punt hagin tingut gaire acollida a casa nostra , però també, i sobretot, perquè les prioritats d'investigació en literatura catalana contemporània han marcat, diria que per simples raons d'urgència històrica de necessitat d'inventariar i organitzar el passat immediat en temps primer atziacs i després «de corredisses i llaurar tort», com en diria Foix , uns altres camins dirigits cap a la història literària i poc enclins a l'especulació textual, a diferència de països amb una cultura normalitzada, com França, que des dels 70s ha anat consolidant una sòlida tradició de *critique génétique*, o Itàlia, que ha comptat des dels 80s amb la *filologia d'autore*, culminació ecdòtica de la consistent tradició *variantistica* iniciada en el segon lustre dels 30. Sols cal donar un cop d'ull als plans d'estudis dels actuals graus de filologia catalana o humanitats impartits a les universitats públiques de la catalanofonia per constatar que l'edició de textos ocupa un lloc clarament marginal, mentre que les matèries d'història literària dedicades a períodes i/o moviments hi solen mantenir els llocs troncats: en concret, de tots aquests graus (consulta feta el febrer de 2022), sols n'hi ha un que contempli una assignatura sencera dedicada a les diferents disciplines ecdòtiques, un que n'incorpora una de dedicada exclusivament a la crítica textual i dos que n'hi dediquen una meitat (l'altra se centra en el treball de correcció editorial). L'ecdòtica, entesa no com a feix de tècniques sinó com a acostament crític als textos, amb la retòrica, concebuda no com a llista de figures a memoritzar sinó com a eina per a la identificació i l'explicació de procediments literaris, i la mètrica, explicada no com a objecte en ella mateixa sinó com a part indissoluble de la funció poètica, són tres disciplines deficiàries en els nostres plans d'estudis que, al meu parer, haurien d'ocupar llocs centrals en els primers cursos de grau.

En segon lloc, sembla que en el mapa editorial del país (v. Izquierdo 2013) no hi ha lloc per a l'edició d'uns llibres que, a més de significar un important esforç econòmic i tipogràfic pels grans reptes

que planteja simplement la seva maquetació, resulta que troben un ressò lògicament insignificant entre el gran públic i m'ensumo que, no tan lògicament, tampoc entre el lector especialitzat, si més no entre un determinat sector de crítics i estudiosos que practica un cert menyspreu per la crítica filològica, ja sigui, en el millor dels casos, per motius d'adscripció crítica com els que poden esgrimir els sotmesos a una visió dogmàtica de la sociologia de la literatura o de l'estètica de la recepció, en tant que consideren que el text a estudiar és el que ha circulat públicament, respongui o no a la voluntat de l'autor; ja sigui, en el pitjor dels casos, per l'actitud d'aquells per als quals qualsevol cosa que tingui a veure amb manuscrits i biblioteques fa tuf d'erudició, de positivisme, i és automàticament relegat dins el sac de l'anacronisme; ja sigui, encara, per allò que va denunciar Fredson Bowers (1959, 5) fa més de mig segle: «it is still a current oddity that many a literary critic has investigated the past ownership and mechanical condition of his second-hand automobile, or the pedigree and training of his dog, more thoroughly than he has looked into the qualifications of the text on which his critical theories rest». Esforç editorial i ínfim ressò fan econòmicament inviable aquesta mena d'edicions. És per això que les poques empreses d'èxit endegades en aquesta línia han hagut d'acudir al recer de les subvencions públiques (v. Izquierdo 2013). No és aquest el lloc per fer història i balanç de les edicions crítiques o criticogenètiques de textos contemporanis; sols vull esmentar el fet que després de la meua edició de *Tocant a mà...*, com a cinquè volum de la col·lecció Textual aparegut el 1993, Edicions 62 va decidir tancar-la per manca d'un mínim quòrum lector que garantís una certa rendibilitat. Em consta que molts anys després, l'editorial va enviar tots els exemplars que tenia en estoc a la Fundació J. V. Foix perquè els devien fer més nosa que servei...

### III

Molas va ser encarregat de curs de l'assignatura «Edición crítica de textos» a la Universitat de Barcelona durant els quatre cursos de 1955 a 1959 (Molas 2021b, 217), va ser deixeble de Martí de Riquer («en Riquer em va ensenyar el mètode filològic, molt dur», Molas 2021b, 318) i va enllestir una tesi sota la seva direcció dedicada a l'estudi i l'edició de l'obra lírica del poeta baixmedieval Lluís Icart, llegida el 1958 (Molas 1967), fets que acrediten amb escriu l'assoliment d'«unes tècniques ben adquirides i aplicades amb pulcritud» (Badia 1996, 15-16): les de la crítica textual de patró neolachamannià d'obres antigues i medievals. Per si no en tenia prou amb el seu propi rigor, que havia incrementat amb el mestratge de Riquer mateix, però també de Rubió i de Casacuberta, aquesta formació li devia acabar de reblar la

idea tan ben condensada per Roncaglia (1975, 25) que «senza testi sicuri non si può fare sicuramente storia né critica sia letteraria sia d'altro genere», que Molas devia tenir molt clara i present respecte dels textos medievals. Però quin paper jugava aquesta formació en relació amb l'edició, crítica o no, dels textos contemporanis, dels segles XIX i XX? No sé si arribaré a contestar aquesta pregunta, però la seva formulació és el que origina les reflexions que seguiran sobre el paper de Molas en dos dels grans projectes que va dirigir i que abracen els dos extrems de l'espectre de l'edició: el de la filologia, amb les edicions de Verdaguer, i el de la divulgació, amb la col·lecció *Millors Obres de la Literatura Catalana* («MOLC»).

L'editor crític pot haver d'enfrontar-se al text, sigui aquest de l'època que sigui, amb tres tipus d'actuacions diferents: la restauració, la fixació lingüística i l'atestació de la gènesi i l'evolució. És evident que la naturalesa del text i dels seus testimonis desviarà la problemàtica cap a una o altra d'aquestes tres tasques, com també que en general cadascuna d'elles es distribueix en proporcions desiguals, que poden anar de la total inoperativitat a la màxima complexitat, segons es tracti de textos medievals, moderns o contemporanis. Vull dir que, normalment, en els textos medievals la primera estarà per sobre de la darrera, si és que aquesta hi arriba a aparèixer, i en els contemporanis es donarà el cas contrari — per bé que no es pot generalitzar. I és aquí que voldria portar a col·lació una anotació del dietari de Molas (2021a, 396–397), del 16 de novembre de 1991, en què escriu el següent sobre Verdaguer:

De fet, hi ha entre Verdaguer i la seva obra, que, al capdavant, és la que compta, dos elements distorsionadors: la biografia i els esborranys. Verdaguer, sens dubte, portat per aquest afany d'autoinstitucionalització, va guardar tots els seus papers de treball, fins i tot els esborranys més innocus. Crec que es va equivocar de mig a mig. Espriu, amb molta més vista, ho va destruir tot. El volum d'aquesta paperassa ha desviat l'atenció dels estudiosos cap a qüestions subalternes i ha impedit l'estudi de l'obra en ella mateixa, de l'obra tal com l'havia deixada. Per a alguns erudits, l'estudi de l'una [biografia] i dels altres [esborranys] és el que dona la mesura de l'obra, no l'obra neta i pelada. No s'adonen que els esborranys només serveixen per estudiar la gestació, no l'obra. En Casacuberta té una bona part de culpa de l'afer.

Abans de passar al que m'interessa, vull fer un breu incís sobre l'encert del recurs al terme «autoinstitucionalització», perquè designa d'una manera molt gràfica la relació de l'escriptor no sols amb el lloc i el moment que li ha tocat de viure sinó també amb la posteritat,

amb la història, a través, en aquest cas, de la *conservació* dels seus manuscrits. Entenc, però, que caldria considerar la *destrucció* de les traces materials de la creació pròpia com una altra manera coadjuvant en l'«autoinstitucionalització»: ¿o és que en la institucionalització de què va ser objecte Espriu — per recórrer al mateix autor citat per Molas — al llarg de la seva vida no hi va intervenir, igualment, l'«autoinstitucionalització» exercida pel poeta mateix? De la mateixa manera, la *selecció* dels materials privats per a la posteritat — Molas ho va fer amb determinats fragments del seu dietari o amb la interdicció de la publicació de les seves memòries — té a veure amb l'«autoinstitucionalització». En la «historicitat» de l'escriptor, tant la relació amb els seus papers com els papers mateixos juguen un paper cabdal (Hay 1994).

Però el que m'interessa d'aquesta anotació de 1991 és aïllar-ne algunes de les afirmacions per tal de posar sobre la taula un debat pendent en l'àmbit de la nostra filologia, amb el reconeixement profund i l'admiració sincera que sento pel que va ser un dels meus grans mestres.

