The Poetry Research of J.V. Foix (1918-1985)

Knowledge Through Likenesses in the Avant-Garde

Sergi Castella-Martinez

e-ISSN 2610-9360 ISSN 2610-8844

Biblioteca di *Rassegna iberistica* 40

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e-ISSN 2610-9360
ISSN 2610-8844

URL http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/collane/biblioteca-di-rassegna-iberistica/

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Venezia
Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Venice University Press
2025

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Edizioni Ca' Foscari | Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari | Dorsoduro 3246 | 30123 Venezia
https://edizionicafoscari.unive.it | ecf@unive.it

1a edizione maggio 2025 | 1st edition May 2025
ISBN 978-88-6969-924-5 [ebook]
ISBN 978-88-6969-928-3 [print]

This volume was realized with the generous support of the Fundació J.V. Foix and the Haas Research Group in Poetics of Knowledge at the Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona.

FUNDACIÓ J.V. FOIX

Universitat Pompeu Fabra Barcelona

Progetto grafico di copertina | Cover design: Lorenzo Toso

The Poetry Research of J.V. Foix (1918-1985). Knowledge Through Likenesses in the Avant-Garde / Sergi Castella-Martinez — 1. ed. — Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2025. — x + 132 pp.; 23 cm. — (Biblioteca di *Rassegna iberistica*; 40). — ISBN 978-88-6969-928-3

URL https://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/libri/978-88-6969-924-5/
DOI http://doi.org/10.30687/978-88-6969-924-5

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Abstract

This book offers a comprehensive interpretation of the literary and journalistic works of the poet J.V. Foix (1893-1987), one of the most original voices of the Iberian avant-gardes, focusing on his poetics and communication of knowledge. Early in his life, this active arbiter of taste and experimental writer of prose poems described his endeavor as a 'poetry research'. He sought independence from all isms and wrote classicizing sonnets, oneiric oneiric poems, and fictional chronicles. He despised bourgeois art and rejected art's subjection to passing aesthetic and political trends. His poetic and ethical commitment was to 'living reality', which he claimed to share with artists of all eras and with the best poets of his time. The monograph critically assesses Foix's articulation of a realist poetology. This clarifies his position in the fragmentary panorama of the avant-garde and revises traditional surrealist readings of his works. Rather than establishing a separate poetic reality accessible via dualistic or idealistic modes of thought, his obscure metaphors and inconclusive narrations stage the impossibility of such a detachment. Instead, poetic objects, consistently considered as 'likenesses', are identified as constituent elements of a practice of accumulation of fragments. These likenesses lead him – and us – to an ever-renewing adventure toward the encounter with the common and the unbelievable alike. Foix's research, in prose, verse, and essay, is a tireless exercise in the embracement of actual plurality with aesthetic pluralism, which informs his views on culture, politics, and religion. The book appeals to both students and researchers of the European avant-gardes, and especially to literary critics and aesthetics scholars interested in modern, artistic and essayistic poetics of knowledge.

Keywords J.V. Foix. Modern poetry. Literary criticism. Literary journalism. Poetics of knowledge. Realism and the avant-garde. Literature and religion.

Acknowledgements

This book would have been impossible to write if it hadn't been for a distant day of 2017 when Amador Vega, who would become my PhD supervisor, told me that some remarkable avant-garde poets had deeply engaged in reading and creatively interpreting the medieval philosopher Ramon Llull. Two main questions followed: How did the late medieval mystical revolution impact modern experimental poetics? And how can these poetics transform our understanding of medieval inventions? For over four years I was a guest in a conversation taking place across over six centuries, and the insights gathered by J.V. Foix became the foundation for the in-depth exploration of his poetology in this book. I am extremely grateful to Amador for his always inspiring remarks and for his trust over the years. In this journey and throughout various stages of the research, I have benefited from the advice from many professors at Pompeu Fabra University, especially Raquel Bouso, Ignasi Moreta, Fernando Pérez-Borbujo, Linda Jones, Sonia Arribas, Elizabeth S. Coles, Begoña Capllonch, Emilio Suárez, María Morrás, Isabel Valverde, Nausikaä El-Mecky, Tomas MacSotay, Maria Dasca, Camil Ungureanu, Miguel Beistegui, and especially Jaume Subirana, whose perceptive insight and encouragement some months ago were crucial for me. I would have been lost without the aid of Miquel Sánchez, Rosa Parra, Isabel Cortés, Cristina Garrido, Àngels Bertran, and Débora Llauradó from the Humanities Administration Office.

