



displaced penmanship: Jujol through his texts

Josep M.^a Jujol's first piece of writing —an obituary— dates back to 1922. During his life, on and off but punctually and parallel to his professional life, Jujol never ceased to publish short articles (his last article, *The Figure of Christ*, was written only a few months before his death). They were often commissioned by local newspapers or religious journals of limited edition.

The total amount of this production is rather small, despite the fact that it spreads over a long period of time: nine pieces made up of three obituaries, three religious pieces and three reports on architecture. The topics are baffling in a way, but they give an accurate picture of the author's private world. Indeed, Jujol was not to write in order to communicate abstract ideas; he wrote to give visible form to certain feelings, which were very often emotional conditions, his feelings towards people he missed, religious reactions to some occasion or his perception of a finished work. Even on the few occasions that the author refers to his creative work, he does not do so to argue in favour of one theory or another, but in an attempt to look into those aspects which are most sensitive and apparent about his creative work.

“CUM ALIA IMAGINE MUNDI” The usual annoyance felt nowadays on reading passages which are built essentially from the accumulation —disordered and sensual— of fanciful thinking, of unlikely praises, of epigraphic invocations, or of symbolical associations shows part of the profound disagreement that exists between the author's own private world and a way of thinking which favours logical, objective ways.

It is understandable, then, that Jujol's texts seems like the wilful result of an obvious disorder; moreover, a disorder widely



present throughout our culture which is individualist, atavistic and traditionally critical of a rigid, homogenizing modernity and consequently more closely identified with an idea of irrationality in which anachronism is combined with the most visceral, and nonsense moves towards religious and mystical feelings: the presence of the supernatural, a kind of experience that is not part of any rational system, therefore encourages not only subjective and uninhibited playing with images but a fanciful ingenuity, full of mysterious and whimsical forms. The world then becomes an unconventional representation of reality which can take on a double or threefold meaning.

«The sepulchre is the sowing. From the dark iron grave where the seed lies will rise the green spring shoot and in time the golden grain (...)» («El Mejor Punto De Vista») (The Best Point of View).

There is a heterogeneous dynamics in which animism pervades everything and manifestations multiply in their analogies and oppositions.

“Turning round (...) one sees the stones move and become alive (...) it is as if the huge arcade is moving and growing even bigger (...) (El Mejor Punto de Vista). “The colours of the letters are varied and turn pale next to the rose, as if it gave off a bright radiance (...)” (El Nuevo Pendón).

This strategy, where things are controlled by their symbols, constantly needs to approach reality in its most intimate aspects. An infinitely close approach to singularity through fantasy, which no longer relies on abstract categories, but is joined to what is concrete and material; furthermore, just as in the works of Bosch and Bruegel —authors whose work, like Jujol’s, has frequently been associated with the world of surrealism— rising above the confusion is a look which is attentive to the smallest closest detail and to physical and everyday things where domestic and dramatic affairs are brought together and naïvety lives alongside morbidity.

“Occupying the stones of the arch on which the lintel rests, two tombs open up for the buried figure to come out; an elegant young lady begs for mercy, a just man praises God (...). the verses from Miserere and Te Deum ring out in an agonizing sonata; it is a moment of imponderable horror, *Dies irae, dies illa, dies magna et amara valde*: even the good will tremble. Oh my! What shall I say, how much will they tremble? (El Mejor Punto de Vista).

“High up angels hold the instruments of the Lord’s terrible suffering (...); the holy tree of the shining Cross, coloured by the purple of the Blood (...), the lance, the crown of thorns, the pole with the sponge soaked in vinegar and bile... what we sinners have given to God (...)” (El Mejor Punto de vista).