1) *La biografia i els esborranys s'interposen com a element distorsionador entre l'autor i l'obra, que és «la que compta», i com a element de distracció entre aquesta i els crítics.* Certament, els controvertits episodis de la vida de Verdaguer van atiar de seguida l'atenció per la seva biografia, que va desencadenar escrits ja en vida del poeta: per tenir una idea aproximada, una cerca avançada al CCUC per les matèries «Jacint Verdaguer» i «biografia» dona un total de 67 ítems publicats entre 1896 i 2002. No tinc coneixement exhaustiu de la bibliografia sobre el poeta de Folgueroles, però diria que la biografia, més que element *de distorsió* de l'obra, ha estat un component *de desviació* de l'interès dels investigadors cap a aspectes aliens a aquesta. I l'ingent llegat dels seus materials avantextuals ha merescut l'atenció d'«alguns erudits», especialment Casacuberta i Condomines. Però la crítica genètica — ho fa per exemple Jacques Neefs (1990, 27) — considera que l'obra «n'est pas présente dans le seul texte achevé», sinó també «dans la pensée d'œuvre qui se joue, polymorphe, aventureuse, dans l'ensemble des écrits d'un écrivain». És a dir que, si més no des d'aquest punt de vista, estudiar el conjunt d'escrits que precedeixen l'«obra» és també estudiar l'obra mateixa. En l'anàlisi de la qual seria absurd no tenir en compte tots els elements que hi intervenen — tal com ens va ensenyar el doctor Molas: «per a entendre un text has d'utilitzar tots els elements que poden ser útils»; «en fer lectura de textos [...] no em limito únicament al text, sinó que cerco tots aquells elements que m'ajudin a comprendre'l», «llegir no és només quedar-se en el text, sinó buscar tots els elements, tots els suports necessaris per entendre'l» (Molas 2021b, III, 118 i 142) — i, doncs, en la seva interpretació, que és «el que



compta», com ara l'autor i el seu context (gestació i evolució, fonts i influències), el canal i el lector (la transmissió i la recepció) i la relació amb el codi (lingüístic i literari), etc., i bandejar les traces materials de la seva elaboració: per què haurien de ser aquestes motiu «de distracció» i els altres elements no?

2) *Els esborranys poden arribar a ser «innocus»*. Però el «document», entès com a testimoni del «monument» que és l'obra, «no es inocuo. Es el resultado ante todo de un montaje, consciente o inconsciente; de la historia, de la época, de la sociedad que lo han producido, pero también de las épocas ulteriores durante las cuales ha continuado viviendo, acaso olvidado, durante las cuales ha continuado siendo manipulado, a pesar del silencio» (Le Goff 1991, 238). Diria que cap material, cap dels elements que poden intervenir en la creació literària és, a priori, «innocu»: la seva ineficàcia, si de cas, caldrà determinar-la després de fer-ne una anàlisi acurada; perquè de la mateixa manera com el pitjor testimoni d'un text medieval pot contenir una lliçó vàlida per resoldre un lloc crític, tal com asseguren tots els manuals de crítica textual, l'esborrany més desguitarrat pot oferir també una engruna de llum sobre l'obra i no només sobre la seva gestació. A més: el bandeig sistemàtic de tot apriorisme és una de les lliçons que ens va deixar el llegat intel·lectual de Molas, en els seus vessants de professor i d'investigador. «On ne devrait pas entreprendre d'éditer un texte *sans qu'on sût parfaitement ce qui représente le matériel de l'édition*», diu Dain (1975, 180): apartar els esborranys sense haver-los analitzat exhaustivament contradiu aquest principi axiomàtic de la crítica filològica. És clar que si l'edició no vol donar compte de la gènesi, és a dir que vol ser crítica però no criticogenètica, i l'anàlisi dels esborranys porta a considerar que no poden aportar res a la restauració del text, aleshores el bandeig està justificat sempre que es faci a posteriori.

3) *La mesura de l'obra no la dona la biografia ni els esborranys sinó l'obra mateixa*, entesa aquesta com la versió donada com a definitiva que és el que entenc que vol dir Molas quan escriu «neta i pelada» (v. Molas 2006, 397). Efectivament, ni la biografia ni cap dels elements que intervenen en el text no la donen, la mesura de l'obra. Però cal tenir-los en compte tots en la mesura que l'obra els necessita; i aquest és un altre ensenyament del llegat crític de Molas: no es pot explicar el text a partir d'elements externs (biografisme, psicologisme, historicisme, etc.) però el text porta a elements externs que poden ajudar a interpretar-lo: quantes vegades, per exemple, una carta, un fet biogràfic o històric, etc., dona la clau per a la interpretació d'un determinat mot o fragment d'un text? «Tot mètode crític ha de partir del text i ha de tornar al text» (Molas 2021b, 110). Seria absurd, hi insisteixo, tenir en compte tots els elements que poden intervenir en

el text (l'autor, el context, el codi, etc.) i, doncs, en la seva interpretació, i bandejar els materials conservats de la seva elaboració escrits de la pròpia mà de l'escriptor.

4) *Els esborranys només serveixen per estudiar la gènesi, però no l'obra; el seu estudi condueix a «qüestions subalternes»*. Tot depèn de la consideració en què es tinguin els esborranys i de l'abast que es vulgui donar al concepte «obra». En un altre lloc he intentat aportar arguments ja coneguts i altres de nous per justificar la idea de Donald McKenzie (1999), que mai no podem tenir accés al text ideal de cap obra sinó tan sols a les seves versions, enteses com les realitzacions materials conservades en un suport físic, perquè el terme «obra» s'escapa a qualsevol delimitació dins un correlat concret en la realitat (Veny-Mesquida 2022). En tot cas, les assercions de Molas s'allunyen força dels principis de la «moderna filologia» per usar la seva expressió de 1968 de textos contemporanis, com és la *filologia d'autore* i, més encara, de la *critique génétique*. Paola Italia, una de les més destacades estudioses de la primera disciplina, constata, aprofitant una coneguda asserció de Contini (1937, 233), que «per la filologia d'autore e la critica delle varianti, infatti, la poeticità del testo no è un “dato”, un “valore” stabilito, ma [...] una “aprossimazione al valore” che *comprendere ed è il risultato* di tutti i testi che l'hanno preceduto, di tutti gli avantesti» (Italia & Raboni 2010, 26; la cursiva és meua). De fet, una desena d'anys després de l'anotació privada que he citat del dietari, Molas (2002, 10) matisava en un escrit públic aquesta idea: «Sens dubte, tots aquests materials [avantextuals], [...] són d'un valor incalculable per a l'estudi de l'obra en general i d'algunes en particular» i hi afegia dues obvietats: «però no compleixen ni amb les exigències pròpies de Verdaguer ni amb les de qui aspira a fer una lectura lliure, més exactament: “literària”».

I 5) *«En Casacuberta té una bona part de culpa de l'afer»*. Sis anys abans d'aquesta afirmació, Molas (1985) havia escrit un article necrològic sobre Casacuberta en el qual feia balanç de la seva obra amb una sèrie d'afirmacions sobre el savi editor que bé podien referir-se a ell mateix: «Josep M. de Casacuberta [...] intentà de transformar una cultura mig improvisada i provinciana en una altra de moderna i homologable», «convertí el que, fins aleshores, havia estat la pista de patinatge de memorialistes i gasetillers en un camp seriós d'erudició i d'interpretació», «posà la seva prodigiosa formació de romanista al servei, no d'una glòria personal, sinó d'allò que Foix anomena el Comú», «dissenyà col·leccions, planejà, dins les col·leccions, sèries destinades a omplir buits o a satisfer les seves obsessions, trià autors i temes, dirigí i ajudà els seus col·laboradors a realitzar-les, etc. I, mig d'amagat, produí, a més, una obra personal d'investigador», «editor que, contra les lleis del gremi, treballava els llibres fins al darrer detall». I més de vint anys després deixava clara

la seva preferència d'acostament metodològic al poeta de Folgueroles: ho feia en la «Justificació» que obre el seu *Llegir Verdaguer*, en la qual afirmava que a poc a poc va anar convertint Verdaguer en objecte preferent de lectura «professional», per a la qual cosa «m'hi van ajudar Carles Riba, amb els assaigs aplegats a *Els marges* i a *...Més els poemes*, i Casacuberta, amb els seus estudis biogràfics i filològics, si bé, per formació, vaig tendir sempre a repenjar-me més en la “literària” de Riba que no en la “documental” de Casacuberta» (Molas 2014, 15). No hi ha, però, em sembla, contradicció en un i altre acostament, ans al contrari: la lectura «documental» necessita la crítica literària de cada testimoni, imprescindible per fixar un text que permeti una lectura «literària» segura. Es tracta de dues cares de la mateixa moneda, tal com va defensar Lanfranco Caretti (1955) en la famosa conferència no endebades intitulada *Filologia e critica* pronunciada a la Universitat di Pavia el 1952: no es pot fer crítica literària si abans no s'ha fet crítica filològica i no es pot fer crítica filològica sense una crítica literària prèvia (v. Veny-Mesquida 2023). La «culpa» de Casacuberta, en definitiva, ¿és haver pretès d'oferir unes edicions crítiques criticogenètiques fins on era possible perquè els crítics literaris poguessin bastir les seves interpretacions sobre textos segurs?

