

Perejaume' s Writing

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On the way to Ogassa we walked, in the midst of a loaf of low fog – "the soft bread of the fog", in words of J. V. Foix– enveloping the rustic nudity of the Romanesque chapel and the agrarian quietude of the livestock, just as powerful as any deep and all-absorbing lowing. The fog delivered the present-tense of an immemorial Beyond into our hands, the crystallization of a fossilized fir needle in the shape of a spontaneous poem-object, returning it to a cool and verdant clarity, set outside of time. But more than anything else on that summer afternoon in 1987 on our way to Mitjavila, it was the blinding light of the sun melting into the grass that struck our eyes and spirit most profoundly.

There we found Perejaume, painter and writer, in the middle of the field, beneath the great bluish dome of a liquid sky with its smoky dragon clouds in battle. There was a canvas on his easel that gave the entire scene the look of a landscape from the Olot school. Off to the side were a few typewritten pages, fragments from *Ludwig-Jujol*. We knew that in time the naive Olot-like landscape would become a pure concept, the ideogramme of itself, as if seen in a microscope or in the old deformed mirror in the Tibidabo amusement park. It was not thus this mutation that disturbed us, but the transitions and metamorphoses that had established a common subterranean current in the text between Ludwig II of Bavaria and Josep Maria Jujol. Perejaume does not feel the text can be excerpted, so the reader will find here only the add-on of Ogassa, which though separate from the body of the work serves as its closure. To understand Perejaume one must come to know Ludwig-Jujol, not just because along with *Oïsmè* it is his most important literary work, but because the aesthetic operation it carries out characterizes Perejaume as a writer and visual artist.

The "I just paint" school or club has long since disappeared in Catalonia. Miró wrote fine poems in French and personal annotations in Catalan of clear interest. Dalí had an undeniable literary talent, though we are not quite sure in which language (perhaps not even he knew for sure). Tàpies has developed a serious and ongoing body of essays, as well as a worthwhile book of personal memoirs. In none of these cases, however, do we find the extreme degree of complementary force and interconnectedness as in Perejaume, whose theoretical work (especially in *Ludwig-Jujol* and *Oïsmè*, together with slivers and margins of other books) is not

just an explanation or illustration of his visual work, nor a type of parallel irradiation or projection. To a great degree it prepares it, launching it and spurring it on, much like the diary of Delacroix anticipated the canvases he wished to paint; or to be even more exact, as if Delacroix, instead of writing his own diary, had written Baudelaire's art criticism.

If he is more than just a painter who writes, is Perejaume perhaps a writer who paints, like Strindberg, or, in a certain sense, like Antonio Saura? Not quite: we cannot precisely define him as a visual artist nor as a writer. (In this he is not alone: in my view this occurred with Henri Michaux, though along different lines). What Perejaume epitomizes is the conception and realization, whether intellectual, verbal or visual, of a series of visual and ideological transmutations and interchanges between apparently different orders of both natural and artistic reality. The pursuit of unity thus defines him, and in this sense his work resembles that of the poet, an extreme intelligence in union with his instinctive capacity for pre-rational intuition. The poet tries to uncover the originary unity of the world and the word by means of metaphor or metonymy. Perejaume's writings, paintings and installations are also metaphors and metonyms. The unity they are searching for is the lost primordial paradise of poetry and painting, the territory (not a legendary one, but one that is historically real) which poet and painter naturally co-inhabited in the dawn of cultures. Yet Perejaume does not let himself be seduced by anthropological myths, knowing that unlike what Artaud legitimately (though vainly) believed, a contemporary Westerner will not do Balinese theatre, aware as well that if Picasso discovered African art, it was not in order to produce African art but to create the art of Picasso.

In Perejaume's particular case, this lost unity of the world and the word is due to a division of meaning signalled out in the moment the Catalan language lost its capacity to confect, all by itself, a total vision of the world (an ability it had to a great degree in Ramon Llull). It has been proposed that the poetry of J. V. Foix and Carles Riba, or Joan Miró's and Tàpies' painting, could be treated on the basis of this loss or division, though along different lines. In this sense it is more profound and essential that the textual and visual adventure of Perejaume might continue the task of these masters in a very personal way, taking up their legacy. All of us will in the end find ourselves facing Ramon Llull upon that shady slope where the crevice between the word and the world is meant to disappear, where the split between sign and sense has been wiped out: a most ancient territory, which is at once the most vigorous and rigorously contemporary site of all.