Jujol’s writing, like his buildings, does not express its meaning as a whole but by an infinite approximation to a point, to the production —or detailed and careful description of the objects (ornaments or decorations); concrete examples of a distant world of shapes— of magnificent, ephemeral makeup and attire as would be appropriate to a tactile, physical and, in a way, medieval perception of the Universe.⁽²⁾

«From a wooden beam of golden beech, with engravings of flowers, ending in two bunches of roses hangs a canvas of silk embroidery, tied by three bows of pink and white ribbons. Around it there is an inscription: «Ave Rosa sine spina, peccatorum medicina» as the middle of a fringe of fine gold thread with clusters of pearls and precious stones drawing a difficult picture (...). (El nuevo pendón)

The frequent presence of other constants, regarding themes, such as heraldry⁽³⁾, the figure of the Virgin, or the occasional use of old expressions like «*récits oraux*» give force to the will for recovering a language and a style related to past ideals⁽⁴⁾.

«I dare not make a full description which would be too tiring...» (La Iglesia Primera De Vistabella) (The First Church of Vistabella)

«It takes a long time to explain all the building...» (La Iglesia Primera De Vistabella)

«And over the front of the building, the description of which (already too long) we are now busy with...» (Fiestas Centenarias) (Centenary Celebrations).

It is then that Jujol’s texts appear before us like the endless calligraphy that covers his walls and the blueprints of his buildings, memories of old monastery exercises brightened up by vivid colours, displaced lines that are

able to recreate, for a moment, the vision of a word now —practically— gone for ever.

TOMBSTONES AND OBITUARIES. So regularly that it seemed dictated by fate, Jujol was to see, throughout his life, how those who trusted him most were to leave him for good.

Sometimes the architect himself, between paradox and sarcasm, ended up designing the tombstones for the clients who could have offered him the best projects. At other times it was his closest assistants who left him.



Tombstones and obituaries, then, were to become the homage to definite feelings which were going to mark their author's creative work to the very end.⁽⁵⁾

Regardless of any cultural interference, and far from any intellectual constraint, Jujol writes these short texts intending them to be uninhibited declarations of his own moral values. The redeeming principle of work (so close to that option since he took on manual and craft work),

«He died with his tools in his hand... he never faltered in his work (...)» (Casimir Llobet's Obituary)

«Like all nobler spirits, he took pleasure in overcoming difficulties, and the greater the problem the harder and more merrily he worked at it (...)» («Angel Brú's Obituary»)

or his faith in such virtues as loyalty, trustworthiness or modesty,

«How patiently (...) he helped me! What support his quiet approval gave to my purpose!... (always) he carried out my plans and as he was an intelligent man he allowed himself to be guided (...)» (Angel Brú's Obituary)

«She would not allow anyone to say how much she had donated in the end to our Church (...)» (Concepció Mallafré's Obituary)

would show themselves as posthumous tokens of friendship, but also as expressions of a certain —and ancestral— model of conduct.

In many cases Jujol's work is seen as a constant desire to grasp a fleeting moment (6) and it is in these texts that an unforeseeable, fleeting presence becomes more clearly apparent, together with the need to accept incompleteness rather than any pretension of totality. Therefore, Jujol's world is not one of uncontrolled passion, nor one of abstract idealism, but a world of feeling which can tune sensitiveness; a material sensitiveness shared among all things, and which needs a constant reference to everyday life, to what surrounds us, even with a slight touch of everyday, real, homely, moderate sense of humour; as much so in common, but hardly-ever-used objects (Bofarull's glass wine jar, or porró, Montferri's spring mattresses, the wooden drawers in El Vendrell or the shoeboxes of the Casa Negre) as in how much he valued the storytelling of those anecdotes and coincidences that really happen.

«He was the cornet player for the Tarragona Choral Society (...)» (Angel Brú's Obituary)

«He was bitten by a horse; I remember the witty ways in which he proved the animal's innocence (...)» (Casimir Llobet's Obituary)

«Feeling sorry for the physical sufferings that for many years this poor lady had borne with Christian patience, the Lord took her away, only a few days before her Saint's Day (...)» (Concepció Mallafré's Obituary)

«Spots of poetic reaction», absurd reactions, fanciful findings that fix the senses and repel the last trace of an indifferent pose or intellectual distance against the constant stimulation of a physical, sensual world.