#### IV

Em sembla que en el fons del fragment citat del dietari de Molas hi ha una qüestió conceptual no sé si del tot resolta: si Verdaguer «va deixar», amb l'obra, infinitud de materials avantextuals, l'estudi de l'obra en ella mateixa, «tal com la va deixar», no hauria d'incloure-hi també aquests materials? El punt de vista de Molas redueix el «monument» a «document» (Veny-Mesquida 2023) i no té en compte que la crítica filològica és a dir, la crítica textual, la bibliografia textual, la filologia d'autor i, en bona part, la crítica genètica no serveix només per a l'estudi de la gènesi i l'evolució, sinó també per a l'eliminació de lliçons espúries i, sobretot, per a la interpretació de l'«obra».

Aquest categòric bandeig d'una part dels materials avantextuals, per quin model d'edició de Verdaguer havia d'advocar, doncs? Conseqüentment, per aquell que obvia la darrera de les tres operacions esmentades uns paràgrafs més amunt amb què es pot haver d'encarar l'editor, ço és, l'atestació de la gènesi i l'evolució del text, i que concentra el seu quefer crític en la restauració del text i, sobretot, en la seva fixació lingüística, que són dues ocupacions diferents: la primera és una operació bàsicament intrínseca al text i consisteix, per centrar-nos en el cas de Verdaguer, a identificar

lliçons alienes a l'autor i recuperar-ne les originals, mentre que la segona hi és essencialment extrínseca, en tant que tracta d'aplicar-hi una determinada normativa lingüística —la vigent en el moment de l'edició—, fins allà on el text ho toleri —vull dir sense desvirtuar-lo. Si més no en el pla teòric, fins i tot en aquest plantejament d'edició crítica —no pas criticogenètica— l'anàlisi dels materials avantextuals afavoreix, en posar damunt la taula del filòleg la successió de sincronies que aquests representen (v. Segre 1986, 79), un coneixement més profund de l'*usus scribendi* de l'escriptor, de les seves preferències i les seves aversions —lingüístiques, estilístiques, retòriques, etc.—, que poden oferir a l'editor arguments de pes per defensar les seves intervencions sobre el text base.

Aquell model d'edició és el que van proposar a debat i ratificació Pere Farrés, Joaquim Molas, Ramon Pinyol & Ricard Torrents en una ponència presentada al Col·loqui sobre Verdaguier del 4 d'abril de 1986, publicada a l'*Anuari Verdaguier 1987* el 1988 (Farrés, Molas, Pinyol & Torrents 1988) i després promocionada per Pinyol (1988) i Farrés (1988-1989). I més de vint anys després, amb algunes absurdes i infructuoses polèmiques en l'endemig —amb més sentiment i ressentiment que arguments i idees—, Pinyol (2008) ofería una anàlisi succinta en què classificava en quatre grups les edicions verdaguierianes aparegudes en el període: les de la segona etapa de la Biblioteca Verdaguieriana de Barcino, les de la Societat Verdaguier (*OCEC*), les de Narcís Garolera i les de *Totes les obres* de Proa (*TLO*). Molas, que va intervenir en la fixació dels criteris en la ponència de 1986 —o, si més no, els va signar— però no va tenir cura de cap edició crítica de les *OCEC*, va codirigir amb Isidor Cònsul l'edició de *TLO* en quatre volums amb textos establerts amb criteris de fixació textual concomitants amb els de 1986, però de diferent concepció dels volums i dels peritextos que els acompanyen (v. Molas 2006, 512-513 i Pinyol 2008, 389-390), amb les col·laboracions diverses d'Andreu Bosch, Francesc Codina, Pere Farrés, Josep Massot, Ramon Pinyol, Lluïsa Plans, Maria Mercè Riu, Pilar Serra, Pere Tió, Josep Torras i Ricard Torrents. Quina és la proposta de *TLO*? M'hi detindré de seguida, però abans no puc deixar de dedicar alguns paràgrafs a comentar breument dos punts importants que van aparèixer en les esmentades polèmiques perquè afecten la teoria ecclòtica.

El primer d'aquests punts té a veure amb la diversa consideració de la «criticitat» de les edicions, és a dir, el diferent criteri de les parts en disputa per referir les condicions que ha de reunir una edició per considerar-la «crítica», una qüestió que, de tan elemental i donada per sabuda, no és gens trivial. La diferència entre una edició crítica i qualsevol altra que no mereixi aquest apel·latiu és que en aquella l'editor i) ha hagut de qüestionar-se, paraula rere paraula, lletra rere

lletra, el text que edita, a la vista de *tots* els seus testimonis i *tots* els materials en què ha recolzat per triar una lliçó o una altra; i 2) ha ofert les evidències d'aquest qüestionament crític, acompanyant l'edició amb els elements que justifiquen les seves opcions: exposició dels resultats de la *recensio*, defensa de la tria del text base, tipologia i autoria de les divergències del seu text crític respecte del text base (esmenes *ope codicum* i *ope ingenii*, correcció d'errors, etc.), criteris de selecció, si és el cas, de testimonis, disposició de les variants dins els aparats, etc.

α) La consideració d'inutilitat per a l'edició de determinats testimonis i el seu consegüent bandeig són decisions que el filòleg ha de prendre *després* d'haver-ne dut a terme un examen i una col·lació exhaustiva de *tots* els documents: fer aquesta estimació abans és un apriorisme que va contra la defensa de la necessitat d'una *recensio* completa, cosa que, com ja he dit, constitueix un dels principals axiomes de l'ecdòtica. I això val tant per als testimonis anteriors al del text triat com a base per a l'edició — testimonis genètics — com per als posteriors — testimonis evolutius.

β) Alguns editors han donat per suposat el procés especificat a α i han defensat que la simple atestació de variants, sense més, converteix automàticament en crítica una edició, mentre que d'altres han volgut fer creure que la sola enumeració dels criteris generals d'edició, sense més, en garanteix aquesta condició. Sembla com si els primers obviessin el fet que l'atestació de variants no és arbitrària sinó que respon a criteris coherents amb la *recensio* i que els segons demanin al lector un acte de fe en l'expertesa de l'editor sense que aquest en doni les proves. Al lector d'aquest meu escrit no li costarà gaire trobar mostres dels dos capteniments. Així, s'han publicitat com a crítiques edicions en què la feina de l'editor consistia a esmenar els suposats errors que havien estat introduïts en el text generalment per editors i/o correctors més sapastres o menys , però sense deixar-ne constància precisa ni en cap aparat ni tan sols en una llista en apèndix. De la mateixa manera com ningú no creurà una interpretació d'un text si no se n'exposen les proves sobre les quals se sustenta, el millor argument per donar raó de les pròpies decisions textuais és mostrar d'alguna manera el ventall de les possibles opcions; altrament, l'editor demana al lector un acte de confiança en la seva expertesa que la sola actitud d'amagar aquest ventall ja fa posar en dubte. No n'hi ha prou a oferir-ne una selecció d'exemples paradigmàtics en la introducció a l'edició o en possibles epitextos. Perquè, a més a més, cal tenir en compte que la concepció d'«error» no és unívoca i universal: el gran romanista Alberto Varvaro (2022, 77) va constatar, «non senza una certa sorpresa», que en les edicions crítiques que van fer del *Libro de buen amor* Joan Coromines, Alberto

Blecua i Giorgio Chiarini, tots tres d'indiscutida solvència i rigor indiscutible, no hi ha acord sobre el que consideren error: «ciò che per uno studioso era un errore [...] per un altro era una lezione che veniva messa tranquillamente a testo, senza neppure una nota che ne difendesse la correttezza e dunque la legittimità». L'única manera de «confiar» en l'editor i, doncs, en el text editat, que és el que interessa al lector, és atestar les divergències que presenten els testimonis i justificar, quan calgui, les opcions triades. Vet aquí una altra lliçó de Molas: en una de les poques entrevistes que hi vaig mantenir com a director de la meua tesi, li vaig exposar no recordo ben bé quina hipòtesi sobre el text que estava treballant, però tinc perfectament present la seva resposta: «Bé, doncs provi-ho!». Vaig trigar força a advertir que havia d'entendre el mot en el sentit, primer, de 'verificar' la idea, 'assajar-la', per poder, després, 'acreditar-la', 'justificar-la' de forma convincent.

