



You are accessing the Digital Archive of the Catalan Review Journal.

By accessing and/or using this Digital Archive, you accept and agree to abide by the Terms and Conditions of Use available at [http://www.nacs-catalanstudies.org/catalan\\_review.html](http://www.nacs-catalanstudies.org/catalan_review.html)

Catalan Review is the premier international scholarly journal devoted to all aspects of Catalan culture. By Catalan culture is understood all manifestations of intellectual and artistic life produced in the Catalan language or in the geographical areas where Catalan is spoken. Catalan Review has been in publication since 1986.

Esteu accedint a l'Arxiu Digital del Catalan Review

A l' accedir i / o utilitzar aquest Arxiu Digital, vostè accepta i es compromet a complir els termes i condicions d'ús disponibles a [http://www.nacs-catalanstudies.org/catalan\\_review.html](http://www.nacs-catalanstudies.org/catalan_review.html)

Catalan Review és la primera revista internacional dedicada a tots els aspectes de la cultura catalana. Per la cultura catalana s'entén totes les manifestacions de la vida intel·lectual i artística produïda en llengua catalana o en les zones geogràfiques on es parla català. Catalan Review es publica des de 1986.

***Discussing Art and Painting Poetry? A Commentary on 97 notes sobre ficcions poncianes (1974) by J.V. Foix and Joan Ponç***

**Montserrat Roser I Puig**

**Catalan Review, Vol. XIX, (2005), p. 155-171**

DISCUSSING ART AND PAINTING POETRY?  
A COMMENTARY ON *97 NOTES SOBRE  
FICCIONS PONCIANES* (1974)  
BY J.V. FOIX AND JOAN PONÇ

MONTSERRAT ROSER I PUIG

ABSTRACT

The article looks at the peculiarities of this collaborative work between the poet J.V. Foix and the painter Joan Ponç. It discusses and illustrates the dialogic relationship between Art and Literature by focusing on the book's physical construction, its heteroglossic nature and the magnetic effect that the ludic interaction between the written and the plastic languages produces on the reader.

Bibliophile editions are characterised by their very short production runs. This is what makes them precious in the eyes of a few discerning readers and/or collectors who cherish them for their value as artistic objects. Libraries find them too rare or too expensive to acquire and, therefore, access to them in their original format is difficult. Because they have tended to be classed as illustrated books, when it comes to producing a new edition their illustrations tend to be discarded and the relation between their images and text is irretrievably lost. Consequently, the critical attention so far awarded to them as distinct hybrid texts has been fragmentary. The intention of this article is to look at the peculiarities of one such work and to analyse and discuss the effect produced by the dialogic relationship between Art and Literature within it.

In 1970 the editor Miquel de Muga asked Joan Ponç to illustrate *La pell de la pell*, a poetic-prose text addressed to him by J. V. Foix in 1968. The final product was presented in a boxed format of bi-folio dimensions with unbound numbered pages in which the text was interspersed with small images and was completed with 22 etchings by Joan Ponç. Foix's magic story about the woman who collected snake skins and Ponç's powerful drawings achieved an astounding result since, according to Mordechai Omer "Este álbum fascina a todos los que lo conocen" (Omer 264)<sup>1</sup>

1. For a detailed discussion of this work, see Prudon, M. "La peau de la peau ou le poète dit le peintre (J. V. Foix/ J. Ponç)" in *Peinture et Écriture* 1, UNESCO: La Différence, 1996. 129-43.

Indeed, the work was so special, that it encouraged Foix and Ponç to work together in another book which explored the connection between Art and Poetry and in which Ponç illustrated Foix's notes on his own visual fictions. The result of their common quest and the subject of this study were the *97 notes sobre ficcions poncianes*, published by Polígrafa Editors in 1974.

This collection consists of 97 poetic prose comments by J.V. Foix and 97 drawings and one etching by Joan Ponç. The original publication series comprises 75 special copies with the etching signed by the artist, 425 copies in book format and 15 *bors de commerce* copies produced for the authors and collaborators.<sup>2</sup> Its dimensions are 32 x 25 cm and the volume is bound, has a grey hard canvas cover illustrated by Ponç, and contains a continuous series of unnumbered pages alternating each textual note with an image, thus reproducing the format of an illustrated book. The book also follows editorial conventions featuring an opening statement or "Advertiment" where the poet and the artist express their intentions.<sup>3</sup>

By the time this particular collaboration started the poet J.V. Foix, who saw himself not just as a poet but as an "investigador en poesia," was aged 81 and had already given up writing poetry but was still searching for the same truth that had kept him working all his life. As he would later state:

No tant sols sóc buscador de la veritat, sinó que és la única cosa que m'interessa. [...] LA VERITAT ES BUSCAR LA VERITAT. És una definició molt bonica i la sensació que sents és que si un dia la trobessis deixaria de ser-ho. Així que la veritat és la búsqueda de la veritat i això la fa eterna. (Foix 1)

For him, as he had described addressing himself to Joan Ponç in the closing lines of *La pell de la pell*, this truth went beyond the obvious and had a liberating effect: "Vos, Joan Ponç, us heu adonat com la troballa del meravellós espellussat allibera la ment, aviva els sentits i prova la nostra innocència" (p.28), and, indeed, Ponç shared with him this permanent search for the truth not only at an artistic but also at a personal level.

In *97 notes sobre ficcions poncianes* the written and visual elements are particularly interesting in the way in which they relate to each other. In principle, as it would be expected of an illustrated book and following the Hermetic tradition (which in itself was based upon the

2. The copy used for the research leading up to this article is number 170.

3. Because of the lack of pagination, in this article the notes are going to be referred to by their number of appearance and the illustrations by reference to the text they accompany.

same principles of visual representation as Egyptian hieroglyphs), the images, paired as they are to the notes, would be expected to reinforce the written word, add a deeper level of communication with the reader and compensate from the loss of credibility in the truthfulness of words that characterises modernity. The word could be seen as benefiting from its simultaneous appearance with another means of communication which added a symbolic element to it, because, as Arthur Versluis argues:

The modern mind has, for some centuries, been ever more conditioned to think only in evolutionary, materialistic terms, so much so that the visionary symbolical thinking which traditional metaphysics demands is virtually incomprehensible for most people today. (Versluis 5)

If the purpose of *97 notes sobre ficcions ponçianes* was to search for something as deep, meaningful and abstract as the truth, then the importance of the visual element in expressing metaphysical ideas would be paramount. However, instead of adopting this approach unreservedly, Foix and Ponç, having declared that "the Truth is the search for the Truth," opt for using their book not as a container that holds the answer to one of life's enigmas but as a "Text" (in Barthes' terminology) which becomes a "methodological field" where the visual and written elements are made to interact with each other in a number of ways. This "Text," in fact, explores not only the definition of what an illustrated book is but also the very nature of the act of reading.

For Bakhtin all utterances include inner tensions, collaborations and negotiations which are comparable to the process of dialogue (in its everyday sense). Therefore, this process not only enhances the plurality of the work and its heteroglossia, but releases new levels of understanding.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, as Jeremy Hawthorn says: "Spoken or written utterances are like palimpsests: scratch them a little and hidden meanings come to light, meanings which are very often at odds with those apparent on the surface" (47).

For the poet and artist this was not new, as we can trace their interest in disrupting the conventional interaction between text and illustration all the way back to their first acquaintance when they jointly authored the book *Parafaragaramus* (1948):

Era la primera vez que hacían juntos una obra gráfica en colaboración independiente, es decir, ninguno se supeditaba al otro; eran textos que no comentaban las imágenes y unos dibujos que no ilustraban los escritos, práctica que utilizaron más tarde en la revista *Dau al Set*. (Torno 120)

4. All references to Barthes relate to "From Word to Text" (1971).

The same system is readopted in *97 notes sobre ficcions poncianes* where the dialogue between the poet and the artist is opened up to involve the reader in a mental game of association and disassociation, communication and obstruction, teasing and denial, which turns the experience into a game and which allows us to establish a link it to what Barthes has described as characteristic to the "Text": its sense of "playing." As Vicki Mistacco says, "In literature, ludism signifies textual play; the text is viewed as a game affording both author and reader the possibility of producing endless meanings and relationships" (375). At the same time, because of the close relationship between poet and artist, one is pressed towards a symptomatic reading, that is, towards treating the work much as a doctor examines a patient for symptoms and seeking to use such clues in it as a way into the secrets of the author, his society and/or his culture.<sup>5</sup>

With a shared background in the Avant-garde and a long artistic relationship, the intentions expressed by Foix and Ponç's in their foreword to *97 notes sobre ficcions poncianes* do not come as a surprise. They write:

Ni els escrits que integren aquesta obra no comenten els gravats que l'acompanyen, ni els dibuixos no il·lustren el text per bé que en més d'un cas en tinguin l'aire. L'escriptor i el pintor, embarcats en una mateixa nau frèvola i tempestejada, amb carnet d'identitat personal i passaport per a una destinació diferent, es comprenen i s'entenen tot parlant cadascun d'ells la forma dialectal d'un mateix llenguatge.<sup>6</sup>