THE IMPRINTED IMPRINT. The constant presence of the author in his writing, oblivious to any critical sense or distance, points to the subjective line he uses. Totally involved in his text, the author is constantly trying to make

Epigraphical inscriptions on the walls of the Church of Vistabella, Vistabella (Tarragona), 1940.
Photograph: Pedro Pablo Vaquer.



it his own personal piece. We can see this happening in his punctuation, lines, drawings, blots⁽⁷⁾ —which are scattered through his writing and make it recognizable. In Jujol the narrative passages rise from a system of explosions, a clamour of intimate episodes where the author is constantly expressing his obsessions, his preferences, the things that worry him most; whether they be feelings (both in the case of his own religious beliefs and in the case of the passion he feels towards his birthplace, el Camp de Tarragona,⁽⁸⁾

«Above the carob trees... the whitening church spire can be seen against the sky of el Camp (the Tarragona countryside), the bluest and most beautiful of Catalonia (...）」 (La Iglesia Primera De Vistabella)

or whether they refer to knowledge, his admiration for Rome,⁽⁹⁾

«He had a great gift from beauty... in his handsome figure one could see a descendant of the Graeco-Roman colonies (...）」 Angel Bru's Obituary)

his interest in etymology and Latin philology, or his constant reference to the Bible.

These are references to History but, just as in his buildings, it is only a secondary reference. There is no attempt at style, not even precision, but there is a clear will to manipulate his style to turn it into a mere complementary presence within his treatise.

A method, then, where spontaneous discovery is combined with his line of memories. This method causes an explosion of resources that, in the end, go beyond any sort of basic structure, and therefore leave it full of loose ends; passionate urgencies of the author's emotional world, spontaneous explanations and opinions which (like the objects that Jujol himself always ends up protecting with surrounding profiles) are frequently locked in another kind of perimeters: parentheses⁽¹⁰⁾.

«At the top is the coat in arms of Doña Joaquina de Mas de Vedruna y Vidal, as she used to sign her letters (What a beautiful example!) writing before her own surname her husband's, don Teodoro de Mas (...）」 (Fiestas Centenarias)

Opinions without any instrumentality. Spontaneous signatures. Imprinted imprints with a certain degree of naïvety. When all this is included in his narrative writings it reveals a profound capacity of the author to «flow with time, grasp and collect valuable moments and make them present when they are lit up by an image, an obsession, or a thought...» (quoting from Rafael Moneo)⁽¹¹⁾.

Far from any frivolous intention, far from any empty wink or any cynical altitude, the architect is involved in his own reality, and in spite of its limitations, he tries to be constantly expressing a clear desire to do things. Not to reproduce or represent other codes, but to make, even change, a forgotten, enviable set of values, using his own as a starting point,

and in doing so he recovers the values in his work: those of his own assurance.

FRAGMENTS (12) A devout person has ordered a valuable new banner to be made at his expense according to the project and supervision of the undersigned (...)

The front side of the banner is white. In the middle there is an enlarged photograph of the Virgin of the Cloister in the Tarragona Cathedral. Around it there is an inscription: «*Ave Rosa sine spina, peccatorum medicina*» in the middle of a fringe of fine gold thread with clusters of pearls and precious stones which make a complicated picture. At the bottom there is an embroidered cross and a letter J; the signature.

The colours of the letters are varied and turn pale next to the rose, as if it gave off a bright radiance. (...)

The pole is made of beech covered with golden dust so that its greyish gold colour makes a slim white screw—which joins the metal parts—stand out (...). On the end there is a golden, calyx-shaped piece of metal with a ball on the tip of it. The top of the setting—in golden bronze—has a crown of thorns and rounds it all off on the *thau* high among the stars: *ad astra*. (...)

All of the bronze parts are of a soft sheet with relief work and welded in silver and gilded over with pure gold, modern alchemy. (...) El Nuevo Pendón (The New Banner) La Cruz, Tarragona, November 18th, 1923.

Still a young man, Angel Brú has just died (...). He had a great gift for beauty... in his handsome figure one could see a descendant of the Graeco-Roman colonies. His great common sense made of everything a swift, precise judgement. (...)