El segon punt que ha aparegut en les polèmiques és el del suposat respecte per la sacrosanta darrera voluntat de l'autor: quan hi ha evidències que un escriptor ha vetllat de prop el procés d'edició de les seves obres, quina autoritat té l'editor per executar-hi cap modificació? Les crítiques de Quentin i Bédier a Lachmann ja van ensenyar que l'aplicació sistemàtica d'un mètode no pot anar contra el sentit comú (Brambilla Ageno 1984, 184-194). El retorn al *codex optimus*, al «bon manuscrit», que va proposar Bédier (1928), va ser contestat per Contini (1974, 369), que n'havia estat alumne, amb dos arguments sobradament sabuts i que només recordo breument perquè venen al cas: el defecte de Bédier era 1) de «non accorgersi che un'edizione critica è, come ogni atto scientifico, una mera ipotesi di lavoro, la più soddisfacente (ossia economica) che colleghi in sistema i dati» i 2) que «non si rendeva conto que conservare criticamente è, tanto quanto innovare, un'ipotesi», una «tuzioristica» hipòtesi, afegia el mateix Contini en un altre lloc (1990, 23). «*Le conservatisme n'est pas une opinion paresseuse*» assegura Contini (1974, 369) que deia Bédier als seus deixebles en defensa de la seva opció, la que Stussi (1994, 292) va qualificar de «bédierismo rinunciatario», en tant que representava un «passivo rispetto di un solo codice». Però els escriptors, fins i tot els més curosos i primmirats, també cometien errors i també se'ls passen per alt errors comesos pels impressors, editors, etc.: conservar-los és renunciar a la crítica. Foix va fer «set o vuit» lectures de les proves de les seves *Obres poétiques* que van sortir a Nauta el 1964 i se li van escolar no només badades tipogràfiques i errors evidents sinó també greus errates de l'impressor i intromissions del corrector sobre els seus textos, que en malmetien el sentit (Veny-Mesquida 2004, 58). Bona part d'aquestes ingerències són només perceptibles si es col·laciona el text de Nauta amb els testimonis anteriors, amb *tots* els testimonis anteriors. Paola Italia

(2013) ha tractat aquest tema extensament i no val la pena d'insistir-hi.

## V

Però tornem a la proposta de *Totes les obres* de Verdaguer, els criteris de les quals va defensar Joaquim Molas al principi del projecte, en el pròleg al primer volum (Molas 2002), i al final, amb l'aparició del darrer (Molas 2006, 513-517). En el pròleg, Molas caracteritzava l'edició amb una estratègia ecdòtica tan difícil de reprotxar en la teoria com de precisar en la pràctica: el respecte a l'autor, al text i al lector (Molas 2002, 9). Quin lector? Ramon Pinyol (2008, 389) considerava que l'edició tenia «un caràcter de referència per al públic, tant el general com l'especialitzat» idea que semblava reprendre del primer escrit de Molas (2002, 11: «d'aquí que *Totes les obres* compleixin, o intentin de complir, amb les expectatives d'un lector exigent i, de retop, d'un estudiós de la literatura. O de la llengua»), tot i que l'havia matisada en el segon (Molas 2006, 513): «*Totes les obres* [...] van destinades al lector en estat pur [no el lector: les obres], és a dir: al lector que llegeix simplement per llegir, més exactament: per identificar i contrastar les seves emocions, pel plaer de divertir-se o per la necessitat de reflexionar». I quin text? «el que, per a Verdaguer, constituïa el text “acabat”, “definitiu”, és a dir, el que va deixar fixat en les darreres edicions que va controlar en vida ([...]). O les cartes i els manuscrits deixats a punt d'anar a impremta»; en definitiva, «el que realment “és”, o “quasi és” [text], amb tota fidelitat segons la lliçó de les edicions que hem pres com a base» (Molas 2002, 11). Quina edició, doncs? Una edició que «dóna el text nu i pelat, només armat d'ell mateix» (Molas 2006, 512) i que «per bé que no es presenta com a crítica», escriu Pinyol (2008, 389), «s'hi acosta en molts aspectes i no sé veure-hi pràcticament diferències, a l'hora d'establir els textos i de modernitzar-los ortogràficament de la pràctica d'edicions presentades com a crítiques».

Tot això, en el pla teòric, si més no. A la pràctica, res no és tan senzill com sembla. Quant al respecte per les opcions de l'autor, la normativització del text implica una uniformització que no ha trobat un consens entre tots els editors de textos prefabrians (a banda que pot implicar altres efectes col·laterals com ara la difuminació dels «dos registres lingüístics» de la poesia verdagueriana: v. Rossich 2006). Un consens, d'altra banda, que potser no hauria de provocar tants de desassossecs i controvèrsies: potser l'únic que caldria és una major relativització de l'eficàcia dels criteris normativitzadors — en el sentit que potser n'hi hauria prou a valorar la coherència de la seva aplicació — i de les decisions preses pels editors — sempre i quan

ensenyin totes les cartes, de tal manera que del text crític ofert per l'editor es pugui reconstruir un text al més acostat possible al del testimoni base. I fora bo de tenir present, quant al respecte per la venerada darrera voluntat del lector, que algunes de les edicions crítiques de Verdaguer no tenen en compte, a banda de les lliçons dels esborranys, les dels testimonis evolutius, és a dir, les dels textos solts publicats amb posterioritat al text triat com a base, que Verdaguer normalment podia publicar en revistes i diaris. Atenció: tenir-les en compte per a resoldre possibles errors i per atestar-les en l'aparat crític evolutiu, no pas per incorporar-ne les variants al text crític, perquè això representaria barrejar — per dir-ho amb Contini — dos «sistemes» diferents, el del context en què es va idear i construir el llibre i el que va provocar l'edició solta.

Quant al respecte pel lector, en el dilema entre el «lector exigent» i l'«especialitzat» com a destinatari de l'edició, Molas no devia poder esperar — com havia fet amb la MOLC: v. més endavant — a tenir les edicions crítiques de tots els llibres de Verdaguer acabades, coneixedor de la lentitud inherent a una empresa hercúlia com la de les *OCEC*: pel que consta al web de la Societat Verdaguer, dels quaranta-dos volums projectats, en gairebé un quart de segle (1997-2021) n'han aparegut quinze títols, la qual cosa vol dir que, de seguir aquest ritme — el que exigeix un tipus d'empresa d'aquesta envergadura i exigència, val a dir —, el projecte necessitarà un total de setanta anys per veure's finalitzat. El compromís cultural de Molas devia esperonar la necessitat urgent d'oferir un text fiable, rigorós, a la col·lectivitat, però «net i pelat», sense aparat de variants i de notes — que, a parer seu, «constitueix un element distorsionador per a la marxa d'una lectura lliure, és a dir, no especialitzada» (Molas 1981, 5). El problema del respecte al text rau en el que «és» i el que «quasi és» la fidelitat al text base. Com sempre, el moll de la qüestió està en aquest «quasi», és a dir en la distància entre el text crític que ofereix l'editor i el del testimoni triat com a base.

## VI

Tot això, sobre les edicions crítiques (*OCEC*) o rigoroses (*TLO*) en què Molas va poder dir-hi o exercir-hi la seva. Però en el programa de 1968 havia exposat també la necessitat d'elaborar «extenses antologies», tres anys després de posar en marxa la col·lecció *Antologia catalana* (1965-1984) i deu abans — però la idea ja era coetània de l'altra col·lecció (v. Molas 1981, 3-4 i 2021b, 222 i 449) d'endegar les *Millors Obres de la Literatura Catalana* (1978-1983), dues col·leccions (v. Molas 2021b, 323) que des del punt de vista filològic tenen poc a veure amb les promogudes o codirigides de



Verdaguer. El que s'ha de dir sobre la selecció de títols i les característiques «externes» de la segona, que és en la que em vull centrar, ja es va dir, mentre se n'estaven publicant els volums (Badia 1979, Molas 1981, Campillo 1981), immediatament després de la publicació del darrer volum (Gustà 1983, Rossinyol 1983a i 1983b, Bou 1983) o posteriorment, en forma de balanç (Bou 1996, 56-58; també el mateix Molas 2021b, 328-329), de crítica puntual a la reedició d'un volum (Garolera 1998) o com a parcel·la destacada de la tasca de Molas arran de la seva mort (Broch 2015, Izquierdo 2015, Pons 2016, Sullà 2016, etc.). En aquests escrits, al costat dels que cerquen l'objectivitat, s'hi reparteixen l'hagiografisme i la maldiença.

El mateix Molas (1981, 5) va definir la concepció interna de cada volum en el darrer dels dotze paràgrafs que va dedicar a justificar els criteris que l'havien guiat en la ideació de la MOLC. El paràgraf començava afirmant que la col·lecció anava «destinada a un públic de lectors i, a tot estirar, d'estudiants, i no a un públic de bibliògrafs i erudits» i que posava «tot el seu interès en el text: en l'obra en ella mateixa», de manera que «primer, dona un text establert amb totes les garanties científiques; segon, prescindeix de tot aparat erudit». I continuava:

Un aparat que, ara i adés, constitueix un element distorsionador per a la marxa d'una lectura lliure, és a dir, no especialitzada. Ara: cada volum conté una nota bio-bibliogràfica de tipus general. I, en el cas de les obres antigues, conté, a més, un pròleg i un glossari dels mots més estranys. Un pròleg que, sobretot, pretén d'estimular la lectura i que ha estat encarregat a grans especialistes nacionals o estrangers.