Such a declaration sends us back to the multiplicity of voices discussed above. In fact, as Joan Brossa (himself an experienced collaborator in similarly experimental art and poetry works) explained in his presentation of *97 notes sobre ficcions poncianes*, it is obvious that a book like this can only be the product of independence, equality and respect. If, however, its purpose is to widen the scope of traditionally illustrated texts where the image may be perceived as limiting the reader's interpretation to a single, and therefore, dangerously partial one, then the collection's optimal reader should leave behind the trappings of pretence (as did Joan Brossa, preaching with the example) and be truthful:

M'emporto els perruquins i els nassos, perquè la il·lustració d'un text enclou pleonasme; alhora que l'escarneix el limita. Poc escapa a ningú que els fets reals no duen cap disfressa. Vet aquí un compromís que no he refusat mai. La col·laboració dels pintors i els poetes només té sentit entre persones d'un mateix voltatge que actuen amb independència. Han de coincidir, més que no pas amb el coc, amb la flama del foc. (1)

5. For further information on readers and reading, see Hawthorn 193-96.

6. Foix, J. V. & Ponç, J. "Advertiment" in *97 notes sobre ficcions poncianes*.

Airing on the side of the symptomatic, although the book was published during the last year of Franco's regime, one should not underestimate the importance of rebellious elements as expression of socio-political frustration present in the work. Significantly, the content of J. V. Foix's notes can be classified into four main categories, even if we often find a combination of them in the same note: complaints about critics, oppressors and pedantic bureaucrats, ideas on the truthfulness of the Avant-garde and neo-Avant-garde, statements linking Art and Poetry and comments on Ponç's work and working style. Foix's writing is poetic, cryptic, often sarcastic, cutting and agile, and many of the notes include a pondering tone reminiscent of the oracle and possibly inspired by the wise teachings of the old fishermen in Port de la Selva with whom Foix spent so many afternoons. These are different but at the same time beautifully harmonised with the awe-inspiring figures that populate Ponç's drawings which, by extension, transport us into the world of magic.

The intellectual game between the ageing Foix and the youthful Ponç produces an excitingly challenging relationship between the notes and the drawings. The very first note of the *97 notes sobre ficcions ponçianes*

gives the reader a false sense of security as Foix writes: "Com si tot passés a les tenebrositats d'un oleoducte" (n. 1) and the accompanying drawing shows a man coming out of a manhole (fig. 1). This establishes a representational link between the text and the image. However, when facing note 2, the reader sees the image of a world with sections of human bodies coming out of holes (fig. 2) and it becomes clear that it cannot be an illustration of Foix's note referring to Ponç's work:



FIGURA 1

No és pas ben bé pintura literària. Potser no ho és gens, no ha estat elaborada a la claror de falsos gresols romanocristians. No és tampoc decorativa, destinada a l'estança d'un lletranafrat amb presses per a descobrir taüts esgarriats en fosques tines o selves enmascarades. Ni il·lustrativa per acompanyar els escrits d'acòlits mal iodats. Ni per a premiar cap profeta quan evoca el pas dels corbs, amb ritmes bíblics. (n. 2)

In fact, in note 2, Foix is referring to the very question at the core of

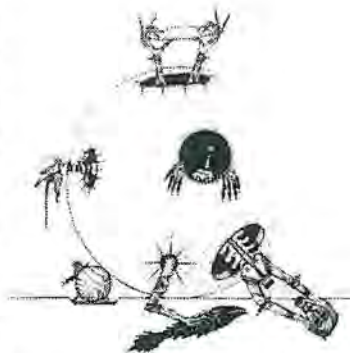


FIGURA 2

our research and puts forward the view that Ponç's drawings go beyond the literary, decorative or illustrative. The reader becomes immediately aware that he is not looking at what Roland Barthes would call a "Work," which "itself functions as a general sign and it is normal that it should represent an institutional category of the civilisation of the Sign," but at a "Text," which "on the contrary, practices the infinite deferment of the signified, is dilatory; its field is that of the signifier and the signifier must not be conceived of as 'the first stage of meaning,' its material vestibule, but, in complete opposition to this, as its *deferred action*" (194). Indeed, this realisation not only takes the reader back to the foreword: "Ni els escrits que integren aquesta obra no comenten els gravats que l'acompanyen, ni els dibuixos no il·lustren el text," but in a world of binary