As all nobler spirits he took pleasure in overcoming difficulties, and the greater the problem the harder and more merrily he worked at it. (...)

He was one of the few chosen ones who are able to appreciate the powerful beauty that Nature has as well as the vigorous art of the ancient Tarraco. (...)

He could have run the most important furniture and sculpture workshops in Barcelona; he preferred his sweet homeland and the limited horizon of his birthplace: he was a true man of Tarragona (...) Necrologia de Angel Brú (Angel Brú's Obituary) Tarragona, April 24th, 1924. Cassimir Llobet, the senior member of the gilders of Barcelona has died (...)

And he died with his tools in his hand. He never stopped working, and never faltered in his work. He grew very old, never decrepit (...)

These artists of gold and encarnalizing move in shadowed modesty as if there were no difficulty in per-

fecting a sculptor's work. Notice how a sculptured head is just left as a piece of wood, it is dead. See how it looks when it is incarnated by the artist and you will think twice before going too near it: the impalpable colouring, the firm lustre of flesh, the sweetness and shine of the eyes... it all seems alive (...) Necrologia de Cassimir Llobet Xicarro (Cassimir Llobet Xicarro's Obituary) La Veu de Catalunya, Barcelona, January 24th, 1929 (evening edition).

To watch this procession of Penitents there is nowhere better than the cathedral's esplanade, the historic *Pla de la Seu*. (...)

The procession meanders its way along, making a figure from the street called *Escribanias Viejas* (meaning old offices) to *Bajada del Patriarca*. (...)

I know that the people who used to meet in the street many years ago at these very devout hours of the day, while the Holy One was inside the Monument, would greet each other with a slight nod, and if they had to speak it was always in a very low voice. It would be good for our home town if this pious silence were restored during the procession. (...)

So, from the cathedral's esplanade and with their backs to the Ardiaca house—nowadays a government building—and turning their heads, as the procession walks by, towards the main entrance of the cathedral, one sees the stones come to life. The beholder is strongly impressed by such blocks of stone; that golden, reddish marble probably taken from the Roman ruins of the old city.

It is as though the huge archway moved and grew as it shows its sculptures of the Last Judgement; fatal, terrible affair. *In die judicii te rogamus, audi nos*, the church is to sing a few hours later (...)

Seven images of angels blow their trumpets to signal the trial (...). Christ Our Lord is sitting in the middle of the door's pediment; majestically he shows his wounds that made him exclaim in prophetic vision: *quid sunt plagae istae in medio manuum tuarum?*, asking for justice for the blood that was shed.

The outstanding moment of excitement: stepping before the door of the sacred image of Christ on the Cross, *Saint Christ of Nazareth*, among red torches, more abundant here, they light up the great archivolt, of the Last Judgement.

There is still the mystery of the Holy Sepulchre which belongs to the Farmers' Guild, accompanied in the past by flute music—like in Roman funerals—. Very appropriate for people who work on the land because the sepulchre is the symbol of sowing, *seminatur corpus animale surget corpus spiritale*. From the dark earthly tomb where the grain lies, the green spring shoot will come out and in time, it will give the golden ear; so from the Holy Sepulchre Our Lord will rise performing miracles, glorious in his own right and power (...)

The sculptural ornamentation of that door also tells of our resurrection on the last day of the world. Occupying the stones of the arch on which the lintel rests, two tombs open up for the buried figure to come out *ut defunctus judicetur*; an elegant young lady begs for mercy, a just man praises God (...). The verses from *Misere* and *Te Deum* ring out in an agonizing sonata; it is a moment of imponderable horror, *dies irae, dies illa, dies magna et amara valde*: even the good will tremble. Oh my! What shall I say, how much will they tremble?

But hopes shines through; (...) in the image of the Holy Virgin Mother, a marble statue that is a beautiful example of Tarragona Gothic art in the Greek style. That is what Gaudí appreciated it for: «*This is Greek*.» (...)