El cert és que la MOLC va ser una col·lecció «limitada a vegades per problemes de tipus pràctic no imputables al director de la col·lecció» (Massot 1983, 34). Un d'aquests problemes va ser, sens dubte, si més no en part dels volums, «la descurança editorial, traduïda en excessives errates i en detalls significatius» (Massot 1983, 34), «errates» i «detalls» que Andreu Rossinyol (1983a) va classificar en la gradació següent: «la falta tipogràfica absolutament innòcua (*cantàrem* en comptes de *cantàrem*, per exemple), la badada capciosa en segons quins contextos (*cantàrem* per *cantarem*, *viure* per *viuré*, o *menjaves* per *metjaves*), la correcció destrallera (*tenia* per *tanyia*), i el bordó o la puntuació esguerrada que fan intel·ligible un passatge sencer». De tal manera que «la presència de “nota sobre l'edició” que volia ser avaladora de «les garanties científiques», es convertia tot sovint en «un marxamo expeditiu per acreditar justament allò que cl

lector avisat, després d'un cop d'ull al text, es resisteix a admetre» (Rossinyol 1983a).

Certament, la «urgència» de la publicació (dos volums al mes, des d'octubre de 1978 fins a abril de 1983) imposaven un ritme propens a l'escolament d'errors textuals i errades tipogràfiques, alguns dels quals, segons Enric Bou (1983), eren «imputables als dirigents editorials, d'altres als responsables directes d'alguns dels volums, d'altres, en fi, a l'estat real de les investigacions sobre literatura catalana, que no es correspon ni de bon tros! amb la resta de països civilitzats» (Bou 1983). Un ritme, per tant, que no devia deixar gaire marge per a les delicadeses filològiques: «Crec que el principal blasme que es podria fer a l'estat major d'aquesta renglera de cent títols és de no haver-se regit per uns criteris filològics seriosos» (Rossinyol 1983a). Molas, com a director de la col·lecció, no es va situar «contra les lleis del gremi», com resumia ell mateix la tasca lenta i segura de Casacuberta, sinó que va haver de cedir-hi i va abandonar cada volum «a l'atzar de la perícia o la malaptesa de cada curador» (Rossinyol 1983a). Diria que el projecte va caure en el parany que anunciava el mateix Molas en el seu programa de l'any 68: «Arreu, els estudis d'història literària han seguit unes etapes que limitaven successius camps d'interès i formulaven uns mètodes adequats. Si ens lliuràvem, en un estat de coneixements com l'actual, a interessos i anàlisis que corresponen a fases d'investigació més avançades, hauríem d'improvisar tot l'edifici i potser, a la llarga, no resoldríem cap dels problemes generals que tenim plantejats». La MOLC es va «lliurar» a l'«interès» de la divulgació abans d'esperar una «fase d'investigació més avançada» que donés uns textos «sicuri»: com deia Bou (1983) i és prou sabut, «l'estat real de les investigacions sobre literatura catalana» no es corresponia «amb la resta de països civilitzats». I no serà ociós de recordar aquí, per contextualitzar aquesta circumstància, la idea que «el nostre hàndicap és que hem de salvar allò que volem estudiar» (Molas 2021b, 205) i el fet que Molas es pot comptar entre els qui més van fer per homologar la literatura, la cultura i els estudis literaris catalans amb la dels països civilitzats: aquesta va ser una de les seves grans obsessions (Gallén 1996, 81).

Dit d'una altra manera: entre rigor i divulgació, entre «filologia» i «acció cultural», Molas va prioritzar el segon terme d'aquests binomis empès pel seu compromís amb la pròpia col·lectivitat («t'has passat la vida treballant, ajudant la gent, anant a salvar la pàtria», Molas 2021b, 196) i per raons d'«urgència històrica», perquè calia omplir un buit («he intentat omplir molts buits: amb les col·leccions “Antologia Catalana” o “Les Millors Obres de la Literatura Catalana”», Molas 2021b, 136) i normalitzar la cultura catalana, ni que això fos a costa de no prioritzar la filologia. «Duc una vida intel·lectual tan dispersa, sempre pressionada [...] per les necessitats que la realitat

em crea i que voldria contribuir a resoldre», deia en una entrevista de 1969 (Molas 2021b, 32). A banda de voler caracteritzar tota la col·lecció a partir dels errors filològics d'alguns volums (no s'ha fet una anàlisi exhaustiva d'aquest punt en tots els volums i per tant no es pot validar o desmentir aquesta idea, a banda que l'aplicació de criteris diferents hauria de ser necessària, segons la tipologia, l'època, etc. de cada obra), la ressenya d'Andreu Rossinyol (1983a i 1983b), tan objectiva en l'anàlisi dels criteris textuais de la col·lecció, contenia un retret del tot injust, segons el meu parer: dels països anglosaxons, hi escrivia, «ens n'arriben llibres de divulgació realment modèlics. Aquí tan sols se n'ha sabut imitar el format i el preu de venda». La comparació em sembla completament improcedent perquè els «països anglo-saxons», i Itàlia, i França, etc. tots els països amb estat disposaven d'una tradició editorial millor o pitjor sobre la qual recolzar, mentre que a Catalunya, quan al primer terç de segle XX tot just es posaven les bases per a una consolidació que hauria permès, si hagués tingut continuïtat, l'edició de «llibres de divulgació realment modèlics» va venir la catàstrofe bèl·lica i les repercussions que tots coneixem. L'alternativa del «rigor filològic» hauria alentit l'aparició dels volums de la MOLC de forma inadmissible per a la política de subvencions i de subscripcions que la sostenia, ajudada per una certa eufòria politicocultural del moment (Gustà 1983, 4r; Bou 1996, 56). O es confiava la fixació del text de cada volum «a l'atzar de la perícia o la malaptesa de cada curador» o encara hi fórem. Pensem en el públic de lectors «corrents», no filòlegs, que es van subscriure a la col·lecció pel simple gust de llegir no pas d'estudiar la selecció d'obres que li oferia la col·lecció: en van sortir guanyant o perdent? La disjuntiva d'aleshores era llegir textos de fiabilitat heterogènia o no llegir-los: per a mi la resposta és òbvia.

No pretenc justificar res ni defensar o blasmar ningú: sols miro de situar els fets en el context en què es van donar per valorar-los objectivament, en la seva justa mesura. Ara bé, l'exigència d'ara no pot ser la mateixa que la de fa quaranta d'anys: vet aquí per què dic que cal, sense dubte, *reeixir postmolians sense ser antimolians*.

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## Reviews of Books

J. V. Foix, *Daybook 1918: Early Fragments*. Edited and translated by Lawrence Venuti. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2019. 171 pp. ISBN 9780810140653.

There are few scholars more knowledgeable about cultural transfer or the powerplay between minority and mainstream languages than Lawrence Venuti. His contribution to Translation Studies has been outstanding. And those involved in the international promotion of Catalan culture are fortunate indeed to count on his adherence to the cause. In this context, his bilingual edition of Foix's *dietari* is, quite simply, a *tour de force*.

The handsome format attests the quality of the fare that lies within. Against a black, oneiric background there resound the golden tones of Joan Miró's "L'or de l'atzur" whose haunting cosmic archetype anticipates the uplift, polyphony and striking metamorphosis of his friend and compatriot's atavistic wordcraft. Two more Miró sketches adorn the inner pages of the volume, as they did in the original publications, underlining the magnitude of Foix's reputation amongst his contemporaries and, almost a century later, the respect of the copyright holders for the present project, which is an object lesson in scholarship.

Many commentators feel J. V. Foix to be one of the finest poets writing anywhere in Europe both during and after the interwar period of the last century. However, unlike Dalí and Miró whose creative genius found recognition via an internationally accessible medium the minority status imposed upon the Catalan language and its subsequent persecution by Franco's military autocracy consigned their literary colleague to virtual anonymity. This condition of inconspicuousness was compounded, in turn, by concomitant editorial complications. Just how do you go about packaging, for foreign consumption, nearly a thousand pages of intense lyrical output? Moreover, how do you convey an esoteric expressive idiom which would tax the most inventive translator? Happily, Venuti has successfully addressed both issues with imagination and resource; and, one suspects, with a whole lot of perspiration besides.

