

Picornell, Mercè. *Sumar les restes. Ruïnes i mals endreços en la cultura catalana postfranquista*. Edicions UIB, Biblioteca Miquel dels Sants Oliver, 54. Barcelona / Palma: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2020, 318 pp.

The academic work reviewed is the third monograph on contemporary Catalan studies by Mercè Picornell, preceded by *Discursos testimonials en la literatura catalana recent* (Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2002) and *Continuïtats i desviacions: debats crítics en el vèrtex 1960/1970* (Lleonard Muntaner Editor, 2013). This is an essay devoted to the topic of the ruins in post-Franco Catalan culture, with the focus on the so-called “ruins of the recent past,” often still in process of degradation and thus — in contrast with the classical ruins (admired, considered cultural heritage) — seen as simple leftovers. In Catalan, Picornell uses the terminological distinction between *ruïna* (patrimony) and *runa* (waste). What particularly interests the author is the way these remains, represented in literature and the arts, can become the metaphor of what is not integrable in the current economic, social, and also cultural model. In the latter case, this lack of inclusion is attributed to the historiographical tendency to build up discourses of continuity with causal, teleological, or linear schemes (240), which, in order to support the idea of progress, leave aside fissures and inconsistencies.

To develop her reflection on “ruinous” representations, Picornell structures her volume in four chapters that constitute two large blocks, *grosso modo*. The first one, “Ruïna, runa i supervivències,” works as a stage of the question and theoretically strengthens the analysis. The author traces the historical evolution of the topic to highlight that the interpretation of ruins has changed in every period. For instance, the romantic idealization of ruins as a vestige of a distant past contrasts greatly with the treatment in the avant-garde, when, devoid of the aura of antiquity, “slow ruins” become “fast ruins.” Detached from the course of history, remains no longer show the consequences of the passage of time on human work, but are related to the capacity for destruction (this is the case of war ruins) and technological advances (49). Once in the twentieth century, when we find ruins still in the process of deterioration — such as abandoned industrial buildings or flats that have not been completed — the boundary between heritage and remains is almost completely blurred.

Also, in this section, the author presents the hypothesis from which she starts. That is, that the images of ruins are more visible in cultures that have suffered processes of crisis or repression and that, consequently, have created mechanisms of reparation, reconstruction, reinvention, or cultural rearticulation (17). Since these *transitional* cultures, like the Catalan, have had to introduce a model of normalization to restore themselves, the model itself has created margins where artistic productions that do not fit in the hegemonizing paradigm end up.

The following three chapters, corresponding to the second block of the book, can be read independently. These sections offer an interesting route through contemporary representation of ruins, with seven samples selected from different disciplines.

The main thread in the second chapter, “Diàleg i conflicte en la ciutat podrida,” is the urban space and the collective memory that this can hold. From this perspective, Picornell analyzes the collection of poems *Última oda a Barcelona* (2008) by Lluís Calvo and Jordi Valls (reedited in 2014 with pictures by Gemma Miralda), the documentary *Mercado de futuros* (2011) by Mercedes Álvarez, and the debate around the monument to the *Héroes del Crucero Baleares* in the Parc de Sa Feixina in Palma, especially active between 2015 and 2016.

The third part of the volume (“La revolta dels objectes usats”) is focused on used objects that materialize the absence of those who had them before. One of these is the pocket watch without hands that belonged to a man executed and buried in a mass grave, presented in the installation *Dark is the Room Where we Sleep* (2007) by Francesc Torres. In the novel *La pell de la frontera* (2014) by Francesc Serés, the old furniture that migrants have in the barracks where they live poorly is described. These low-value possessions are one of the elements of the story at the service of rethinking otherness.

Besides, it is worth noting that, on the occasion of the publication of *Sumar les restes*, both creators participated on November 27, 2020, in the online dialogue “Les restes abjectes de l’hegemonia en la cultura (catalana) actual,” with Helena Buffery, and in conversation with Joan Mas, Margalida Pons, Damià Pons, and the author, Mercè Picornell. (The writer and the artist are also present in the book from the paratext — Francesc Serés, as the author of the cover picture; Francesc Torres, quoted in the epigraph — alongside Benjamin and Bal.)

In “Les restes de la norma,” which closes the study, Picornell deepens in the Catalan process of cultural normalization and in what it leaves out. (During the debate “Les restes abjectes de l’hegemonia en la cultura (catalana) actual” (November 27, 2020), Damià Pons was skeptical about the existence of hegemonies powerful enough in Catalan culture to exclude certain artistic products. He went a step further, asking whether it is or is not possible to analyze Catalan culture (all of it) as a ruin.) The artistic manifestations examined here are the exhibition *Expo-Caca* (1977), by the Majorcan art group Criada 74, and Albert Pla’s songs and performances. On the one hand, the author pays attention to the way Criada 74 uses dirt as an element for political criticism, during Transition, hidden in artistic criticism. On the other, she thinks about how Pla integrates poetically the abject, that is, what we cannot assume as ours for some reason, either because it is impure, like the scatological, or immoral, such as the rape narrated in the song “Y estuvo bien,” or the consenting love for a terrorist girl in “La deixo o no la deixo.”

It is noteworthy that some sections of the volume had been published as journal articles or book chapters (this is indicated at the beginning of each part). In addition, in the Introduction Mercè Picornell explains that the initial idea for the work arose “timidly” while preparing a paper on Jordi Domènech’s poetry, work that eventually appeared in the *Catalan Review* (no. 26, 2011), so that now, ten years later, publishing this book review on these pages feels like closing a cycle.

The result of this “sum” of studies is a thought-provoking essay that puts into question the great narrative of the recent Catalan culture from a “ruinous perspective” (19). Critically reasoning about the uniformizing discourses of order and continuity, Mercè Picornell presents a suggestive “lectura a contrapèl” (*counter-reading*) (38) of post-Franco cultural panorama. Her work is an attempt to reflect on contradictions (represented in all what does not fit the norm), through which (and also thanks to) culture has developed. She argues that leaving these contradictions out of the analysis involves an incomplete vision of the cultural past.

Therefore, *sumar les restes* — Helena Buffery proposed during the dialogue on November 27, 2020, that translating this title as *including the remainders* — is not a mere pun, but seen as a cultural necessity. So much so the author concluded the abovementioned dialogue with this other eloquent play on words: “Without the rests, the rest it not understood.”

CATALINA MIR
Universitat de Barcelona

Radatz, Hans-Ingo (ed.). *Canvi lingüístic, estandardització i identitat en català. Linguistic Change, Standardization and Identity in Catalan*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2020, 190 pp.

A lot has been written about the process of Catalan standardization but it is not very common to find a volume entirely devoted to some of the issues that this process entails. Of the studies presented in this book, edited by Hans-Ingo Radatz, Professor at Bamberg University in Germany, all but the last two articles are devoted to explaining how dialects from what could be called peripheral areas (Mallorca, Lleida, València) are inexorably shifting towards Eastern norms. The tension between language standardization (taken here as a compulsory confluence of language models required to achieve normalization) and the survival of peripheral dialects reveals the impact that different conflicts center–periphery have on personal and collective identities. As the editor points out, this is precisely where the volume “is a contribution to the field of Identity Studies, but from a clearly linguistic perspective” (13). Identity is a complex and vague concept that we