High up, angels hold the instruments of the Lord's terrible suffering in his Holy Passion: the holy tree of the shining Cross, coloured by the purple of the Saviour's Blood: *arbor decora et fulgida ornata regis purpura*, the lance, the crown of thorns, the pole with the sponge soaked in vinegar and bile... what we sinners have given to God (...)



Banner of the Instrumentos del Dolor for the Gremi de Pagesos. Church of Sant Llorenç (Tarragona), 1940.
Photo: Pedro Pablo Vaquer.

All this—and how much more?— is what comes to mind when watching the procession of public penitence in the *Plà de la Seu* square. Looking at the sculptures—they come to life in the lively light of the burning torches—which show up the construction of the great double door of the metropolitan cathedral of ancient Tarraco. They decorate with great Mediterranean grace, while at the same time they show us especially at those solemn hours of Easter—living memory of the Lord's Holy Passion—the contrition of our sins and holy penitence. *El Mejor Punto de Vista* (The Best Point of View) *Semana Santa* (Cofradia de Sant Magi), Barcelona, 1946.

NOTES

1. In order to write this article we have tried to gather all of Josep Ma Jujol's publications. To do this we used the basic bibliography offered by Josep Ma Jujol jr in *«La Arquitectura de Josep Ma Jujol»* (Josep Ma Jujol's Architecture), published by COAC, Barcelona, 1974. The list, in chronological order, is the following:

- «Necrologia de Concepció Mallafré» (Concepció Mallafré's Obituary) in *La Veu de Catalunya*, Barcelona, July 5th, 1922.
- «L'Església Primera de Vistabella» (The first Church of Vistabella) in *Lo Missatger del Sagrat Cor de Jesús*, Barcelona, March, 1923.
- «Necrologia de Angel Brú» (Angel Brú's Obituary) in *Tarragona*, Tarragona, April 29th, 1924.
- «El Nuevo Pendón» (The New Banner) in *La Cruz*, Tarragona, November 18th, 1923.
- «Fiestas Centenarias» (Centenary Celebrations) in *Tarragona*, Tarragona, May 30th, 1926.
- «Necrologia de Casimir Llobet» (Casimir Llobet's Obituary) in *La Veu de Catalunya*, Barcelona, January 24th, 1929.
- «El Palacio del Vestido» (The Dress Palace) in *El Imán*, Barcelona, December, 1929.
- «El Mejor Punto de Vista» (The Best Point of View) in *Semana Santa* (Saint Magin's fraternity), Barcelona, 1946.
- «La Figura de Jesús» (The Figure of Christ) in *Semana Santa* (Saint Magin's fraternity), Barcelona, 1949.

We should also add the project the architect produced for the Open Competition for the Plaza de España Fountain (Barcelona, 1927).

2. This association is not really capricious: the flow of intertwined information, the careful description of intimacies, the union of idealism and sensuality are reasons which are also present in a certain kind of medieval literature (from Chretien of Troyes to the English Anonymous Writers), and must have been familiar to Jujol.

May we use as an example a stanza from the poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, part one, stanza nine, where the author describes the horse's attire:

countless braids, skilfully held by a golden thread, twist round prodigious green. As well as the braids there are golden ribbons, bright green ribbons, precious stones and gold bells. It is a surprisingly similar passage to many of the descriptions that Jujol uses to give detailed descriptions of ornaments and attire.

«Both shields are decorated with laurel garlands; from the arms of the cross hang green and flowery garlands (...) and so on.» (Fiestas Centenarias)

3. Jujol's interest in heraldry is indeed present in many of his writings. There are a number of shields in his texts and even in his article *Fiestas Centenarias* he goes to considerable lengths to describe the coats of arms of the Mas and Verduna families.

«We give our interpretation no more than a poetic value but as not even the leaf on the tree makes the slightest movement regardless of an existing plan, we are liable to think that these coats of arms have some mystical meaning...» (Fiestas Centenarias)

4. Quite a remarkably common procedure in the old medieval narratives, reminiscent of an oral tradition that is so close to Jujol's atavistic sense.