The hallmark of prudent scholarship is, of course, to avoid the pitfalls encountered by predecessors. David Rosenthal's valiant

attempt in 1988 to promote the Catalan's work in English may have been proved satisfactory in literary terms but, with its thirty-five poems, could be little more than a taster of the fare as a whole. Likewise, whilst adding a further twenty items a decade later, Arthur Terry's *Readings of J. V. Foix* was mainly a compilation of essays on key themes of the poet's output. Venuti squares the circle with aplomb by focussing on the first two collections, *Gertrudis* (1927) and *KRTU* (1932). These were calculated to be the first tranche of 365 prose poems, drafted between 1909 and 1925, which would be known collectively as the *Diari 1918*; although when the project was eventually published in 1981 (the symmetrical inversion of the final digits would have enchanted Foix!) only 203 appeared. In this way, with his 'Daybook of Early Fragments' the translator not only provides us with a complete picture of the startling, early creativity of this vanguard wordsmith but also serves up, in embryonic form, a truly representative sample of an expressive idiom which would, like the voice of Joan Miró, alter little but rather expand and mature in terms of coherence and consistency.

Venuti's Introduction begins with an informed synthesis of the socio-historical condition of Catalonia in the pre-Civil War decades of the last century, which saw the growth to maturity of this formidable writer. All relevant details are covered. This is a feature of major importance given Foix's protagonism as commentator on major political and cultural events both at home and abroad. Helpfully, these articles appear at the end of the book and are of fundamental importance to an appreciation of the poet's assimilation of the latest artistic innovations and his reaction to the major ideological developments on the continent, both essential elements to the avant-garde mindset.

The relevance of the global dimension should not be understated. Though marginalized, Catalonia is not parochial. And just as its present Independentist crisis is not singular, but rather reflects identical tensions in Scotland, Belgium, Canada and beyond, Foix's creativity can only be fully understood in an international context. Venuti's meditation on this aspect of the enterprise is relevant both from a stylistic perspective and also from the viewpoint of marketability. The care with which he locates the pertinence of Foixian diction, for example, to modern American expression is as sensitive as it is convincing in its painstaking exposition and illustration. (It also offers an implicit rebuke to the many commissioning editors who passed up the opportunity to publish the venture.)



However, in his purview the translator also demonstrates the relevance of the European Avant-Garde in general, identifying powerful and provocative coincidences with creative artists elsewhere. By way of example, the editor engages with the work of Breton, in particular the questionable topic of female representation. The issue opens rich avenues for comparative study as the re-encounter with the haunting dreamscapes of Foixian discourse strikes familiar resonances, at least for this reviewer, with Vanguard set pieces: from the oneiric sequences of *Chien andalou* and *L'Age d'or* to *L'Année dernière a Marienbad* and their shared fixation with theatricality, décor, ornament, costume, wigs and disguise, statues, mannikins disturbingly Dalinian in inspiration and a conventional, phallographic pursuit of the muse, siren or object of desire.

It may appear odd, in a review of a project whose priority is translation, to deal with this element last. In many ways, excellence has become such a hallmark of this discipline – especially in the case of the present scholar – that little comment is required. I would, however, like to draw attention to two issues which confirm the quality on show here. In a ground-breaking article published in *Serra d'or* in 1968, Arthur Terry, one of the finest readers of Hispanic verse that the last century produced, identified a pulsating rhythm as a key characteristic of Foixian expression (102, març 1968, 47–52). To be more precise, he adduced Suzanne Bernard's apt description of Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, whose trailblazing prose poetry displayed a "suite d'accents vigoureux" (p. 48).

I have always found this element to be essential to the vitality and charge of Foix's creative idiom; and was therefore impressed by the consistency with which it recurred in Venuti's English version. The following piece from *KRTU* provides a representative sample. It is precisely the rhythmic syncopation which assumes pride of place in both elements. What is equally apparent in the target version is the translator's attention to such technical details as alliteration, assonance, sibilance and internal rhyme, all of which are paralleled with care and sensitivity. Again, this is inevitably the case throughout the book:

Per les obertures tubulars davallen grosses àmfors  
 esmaltades. Del fons de les cisternes unes veus desordenades  
 em criden pel meu nom. Però si em mogué del capdevall del  
 soterrani, la meva testa aranya marmòria coronada de

tantacles cristal·lins llanguiria sota les lluors quitranoses del dia. Quina vida ardent s'escorre per les venes robustes que palpiten al llarg de les parets del passadís...! (86)

Huge enamel amphoras descend from tubular openings. From the bottom of cisterns chaotic voices call me by name. But if I left the back of the cellar, my head marble spider crowned with crystalline tentacles would languish beneath the tarry radiance of the day. What blazing life drains from the robust veins pulsing along the walls of the passageway. (87)

In my view it is the three-dimensionality of this volume which will make it invaluable to the library of every Faculty of Humanities: editorial synthesis, scholarly Introduction and accessibility of the esoteric idiom to an anglophone readership. Hispanists, Comparatists and students of Translation will find it enormously enriching.

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*Catalan Narrative 1875 2015*. Edited by Jordi Larios and Montserrat Lunati. Oxford: Legenda, 2020. 278 pp. ISBN 9781781887103.

This volume gathers a collection of fifteen essays on Catalan narrative works published between 1875 and 2015. As the editors acknowledge in the introduction, these conference proceedings do not aim to provide a comprehensive survey of modern Catalan novelists and short story writers. Rather, each contributor has focused on a particular author or theme, and the result is a collection of individual studies on singular works. The editors, however, find a thread running through the essays, namely “the conviction that a cultural studies approach, mobilizing intertextual, interdisciplinary, and translation-related perspectives and methodologies, has much to offer to literary studies” (1).

Yet for this reviewer the main interest of the volume lies precisely in the textual descriptions of mostly canonical but often overlooked literary works – works, one is tempted to add, that are overlooked precisely because they have been canonized. Even if the volume contains many illuminating theoretical reflections, one of the

main sources of satisfaction are the passages of close reading and textual analysis. In these times of new materialism and anxiety, to return to a sense of reality, the focus on the syntactic, lexical, and thematic “materiality” of Catalan narratives, produces the effect that one is in front of live literary creatures, as if the objects of study were textual bodies that one can feel and touch.

In fact, in one of the most stimulating articles of the volume, Joan Ramon Resina makes an astonishing but significant claim. He writes that Catalan writers have “limited metaphysical concern[s]” (238) and tend to rely on the immanent experiences of the senses and the body. The assertion is worth quoting in full:

The disinclination to engage in speculative thought is summed up by Pere Quart in a sentence expressing a view frequent among Catalans: “en definitiva, és més urgent viure que filosofar” [ultimately, it is more important to live than to philosophize] (1981: 14). In fact, the opposition “to live/to think” is in itself metaphysical, because it conceives philosophy as a variant of nothingness, insofar as it relates to the non-existing or to an “after-life.” Catalan semantics show that aversion to transcendentalism is ethnologically based. Catalan uses the same word, “res,” to denominate *something*, or its absence, so that the positive concept the *something* coexists with its negation, *nothing*, just as the electron and the proton coexist in an electromagnetic field. (238)

One may find this level of national determinism to be excessive, but it does shed light on a common, sedimented structure that acts as an immanent causality or, to use Jacques Rancière’s term, regime of visibility in the Catalan symbolic order. (One is also here reminded of Franco Cassano’s *Il pensiero meridiano* (1998), in which the Italian sociologist argues that Mediterranean peoples have a closer relation to the life of others and therefore are less inclined to engage in “distant” metaphysical speculation.) Indeed, many narratives analysed in these essays, from the portrait of everyday life in Josep Carner or the representation of a Schopenhauerian will in Caterina Albert’s *Solitud* to Albert Sánchez Piñol’s chronicle of the bare life of a heroic explorer in a remote land, include the question of life itself as a thematic core.

Thus, another gratifying effect of the book is that in these pages modern Catalan narrative emerges as an autonomous body with internal life and traversed by what Montserrat Lunati, in reference to women writers, describes as “lines of affective communication” (139). Indeed, Lunati analyses how Mercè Ibarz’s fiction establishes lines of affective communication with Mercè Rodoreda and Maria Mercè Marçal and argues that these intertextual relations are a way of signaling “how a male-dominated history of literature has kept women in a precarious position within the institution of literature” (139). We can effortlessly transpose this rationale onto Catalan literature as a whole. Hence, the network of internal connections, in which each voice “acull altres veus” [includes other voices] (157), constitutes a national enterprise that affirms the difference of Catalan literature as a non-hegemonic singularity. Another precious example of this affirmation of life can be found in Jordi Larios’s close reading of the enigmatic character of Gaietà in *Solitud*. Larios describes not only the richness of meanings of the text but also the diversity of accumulated interpretations of Albert’s masterpiece. Similarly, two essays by Sílvia Mas i Sañé and Rhiannon McGlade analyse, respectively, the ethical and aesthetic revolt and the function of humor in Avel·lí Artís-Gener’s novels. The two different approaches to the same author highlight the internal multiplicity and vibrancy of *Tísner*’s narrative. Also, Mario Santana beautifully describes the dazzling effects of Jaume Cabré’s literary techniques in *Jo confesso* (2011). He specifically sheds light on how Cabré gives syntactic expression to different historical temporalities, thus achieving a “mobilization of the past in the present [that] forces the reader to (or places the reader in a position where she can) experience two temporalities as simultaneous” (253).