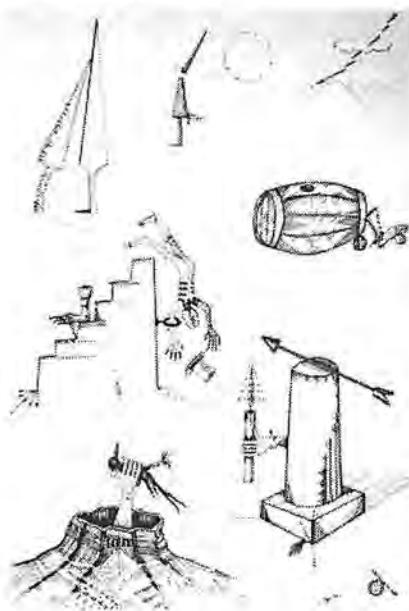


FIGURA 3

oppositions, this makes the reader accept (even if momentarily) that the two are unrelated. However, by note 3, where Foix describes the characters that inhabit Ponç's paintings, confusion grows at the realization that the accompanying picture (fig. 3) includes what could be interpreted as references to what was described in the previous note: antiquity, the world of literature (often symbolically linked by Ponç to the image of the candle), thought (the ladder of knowledge), the black bird (not flying but now trapped by the hand), the wine barrel and the segmented trees (which could, by extension, be seen as representing a jungle). Because of the frag-

mented nature of the images, the links are not definite but they are strong enough to awaken the reader's interest and involve him/her in a search for the truth. We are, thus, facing what Barthes calls the plurality of the "Text," "which is not simply to say that it has several meanings, but that it accomplishes the very plurality of meaning; an *irreducible* (and not merely an acceptable) plural not a prescriptive one but one which will be right for him" (Barthes 194), and this

returns the reader to the "per bé que en més d'un cas en tinguin l'aire" of Foix and Ponç's foreword.

On the other hand, because of Ponç's interest in the occult, many of the images in 97 notes sobre ficcions poncianes can also be interpreted from a mystical perspective. This multiplicity is what gives the reading experience a special feel because, as Barthes says, "the text is multiple, irreducible, coming from a disconnected, heterogeneous variety of substances and perspectives: lights, colours, vegetation, heat, air, slender explosions of noises, scant cries of birds, children's voices from over on the other side, passages, gestures, clothes of inhabitants near and far away" (194). Indeed, when Foix defends that Art and Literature coincide in essence and purpose but, at the same time declares that poets and artists' execution should remain healthily free, one can establish a connection between his views and the concepts of polyphony and heteroglossia described by Mikhail Bakhtin when he studied the polyphony of Dostoevsky's novel where he saw: "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices," where what unfolds "is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event" (*Problems*, 6).



FIGURA 4

It can be clearly appreciated that the cunning game, or what in Barthes' terminology would be called "playing," between Foix and Ponç makes the reader become involved throughout the 97 notes sobre ficcions poncianes. A good example of disconnection would be note 19



FIGURA 5

where Foix states that "Una pintura i una poesia són bones quan després d'haver-les realitzades us sentiu joiosos i frescs com quan us lleveu," and the accompanying drawing is that of a worm crawling in and out of the ground (fig. 4). On the other hand, the drawing of a top hat with a levitating pear (fig. 5) seen in conjunction with the observation that "Una bona pintura i un bon llibre deslliuren i alliberen autors i receptors" (n. 23) makes one wonder whether the creature at the centre



FIGURA 6

of previous illustration might have been a happy bookworm. Then, when in note 29 Foix writes that "Si sou prou original, si interiorment sou reeixit, un integral, la ruta dels estels és a peu pla" and the accompanying drawing represents a winged foot (fig. 6), some readers may see a definitive connection between text and image, while others may not be quite so certain. And then

again, when in note 33 Foix reopens the life-long debate about the need for painting and poetry: "Això s'acaba; la ciència indagadora ho absorbeix tot i esdevé filosofia, teologia, poesia i art en cadascuna de les seves pràctiques," even though the note has no accompanying picture at all, the reader is reminded of the many symbols of death scattered over the preceding pages and the rest of the book (figs. 7, 8 & 9). Indeed, this link is further reinforced in note 37 where Foix writes:

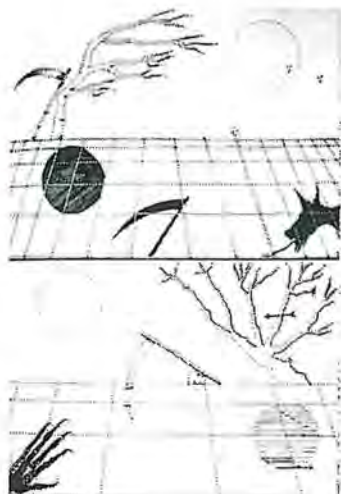


FIGURA 7



FIGURA 8

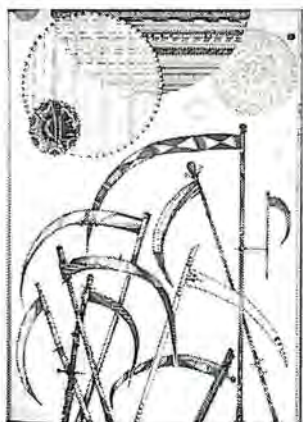


FIGURA 9

Els grops que assenyalen tempesta darrere la muntanya poden provocar radicals capgiraments no solament ecològics —excuseu el mot!—, sinó també escultures vigoroses i fins i tot poesia amb impressió offset negra i color, i inquietants maquetes. (n. 37)



FIGURA 10

The note points to the poetic quality of Ponç's bewitching black on white pictures and, even though the drawing of a severed hand does not seem to bear any connection to the text (fig. 10), many other of the drawings elsewhere in the book do, (see, for instance, figs. 11, 12, 13 & 14). But, as



FIGURA 11

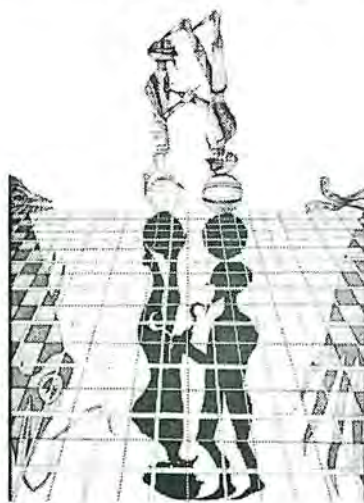


FIGURA 12

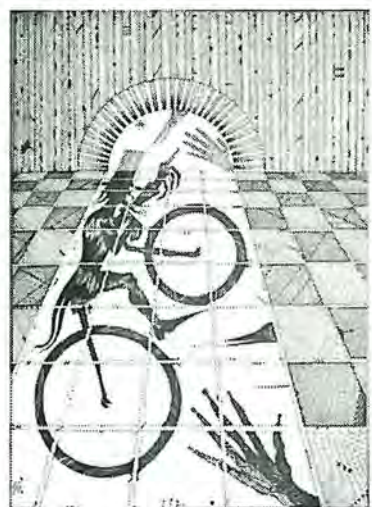


FIGURA 13

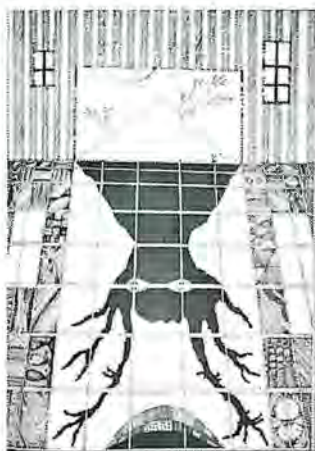


FIGURA 14



FIGURA 15

he says in n. 29, "Poetes i pintors anem a la mateixa barca, amb el motor enferritjat i amb els remes fermats a l'escàlem, per si calia," and this

confirms that creative minds are together in a common voyage but that they have several propelling options to be used depending on the varying circumstances. Once more, the sailing image is likely to hurl the reader back to the foreword, to the drawing accompanying note 20 (fig. 15) where an unearthly creature is rowing a boat and maybe even to the legendary boat trip at the source of Foix's poem "Balada dels cinc mariners exclusius, i del timoner que era jo," which resulted in Foix commissioning a commemorative drawing from Ponç for his personal 1950 Christmas card.

In 97 *notes sobre ficcions poncianes*, probably because of his advanced age, Foix seems totally unfazed by outside pressure and very willing to offer the advice of a seasoned intellectual to the general reader. More often than not his complaints and suspicions on the value of Art and Poetry seem to go beyond the private to encompass Ponç's views. The desire to break away from imposed constraints and categories and the preference for a fluid, more flexible understanding of the world is obvious in his criticism of the attitudes displayed by literary and art historians (n. 35) and their inability to give Ponç, who "...mostra cossos i objectes desaparicionats, desamarrats i desguarnits..." (n. 35) a place within the existing Art categories. Here, while his frustration points to the need for a total rethink, Ponç's drawing (fig. 16) confirms and reinforces the artist's own claim for recognition. In both Foix and Ponç we can see frustration, feelings of uncertainty, threat and fear, irrational images and unconnected ideas which belong to a single grand scheme. While Foix voices his disapproval verbally,