We can find still more examples from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* which are very close to ones which are used by Jujol:

«I shall speak no more of his meals as you can all imagine that nothing was amiss (...),» p 4

«It would be tedious to enumerate even a tenth of the details which were embroidered and embossed on it (...),» p 5

«I would now like to tell you, although it will delay my story (...),» p 6

5. There are eight catalogued tombstones, mainly in Barcelona and Tarragona. Here they are in chronological order:

- Tombstone for the Gibert-Romeu family 1910-Barcelona
- Tombstone for the Planells family 1917-Barcelona
- Tombstone for the San Salvador family 1919-Barcelona
- Tombstone for the Balcells-Suelves family 1924-Barcelona

Tombstone for the Guinovart family 1925-Tarragona

Tombstone for the Arana family 1930-Tarragona

Commemorative tablet for Saint Joaquina of Vedruna 1942-Barcelona

Tombstone for the Pedro Simó family 1949-Sant Joan Despí.

The last tombstone of this list was interestingly Josep Ma Jujol's last design.

It is also noteworthy that Jujol himself was buried in the tomb that his family had in the Montjuïc cemetery in Barcelona under a tombstone he had designed himself.

6. For this, see also:

Rafael Moneo: «Arquitecturas en los márgenes» in «Arquitecturas Bis», March, 1976, p 2

José Antonio Llinàs: «Un arquitecto en una isla desierta» («An Architect on a Desert Island») in «El País», December 1982, (supplement)

7. One only has to remember the lettering that was all over the old wall of Barcelona, the words written on the walls of the Vistabella Church or the calligraphy of the Tienda Manyach, of the Carmelitas School in Tarragona and of the work done on Roda de Barà, El Vendrell, Torre Codina, and others.

8. Jujol's fascination for Tarragona is a theme that has been developed on many occasions. Jujol's writings frequently focus on this point. «In Barcelona the old white marble turns black; but the Tarragona sun covers in with a very beautiful reddish patina, like shining gold (...).» (El Mejor Punto de Vista) (The Best Point of View)

«He could have run the most important workshops in Barcelona (...); he preferred his sweet homeland and the limited horizon of his birthplace: he was a true man of Tarragona (...).» (Angel Brú's Obituary)

9. Of course this interest in Rome was closely connected to Jujol's interest in Mediterranean culture, especially that of Tarragona. His favourite authors were the Latin Classics.

Indeed his only trip abroad was to Italy. References to the culture of the Classics can be found in many passages.

«The canvas hangs like the Textil'la of the Roman armies» (El Nuevo Pendón)

«...The sepulchre is accompanied by flute music like in Roman funerals (...).» (El Mejor Punto de Vista)

«Both statues are dressed in the Roman style... the boy is wearing the bulla aurea and his master the cutting suit (...).» (El Palacio del Vestido)

10. The amount of signatures and initials—a letter J with a cross—, with which the architect left his print in his work, shows a certain similarity with those remarks in parentheses—«sudden appearances»—by the author which are characteristic of his writing, even if they are mere notes (not without a certain touch of humour and ingenuity). «In a land where much wine is produced (of the eucharistic kind)...» (La Iglesia Primera de Vistabella)

«Placed on the cross ad culmina against our beautiful blue southern sky, it is garnished (by electricity) with numerous lights (...).» (Fiestas Centenarias)

«Whoever works on this will be glorious; the plans will open the way to contributions (in cash or in kind)...» (La Iglesia Primera de Vistabella)

or Jujol's own personal opinions.

«From the entrance gate to the exhibition, opposite this palace is (without forgetting their great differences) an impression of the Berninian colonnade (refer, with the greatest respect to the unequalled Saint Peter's Square in Rome).» (El Palacio del Vestido)

«and that is how he looked for an architect, I was chosen, and the necessary plans were made (as far as a drawing may foresee)...» (La Iglesia Primera de Vistabella)

11. See Rafael Moneo, op cit.

12. The following texts are extracts chosen and produced from a number of original articles by Josep Ma Jujol.