

Micó, J. L. *Titulars i reserves. Cròniques entre la derrota i la remuntada*.
Barcelona: Saldonar, 2021.
ISBN: 978-84-17611-67-5.

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This is an almost 300-page book that the author, Josep Lluís Micó Sanz —born in La Font de la Figuera (Valencia) in 1974 and currently chair at the Universitat Ramon Llull—starts by introducing the reader to the two notions captured in the title: what a *titular* is and how *reserva* should be understood. Within the context of this book, he does so by distinguishing these two concepts from other possible meanings. For example, *Titulars i reserves* could be a book about sports teams. But it isn't. The author clarifies the journalistic subject matter when he clarifies: 'The *titular* (headline) is the most important piece of the news item. *Reserva* (reservation) is an attitude of mistrust or distrust of someone'.

The book is organised into three main chapters that are painstakingly organised in chronological order and brimming with details, in which the author casts a very detailed eye on three case studies and the lives of their main figures. Each is very carefully treated distinctly, but as a whole they are a clear example of literary journalism on different realities which share a common thread: in each case the actors decided to conceal part of their existences: violence, prostitution and drug trafficking. They are the trials and tribulations of their main characters, which come from previous experiences, which also share a leitmotif: defeat.

The first chapter, entitled 'Consells per tallar una ceba sense plorar' (Advice on how to cut an onion without crying), uses reporting to condemn the harassment suffered by a family from Madrid who moved to a village during the pandemic. In the second one, 'Producte interior brut' (Gross domestic product), a female university student gets involved in high-end prostitution in order to pay for a prestigious master's degree. The third and last story, 'Gent que passa' (People who don't care), is an experiment that merges two such different genres as interviews and poetry. The author defines it as *poetic journalism*, and it echoes the condemnations found in many rap lyrics, a musical style where the content is the main feature, while the rhythm and tempo simply serve the main text.

All three stories are more like a hybridisation of genres,

without a glimpse of the subjectivity common in *opinion*-based genres. The author builds the stories using multiple information sources, a technique common to in-depth reporting, yet at the same time he approaches the texts differently, similar to the way some chefs who fuse culinary cultures work. Micó prepares his dishes with genuine ingredients and meticulous technique and presents them full of mixtures.

This book emerged from the experiences of a man who knows he is a small-town guy. Micó acknowledges that he may not have become a journalist had he not been raised in a rural setting. Just like *Química orgànica* (2019), another of his books, this one is faithful to an idea of journalism that the author likes: 'I try to do small-town journalism, even if I move about in and write for cities'.

Last but not least, we should note that the book includes a prologue by another journalist and university professor, Albert Sáez, in which he discusses the dichotomy between imaginary literature and observation-based literature—an idea he draws from Josep Pla's thinking—which resembles journalism. Pla includes this idea in one of his first books, *Coses vistes* (1925), published at what we could describe as the golden age of literary journalism in Catalonia, an unofficial form of literature which became popular at the time. Curiously, the expression is also reflected in Pla's last book, *Notes del capvesprol*.

Thus, in the prologue, Sáez wants to point at the style used by Micó in this book, whose essence can be found in the gaze at certain realities that the author examines in detail with a journalist's eyes.