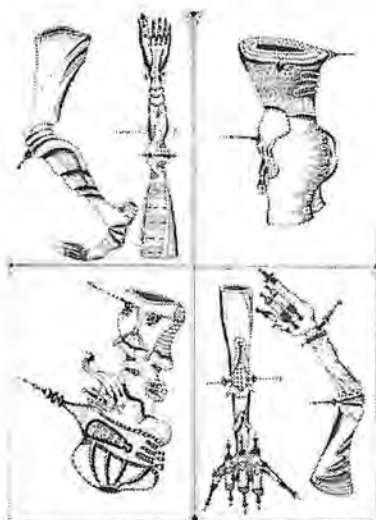


FIGURA 16



FIGURA 17

Ponç tends to displace the frustrations produced in him by Franco's repression to the visual, veering towards the representation of sinister shades and dismembered bodies, alternative behavioural patterns and symbols belonging to those systems

of belief deemed by the establishment as unorthodox. In note 53, Foix, who is perfectly aware of Ponç's fascination with the occult (fate, chance, gambling, palmistry, astrology, tarot, hypnotism, etc.) declares that he is scared of the incursions made by his friend into these worlds:

¿Com copsa En Joan Ponç, de quina antena extrema es val per a captar aquest univers que conté un món del qual no sabem si és ençà o enllà del que petgem? ¿No us fa por, pintor escapadís i fredolíc anacoreta, de descobrir, un dia, que els bolets que es fan al peu dels troncs de la vostra roureda socarrimada són verinosos? (n. 53)

But, in spite of his inability to see things the way the painter does, Foix's attitude is one of respect towards his friend's search and the illustration chosen by Ponç to go with this observation (fig. 17), which is reminiscent of this underworld, could be seen as demonstrating how comfortably the two outlooks cohabit in the space of the book. In fact, the presence of these shadowy figures (figs. 13, 18, 19 & 20) may even be



FIGURA 18



FIGURA 19



FIGURA 20

taken to suggest that changes are already starting to take place in the underworld, away from the gaze of the establishment.

Nonetheless, the relationship between Ponç, Foix and the Avant-garde is uneasy. Their desire to break with the convention of the illustrated book and their common "Dau al set" background would seem to link them directly to the neo-Avant-garde of the late 40s. However, Foix contradicts this very concept in note 5 where he describes Ponç as:

... Alògic i desenraonat —en aparença?—, diria hom que salta el seny per atènyer el bagueny on els astres s'engrunen. No és "artista" tot i ésser investigador plàstic laboriós i artesà ensem. Orelladret. No és realista ni —què em dieu!— "modernista." Ni cap eixorivit "avant-guardista." (n. 5)

The key in this description is the slightly pejorative word "eixorivit," meaning up and coming. In contrast with some of the members of the "Dau al set" group who had managed to find acclaim in both the national and international art world, Foix defines Ponç as an independent creator who, feeling as good and innovative as, for instance, Antoni Tàpies, does not fall within any of the orthodox artistic labels and feels unjustly isolated. Thus, Foix's comments, as do Ponç's drawings, may be displaying a carnivalesque attitude aimed at destroying

the Avant-gardist label in order to restore the term to its own full meaning.<sup>7</sup> For Bakhtin, words were not neutral; apart from neologisms. They were all second-hand and had belonged to other people, and in incorporating them into his or her own usage the individual had to engage in dialogue with that other person, struggle to wrest possession of them from their previous owner(s). Discussing language, Bakhtin habitually makes use of terms such as "saturated," "contaminated," "impregnated"; a word for Bakhtin is like a garment passed from individual to individual which cannot have the smell of previous owners washed out of it. Spoken or written utterances are like palimpsests: scratch them a little and hidden meanings come to light, meanings which are very often at odds with those apparent on the surface.