But the volume also contains a good number of analyses of the historical and political themes contained in the literary narratives. The most illuminating analysis is Dominic Keown’s reading of Sánchez Piñol’s *Pallassos i monstres* (2000), *La pell freda* (2002) and *Pandora al Congo* (2005) as both national allegories and postcolonial, or anti-imperial, narratives. Kathryn Crameri provides another interesting analysis of contemporary historical novels that narrate episodes of the past to imagine what Benedict Anderson called “a deep horizontal comradeship” (80). These novels, which include Alfred Bosch’s *1714* trilogy (2008), Jaume Clotet and David de Montserrat’s *Lliures o morts* (2012), Albert Sánchez Piñol’s *Victus* (2012) and Víctor Jurado Riba’s *No s’hi enterra cap traïdor* (2014), have

no special aesthetic value but are useful to examine present political anxieties. Louise Johnson offers a clever psychoanalytic reading of two novels by Guillem Viladot, *Joana* (1991) on Juana of Castile and *Carles* (1994) on the son of Philip II, Charles – two novels that pursue a critique of power through the matter of the abject. Also, Elisa Martí-López sheds new light on the question of realism and its supposed “shortcomings” in Narcís Oller’s portrait of Barcelona’s speculative market in *La febre d’or*. Finally, Josep Murgades writes an erudite but rather unexciting reflection on *Noucentisme* and narrative.

The volume also provides a series of reflections on the problems of translation. Helena Buffery superbly analyses the transculturation with French culture of Maria Mercè Marçal’s masterpiece *La passió segons Renée Vivien* (1994). Jordi Cornellà-Detrell compares the multilingualism and code-mixing practices of three contemporary authors: Ramon Solsona, Marta Rojals and Joan-Daniel Bezsonoff. Cornellà-Detrell describes the implications of the linguistic options and “heterolingual mimesis” (54) of these authors, and he cleverly pursues a critical approach that avoids both celebration and condemnation. Finally, Alan Yates shares with us his fascinating notes on the dilemmas he faced when translating Raimon Casellas’s *Els sots feréstecs/Dark Vales* (1901/2014).

In sum, even if conference proceedings tend to produce hodgepodes or “calaixos de sastre” with uneven results, *Catalan Narrative 1875–2015* joyfully puts together a collective effort that reaffirms the powerful and well-structured form of modern Catalan literature.

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MERCÈ PICORNELL, *Sumar les restes. Ruïnes i mals endreços en la cultura catalana postfranquista*. Barcelona: Publicacions de l’Abadia de Montserrat, 2020. 318 pp. ISBN 978-84-9191-110-4.

En la introducció a *Sumar les restes*, Mercè Picornell exposa la significació i el desenvolupament de les recerques que han desembocat en aquest seu nou llibre, un recull d’articles modificats i

completats per conformar una obra amb entitat pròpia entorn al motiu de les ruïnes. Aquest hi es pres en dos sentits: una anàlisi d'obres literàries i artístiques que el tracten com a tema; el replantejament metodològic de la història i la teoria culturals des d'una perspectiva "ruïnosa".

Sempre fonamentats, sagaços i ben documentats, els estudis temàtics del llibre ofereixen una mirada comuna però alhora diversa envers els objectes examinats. Així, per exemple, la revisió de l'ús del tòpic de les ruïnes en la literatura del vuit-cents i del nou-cents, al capítol "Híbrids estètics: la natura agent en les poètiques ruïnoses catalanes", fa una primera aproximació sistemàtica a aquest tema, fonamental sobretot en el romanticisme. Es basa principalment en la tradicional enumeració, catalogació i classificació de dades no tractades amb la completesa interpretativa del clàssic estudi erudit i extens d'història literària. Tanmateix, el marc conjunt del llibre permet fer-ne una lectura intencionadament parcial i desviada, que resulta intel·lectualment productiva i oberta —podria projectar-se encara sobre moltes altres obres, des de Verdaguer a Perejaume. En canvi, el capítol "Descampats i intersticis: una lectura d'*Última oda a Barcelona* de Jordi Valls, Lluís Calvo i Gemma Miralda" se centra en una sola obra que, contextualitzada en els fenòmens que la provoquen, altres obres artístiques paral·leles i la proposta metodològica de Picornell, queda fulgurantment il·luminada i reconstruïda des de la teoria. Entre aquestes dues maneres de fer, s'estudien amb coherència temàtica, metodològica i epocal discursos literaris (capítols 3, 4, 8 i 10), cinematogràfics (capítol 5), de memòria històrica (capítol 6), d'arts plàstiques (capítols 4, 7 i 9) i performatives (capítol 10), que s'intersequen en un teixit cultural complex del qual Picornell copsa amb agudesia alguns fils.

Poques pàgines de *Sumar les restes* poden llegir-se en termes clàssics de coneixement. La majoria de contribucions en aquest sentit s'acumulen com a exemples descrits o teories sintetitzades, de manera fecunda en ser encarats des d'un distanciament perspicaç i clarificador, tot i que en algun moment no eviten la impressió de prolixitat i algunes repeticions —també a causa de la publicació originària dispersa dels capítols en forma d'articles. Però és un llibre que apel·la al pensament crític, qüestiona els sentits establerts, busca les fissures d'allò comunament acceptat i, d'aquesta manera, transforma la mirada del lector incitant-lo a pensar diversos aspectes presents des d'una nova perspectiva. Perquè la seva aportació més important —i ho és molt— és la metodologia "ruïnosa" des de la qual es concep aquesta proposta temàtica diversa, incompleta,

intencionadament plena de buits i marges estranys a un examen historiogràfic convencional, i que a cada pas fa explícita la reflexió sobre si mateixa, present en tots els capítols i central en la introducció, els dos primers i el novè.

En efecte, Picornell parteix de la reformulació historiogràfica plantejada per Walter Benjamin (37-40 i 230) i sembla connectar amb l'arqueologia del saber proposada per Foucault, per tal d'afrontar una realitat cultural, la postmoderna, que ja no admet relats lineals amb voluntat de completesa i totalitat que en fixin una estructura i un desenvolupament teleològic. I que ha projectat aquesta condició envers el passat desintegrant-ne els metarelats que almenys en posaven al descobert les pròpies nocions de cultura, des de les quals havien estat construïts i que, per tant, sí que en permetien una certa articulació. La mirada "ruïnosa" suposa actuar des de l'assumpció d'aquest estat: reconstruir, sumar, els fragments, la incompletesa, les restes que no encaixen en els discursos tradicionals, establerts o normatius. Això complementa les mirades estructurals a la cultura moderna que la mateixa Picornell no es proposa impugnar (15 i 255). Però, sobretot, planteja una manera factible d'establir un discurs vàlid sobre la postmoderna, que ja no tolera ser reestructurada historiogràficament amb fidelitat emprant eines inventades entre els segles XVII i XIX. Picornell basteix a consciència un relat "ruïnós", és a dir, que admet l'heterogeneïtat com a punt de partida; que accepta les conseqüències de no quedar tancat la incompletesa, la fragmentació, el buit; que estudia les manques o els trencaments de continuïtats; i que, tanmateix, no deixa de ser comprensiu i coherent, especialment envers una realitat cultural fonamentada en aquests mateixos principis d'heterogeneïtat, dissens, obertura i discontinuïtat. En aquest sentit, *Sumar les restes* és la prolongació de *Continuïtats i desviacions* (2013), una de les obres que ens ha ensenyat millor a mirar i comprendre la cultura catalana postmoderna. De fet, encara pertanyen al seu marc els dos darrers capítols de *Sumar les restes*. El novè proposa afegir a les nocions de "plecs" i "vèrtex" amb què Picornell proposava desenvolupar un nou relat de base historiogràfica, les "d'imatge" i "sediment", que renoven l'aposta per l'explicació de la cultura de la transició al marge del discurs periodològic, causalista i teleològic. Picornell fonamenta la seva proposta en un fèrtil examen crític del concepte de "Cultura de la Transició" i en una revisió comprensiva i exemplar de les tres fonts principals dels estudis catalans sobre la postmodernitat V.

Martínez-Gil, J. A. Fernández i l'autor d'aquesta ressenya, de qui puntualitza amb encert, en la nota al peu 15, una expressió que ara es fa amb tota evidència poc acurada. Les nocions de postmodernitat i els problemes de relació amb la cultura postmoderna plantejats per aquests autors justifiquen de sobres l'operació metodològica "ruïnosa" de Picornell, doblement fecunda perquè s'aplica a tot allò que resta als marges o als intersticis: els objectes descartats (en Francesc Torres i Francesc Serés), les deixalles i els fems (en les instal·lacions de Torres, el grup Criada 74 o Ferran García Sevilla), l'abjecte (Albert Pla), les fronteres (Francesc Serés), les ruïnes (de la poesia catalana contemporània o del monument als *Héroes del Crucero Baleares* de Palma) o les runes d'una urbs postindustrial en què diverses crisis han provocat l'abandonament d'espais i construccions (recorreguts en *Última oda a Barcelona* de Calvo i Valls o en el documental *Mercado de futuros* de Mercedes Álvarez); en conjunt, a fragments de la cultura postmoderna que inciten a entendre-la, encertadament, com quelcom obert, no resolt i, de fet, no resoluble. S'esbossa així una reconstitució de nocions definidores del patrimoni, la cultura o, fins i tot, l'humà.