This is not an isolated example, for Foix's observations on the avant-garde are numerous and never very positive. He felt that going against their very nature, by the 1970s the Avant-garde and the Neo-Avant-garde had become part of the establishment, too simplified and, ultimately, devoid of true meaning. In the poet and artist's common search for truth what they defended was a fresh approach to the Avant-gardist principles based upon multiplicity and a level of freedom that their historical moment was denying them. This is confirmed in note 74 where we find a description of the fast succession of artistic movements that had taken Catalonia by storm and a sarcastic warning from Foix against the limitations imposed on the public from the regime and the art world, who plays its game:

No cavalqueu, però, el pinzell ni la brotxa, els dissabtes: toparíeu amb les bruixes. Som al reialme de l'ull en una terra on l'ull substitueix al cor. Tot hi és vist amb estrenyecaps i pecs, i en una sola direcció. (n. 74)

Taken at face value, the illustration of the hangman (fig. 21) accompanying this note seems quite extreme but, if the reader allows himself an alternative interpretation following the guidelines of the Tarot, for instance, this figure could be taken to mean that life is at standstill and that, although things may not be to one's liking, they are not as bad as one might have thought. Instead of a thread, it may well be a warning to take life patiently until the time is right to make the necessary

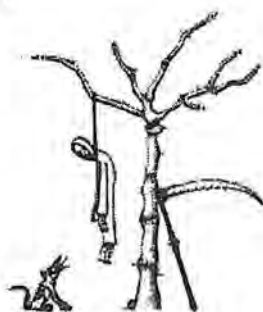


FIGURA 21

7. For further discussion of Bakhtin's concept of Carnival, see Shepherd. For a brief analysis of Bakhtin's ideas on language, see Hawthorn. For Bakhtin on Dialogism, see *Dialogic Imagination*.

FIGURA 22



FIGURA 23

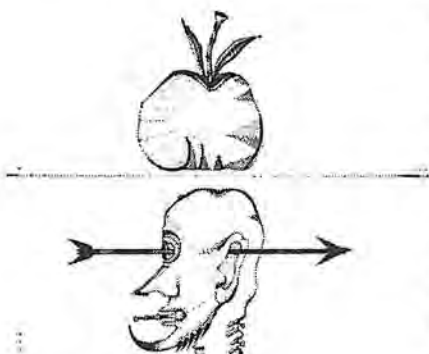


FIGURA 24

improvements to the situation.<sup>8</sup> What is more, the description in note 74 could direct us quite naturally to many images that assume a symbolic function in 97 notes sobre ficcions ponçianes, such as the eyes, which are so common in Ponç's works (figs. 22, 23 & 24) thus giving us another possible interpretation. As stated above, Foix's treatment of the new Avant-garde is just as scathing as it is of the old one and seems to regret it having become, like

the original Avant-garde, another empty word:

Quan les avant-guardes es marceixen en els texts de llurs proclames [...] neixen els "neo." [...] Viuen de les engrunes [...] Reculen convençuts que avancen i contesten quan tothom coneix la resposta.(n. 81)

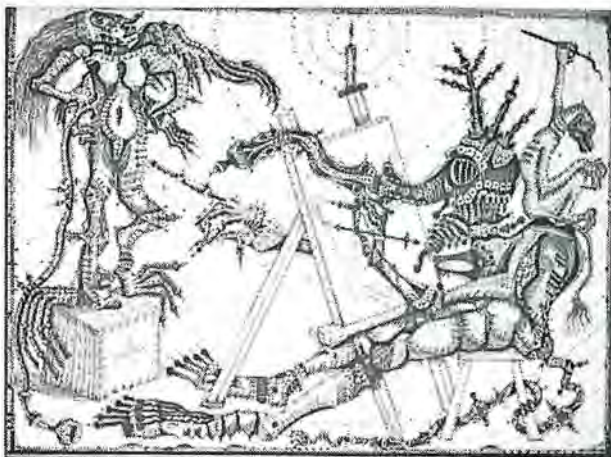
But Foix describes his own way of seeing this in note 86:

Ésser de l'avantguarda no vol pas dir ésser de l'Avantguarda ni tan solament d'avantçada. [...] Cadascú és la seva pròpia avant-guarda, quan cadascú és ell. (n. 86)

And the illustration that accompanies this note is quite fitting and evocative in that it shows one of Ponç's unearthly creatures reclining in a *chaise longue* while painting a canvas (fig. 25).

8. For further information, see Sally Morningstar, *Divining the Future* (London: Anness, 2004), 177 - 201.

FIGURA 25



In all, it seems that Foix and Ponç have been discussing the importance of symbolic representation through the whole of the 97 *notes sobre ficcions poncianes*. As Foix states in note 46: “Les coses aparecen el que no son. Però la descoberta i la invenció hi són simultànies!” (n. 46), and this links directly to the concept of *Jouissance*, as described by Barthes for whom:

“Playing” must be understood here in all its polysemy: the text itself *plays* (like a door, like a machine with “play”) and the reader plays twice over, playing the Text as one plays a game, looking for a practice which reproduces it, but, in order that that practice not be reduced to a passive, inner *mimesis* (the Text is precisely that which resists such a reduction), also playing the Text in the musical sense of the term (196).

And, as Hawthorne states:

The central idea behind ludism/play is that once the illusion of presence has been dispensed with, reading and interpretation no longer involve a decoding that is subject to the firm discipline of some centre of authority that has access to the code book; instead the reader can observe and participate in the free play of signifiers endlessly generating a succession of meanings none of which can claim superiority or authority (126-127).

We are therefore warned not to try to read and decode everything, as we would ourselves fall into the category of those bigoted critics that they both despise, who invent as they create but whose intention is not destructive: “No és cap bandera subversiva. Si proveu d’invertir els colors, capgirar els signes, desplaçar els objectes o desaperonar els

personatges, no anul·leu pas el signe ni en marciu el símbol. El tot roman intacte" (n. 50).

The above discussion allows us to conclude that in *97 notes sobre ficcions poncianes* Foix and Ponç prove that plurality is the only way towards truth. They see the social and political circumstances of modernity as negative and limiting factors and want to involve the reader in their search for truth so that symbolic representation can be made accessible once more as a stimulating power because, as Plato stated, "mysteries cannot be revealed solely in writing, that is, in writing as it is today, an intellectual exercise rather than an invocation." In all, Foix and Ponç have shown that illustration, used creatively as done in *97 notes sobre ficcions poncianes*, can transform a plain unit of communication such as a note into an extremely challenging and symbolically rich message capable of inspiring even the most frustrated of Catalans, as can be seen in the fitting and excellent example that closes their book:



FIGURA 26

Eviteu els qui amb inconstants parers us fan errar el camí. I també, els qui amb un plec de naips a la mà us acusen de perjuri; no els desitgeu, però, una mala fi. Reserveu la pena de mort per als urbanicides i els constructors babilònics. Els delictes de lesa ciutat no tenen eximent. No abaxeu la cresta encara que els grops apuntin dellà del Montseny. (n. 97)

Here, the illustration speaks for itself and gives us as readers a satisfying end to a challenging game (fig. 26).

MONTSERRAT ROSER I PUIG  
UNIVERSITY OF KENT

#### WORKS CITED

- BAKHTIN, M.M. *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*. London: MIT Press, 1981.
- . *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.
- BARTHES, Roland. "From Word to Text," in *Modern Literary Theory*. P. Rice & P. Waugh, eds. London: Arnold, 1996. 191-97. (Originally published in 1971.)

- BROSSA, Joan. "L'hivern i la capa, o el califat del foc." Presentation leaflet for the book *97 notes sobre ficcions poncianes*. Barcelona: Galeria Arturo Ramón, Nov-Dec 1974.
- CIRICI, Alexandre. "Joan Ponç, l'home que passa la porta." *Serra d'Or*, 1974.
- CIRLOT, Lourdes. *El grupo "Dau al set."* Madrid: Cátedra, 1986.
- FOIX, J. V. "Entrevista a J. V. Foix." (Unsigned) in *Vernissatge 12* (Especial), May 1984.
- FOIX, J.V. & Ponç, J. *97 notes sobre ficcions poncianes*. Barcelona: Polígrafa, 1974.
- HAWTHORN, Jeremy. *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory*. 3rd ed. London: Arnold, 1997.
- MIRALLES, Francesc. "Adiós a un artista mágico." *El correo catalán*, 5/4/1984.
- MISTACCO, Vicki. "The theory and practice of reading nouveaux romans: Robbe-Grillet's *Topologie d'une Cité Fantôme*." In Susan R. Suleiman & Inge Crosman (eds.), *The Reader in the Text*. Guilford: Princeton University Press, 1980. 371-400.
- OMER, Mordechai. *Universo y magia de Joan Ponç*. Barcelona: Polígrafa, 1972.
- PUIG, Arnau. "L'Obra de Joan Ponç. Les desraons del llamp." In the catalogue for the exhibition *Joan Ponç*, Barcelona: Centre Cultural Fundació La Caixa, 23 Jan - 28 Apr 2002. 14-35.
- ROIG, Montserrat. Interview for "Personatges," *Televisió de Catalunya*, 1978.
- SHEPHERD, D., ed. *Bakhtin, Carnival and Other Subjects*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993.
- TERRY, Arthur. "Introduction" in *Poems from the Catalan*. Barcelona: Polígrafa, 1974.
- TORMO FREIXES, E. "El meu 'Dau al Set.'" *Revista de Catalunya*, 2 (Sep 1987): 120.
- VERSLUIS, Arthur. *The Egyptian Mysteries*. London: Penguin, 1988.