*Sumar les restes* manté sempre la capacitat crítica, la precisió i el rigor que cal esperar dels estudis acadèmics. Si es compara amb obres per ara més reconegudes sobre la imatge cultural de Barcelona o amb reculls d'articles sobre cultura postmoderna escrits per autors no acadèmics més populars que també intenten donar una mirada interdisciplinària a fenòmens semblants, es fa evidentíssim com aquests es desenvolupen indefectiblement en el balbuceig, la confusió, l'error i la incomprensió absents del discurs de Picornell. No obstant això es difonen impunement perquè les humanitats han esdevingut un camp eteri d'on cada cop ha estat més expulsada la idea d'especialització. Amb aquest llibre, en canvi, Picornell demostra la necessitat d'un pensament en les condicions que fa possibles l'acadèmia — cada cop menys, val a dir-ho, a causa de l'estat actual de la universitat, que ha requerit a l'autora certs sacrificis personals per arribar a produir-lo, tal com ella mateixa retreu en la introducció. Aquestes són la millor garantia per a la permanència del pensament sòlid, crític i actiu amb voluntat de transformació tant de rutines intel·lectuals heretades com de la realitat present — ho demostra a bastament el capítol "Traces del feixisme en la ciutat democràtica. El debat entorn al monument als *Héroes del Crucero Baleares*, de Palma". Potser és per això que estan essent metòdicament destruïdes pel sistema polític del segle XXI. Llibres com aquest en són la resistència. Són les runes d'un sistema devastat.



*Sumar les restes*, però, ens ensenya precisament que les runes contemporànies són restes no patrimonialitzades, rebutjades per l'espai representatiu d'una cultura des dels marges de la qual fan possible qüestionar-la per tal de transformar-la.

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GUILLEM COLOM-MONTERO, *Quim Monzó and Contemporary Catalan Culture (1975-2018): Cultural Normalization, Postmodernism and National Politics*. Oxford: Legenda, 2021. 226 pp. ISBN 9781781883921.

Quim Monzó has been a high-profile figure in Catalan culture for several decades, and while his work has been studied from various angles, nobody has yet attempted the kind of synthesis presented here by Guillem Colom-Montero. He lays out four basic claims as to how his book deepens and widens our understanding of Monzó's *oeuvre*. Firstly, he aims to reintegrate study of Monzó's pre-1978 works into a sense of his overall trajectory, rather than seeing those years as "merely" formative. Secondly, he wants due weight to be given to the American influences on Monzó's work and thinking. Thirdly, he highlights the libertarian foundations of Monzó's politics, challenging the idea that he was some kind of random sniper whose views were *sui generis*; rather, Colom-Montero seeks to expose the myth of Monzó's political neutrality, revealing instead the inherent small-c conservatism of many of his views. Finally, Colom-Montero argues that Monzó's written production cannot be separated from his work in other media, or indeed from his life as a media personality, if we are to appreciate the nuances of his contribution to Catalan life and culture.

With these aims in mind, the book takes the form of an intellectual biography spanning all aspects of Monzó's engagement with culture and politics. When particular works are analysed, this analysis always situates them firmly within their socio-cultural context. The chapters follow a partly chronological and partly thematic structure. As well as introducing Monzó

himself, the Introduction sets out the rationale for this structure, which is designed to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of “Monzó’s trajectory as a literary writer, artist and public intellectual” (p. 3). This personal trajectory is to be firmly situated within the debates and influences that shaped Catalan culture during the period in question, and to this end Colom-Montero includes a literature review that covers issues including cultural normalization and its critics, the “postmodern” 1990s and the consolidation of Monzó’s iconic status in the cultural and political context of the twenty-first century.

Chapter 1, “Moving Beyond *Resistencialisme*,” begins with further details of Monzó’s early life and especially his exposure to American popular culture and literature. If Monzó’s early work can be regarded as experimental/countercultural, Colom-Montero argues that this is not so just because of a rejection of the *resistencialisme* that had characterized Catalan literature before the 1970s. Rather, by examining the American and European influences present in Monzó’s first novel *L’udol del grisó al caire de les clavegueres*, Colom-Montero demonstrates that transnational forces also shaped his work (as with many of his contemporaries). Whilst his early political cartoons examined later in the chapter engaged more directly in controversies surrounding the nationalizing “mission” often attributed to Catalan culture by older generations, Colom-Montero shows that Monzó’s stance on these issues was always underpinned by his understanding of the socio-cultural shifts partly brought about by Catalonia’s greater exposure to American popular culture.

The second chapter continues the exploration of Monzó’s political cartooning, this time during the transition to democracy. Colom-Montero points out that Monzó’s output at this time has received greater attention, possibly because his targets here were largely the Spanish state and its attempts at reform, and the far-right groups that continued to oppose such reform. In contrast, engaging with his earlier work means recognizing the fractures in Catalan culture and society investigated in Chapter 1. Taken together, Monzó’s cartoons of the Transition act as a kind of oppositional chronicle to the Spanish government’s attempts to create a democratic consensus and placate Spain’s regional/national minorities. Nevertheless, his support for Catalan independence consistently underpinned this critique at a time

when Catalonia's mainstream political forces were content to settle for autonomy within the Spanish state.

Chapter 3 returns to the theme of Americanization in a cultural sense, while Chapter 4 focuses on the influence of American libertarianism on Monzó's political stance. His exposure to American influences came through both travel and reading. He translated many US works into Catalan, and Colom-Montero argues that this makes him an important cultural mediator. The specific nature of Monzó's take on American culture is illustrated through an analysis of *Benzina* (1983), which reveals the influence of the essays of John Barth which Monzó himself had translated but also, and more broadly, "the relevance of the American transnational framework to a deeper understanding of Monzó's modernising project" (p. 88). The second half of Chapter 3 provides a detailed analysis of Monzó and Maria Roura's translation of James Finn Garner's *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*, which, as well as demonstrating Monzó's own critical views on political correctness, also employs localization strategies that include references to Catalonia's political and linguistic situation.

Colom-Montero very cogently lays out the case for seeing Monzó's politics as heavily influenced by American libertarianism, even though he himself claimed to follow no particular ideology (p. 114). His views are examined through an analysis of "Fam i set de justícia" from the short story collection *Guadalajara*, which rewrites the legend of Robin Hood, and the opinion pieces originally published in *La Vanguardia* from 2001-2004 and later collected in *Esplendor i glòria de la Internacional Papanates*. Colom-Montero makes it clear that he is not claiming that Monzó had a personal political programme of any kind (other than his support for Catalan independence), but that in the broad sense his critical views on counterculture and his defence of personal liberty can be seen not only as chiming with the tenets of American libertarianism but also Spanish neoconservatism.

The fifth chapter takes a thematic perspective, looking at the role and influence of pornography in Monzó's work. Colom-Montero examines this through the lens of the crisis of hegemonic masculinity (as formulated by R. W. Connell). Monzó's take on the subject is illustrated through analysis of pornography-influenced scenes in *Benzina* and a selection of his short stories.

Colom-Montero contrasts Monzó's nuanced literary exploration of the limits and contradictions of male power (including its expression through sexual violence) with the consistent rejection of feminism he displays in his media work.

Chapter 6 focuses on Monzó's role as a "postmodern intellectual" and "celebrity author." His opening speech at the Frankfurt Book Fair of 2007 has already been mentioned in the Introduction as evidence of Monzó's high standing within Catalan culture; here, Monzó's "canonization" is seen as having been cemented by an exhibition of his life and work that ran in Catalonia for more than a year in 2009–2010 (p. 146). This is despite his constant criticism and parody of the institutionalized striving for a "fantasy" of cultural normalization of which such exhibitions are a part. Colom-Montero also reviews Monzó's media work in the twenty-first century, noting his adaptability and the intriguing personality he was able to present both in person and through social media. The book concludes with an Afterword that brings the exploration of Monzó's life and work fully up to date in the context of Catalonia's active independence movement, and once again restates the four claims made in the introduction.

The book is very thoroughly researched, both in terms of the broad span of Monzó's work that it encompasses and the secondary materials that help elucidate its importance. In some senses it feels quite forensic, as the author is always keen to expose the subtleties and contradictions which, he argues, have generally been glossed over. This attention to detail and nuance, combined with well-evidenced and clearly expressed arguments, means that Colom-Montero's insightful book will be of interest to anyone working in contemporary Catalan cultural/literary studies, whether or not they have a specific interest in Monzó.

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