I appreciate the support from my home university, the Haas Research Group in Poetics of Knowledge, the Spanish Ministry of Science, and the Fundació Joan Maragall. In 2019 I had the profound privilege of meeting Alois M. Haas in Zürich. From then on, I've tried to be inspired by his wisdom, attention, and generosity, at every step of the way. I want to thank Jordi Gayà for his kind and precise remarks, and Josep Maria Domingo, Maria Carme Bernal, Xavier Calpe, and Ignasi Boada for their early interest and support. I will never forget the advice Alicia Kent gave me while wandering along the Vistula in Cracow. The research for this book has been carried out in a number of libraries, and I would like to thank the staff at the UPF Ciutadella Library, the Biblioteca de Catalunya, the Arxiu-Biblioteca dels Franciscans de Catalunya (with special thanks to Araceli Rosillo), the KU Leuven libraries (Maurits Sabbe, Institute of Philosophy, and Erasmushuis), and the Fundació J.V. Foix library. I am also grateful to Karlheinz Ruhstorfer and Stephan Tautz for their hospitality in Freiburg im Breisgau, and especially to Viola Tenge-Wolf from the Raimundus-Lullus-Institut. I thank Sascha Bru for his help, and Bart van den Bossche, David Martens, Chiara Zampieri, Lucia Battistel, and Leanne Rae Darnbrough for the vibrant intellectual life in Leuven. I am thankful to all the colleagues that have reshaped this book and my research, even when our topics of discussion were entirely unrelated: Bernhard Teuber, Bronislaw Szerszynski, Roni Naor-Hofri, Harri Hudspith, Rowland Cotterill, Pablo Acosta, Daniel Esparza, Tomer Damsky, Mechthild Albert, Ali Qadir, Khegan M. Delport, Alberto Winterberg, Davide Marino, Julia Fernelius, Jennifer Ashby, Júlia Ojeda, Juan Aurelio Fernández, Diana Coca, and Rocío Sola, among many others. And to the outstanding readers, critics, and friends Maria Saiz, Eleanor Goerss, Luis Jorge

Aguilera, Javier Funes, Lucas Capellas, Oriol Regué, Luca Scialò, Bernadette Weber, Socorro Ibáñez, and Cristina Fernández. Special thanks go to Lola Badia, Josep-Enric Rubio, and Enric Bou, for reading my PhD dissertation so attentively and for their observations on Foix, which have had a significant impact on the writing of this book. Moreover, I am so grateful to Enric for encouraging me to submit my book proposal and for his support, guidance, and expert editing advice. I would also like to thank the anonymous readers whose suggestions helped me hopefully improve the book. I owe my heartfelt thanks to Jordi Madern and Margarida Trias, president and director of the Fundació J.V. Foix, for supporting the publication of this book. My deepest thanks, as ever, go to my friends, to Marta, and to my parents, whose love and support make it all possible.

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To my parents

Abbreviations

Most quotations from Foix's poetic works are taken from the *Obres completes de J.V. Foix. Volum primer: Obra poètica en vers i en prosa i obra poètica dispersa* (Complete Works of J.V. Foix. First Volume: Poetic Work in Verse and Prose, and Sparse Poetic Work [OPVP]) from 2000, edited by Jordi Cornudella. Unless otherwise stated, translations are my own.

AC1925	(1925). "Algunes consideracions sobre la literatura d'avantguarda" (Some Considerations on Avant-Garde Literature). *Revista de Poesia*, 2, 1-5.
G	(1927). *Gertrudis,* OPVP, 7-33.
AC1927	(1927). "Algunes consideracions sobre la literatura i l'art actuals" (Some Considerations on Current Literature and Art). *L'Amic de les Arts,* 20, 2-4.
AC1932	(1932). "Algunes consideracions sobre la literatura i l'art actuals" (Some Considerations on Current Literature and Art). *La Publicitat*, 01-03-1932, 4; 03-03-1932, 3.
K	(1932). *KRTU,* OPVP, 35-65.
SIDD	(1947). *Sol, i de dol* (Alone, and Mourning). OPVP, 67-112.
LIO	(1949). *Les irreals omegues* (The Unreal Omegas). OPVP, 113-41.
OHD	(1953). *On he deixat les claus…* (Where Did I Leave my Keys…). OPVP, 155-83.
DD18	(1956). *Del "Diari 1918"* (From "Daybook 1918"). OPVP, 185-208.

LJSP	(1962). *Lletra a En Joan Salvat-Papasseit* (Letter to Joan Salvat-Papasseit). OPVP, 241-7.
EDP	(1963). *L'estrella d'En Perris* (The Star of Mr. Perris). OPVP, 249-83.
LCS	(1963). *Lletra a Clara Sobirós* (Letter to Clara Sobirós). OPVP, 5-6.
QN	(1964). *Quatre nus* (Four Nudes). OPVP, 285-92.
C18	(1965). *Catalans de 1918* (Catalans from 1918). Editat per Ll. Quintana i Trias, A. Marí. Barcelona: Tusquets.
AC1965	(1965). "Algunes consideracions sobre l'art i la literatura actuals" (Some Considerations on Current Art and Literature). OC 4, 154-170.
DC	(1970). *Darrer comunicat* (Last Communiqué). OPVP, 419-53.
TAM	(1972). *Tocant a mà…* (Near at Hand…). OPVP, 455-88.
AP	"Altres poemes. 1963–1973" (Other Poems. 1963-1973). OPVP, 497-520.
E	(1984). *L'estació* (The Station). OPVP, 555-9.
OC 4	(1990). *Obres Completes IV: Sobre literatura i art* (Complete Works IV: On Literature and Art). Editat per M. Carbonell. Barcelona: Edicions 62.
PDP	(2006). *Poemes de pedra* (Stone Poems). Editat per J.R. Veny-Mesquida. Barcelona: Punctum, 13-31.

Boehne 1980	Boehne, P. (1980). *J.V. Foix*. Boston (MA): Twayne.
Boehne 1986	(1986). "Selection of Foix's Poems". Transl. by P. Boehne, L. Rodrigues and D. Rosenthal. *Catalan Review*, 1(1), 273-325.
Rosenthal	(1988). *When I Sleep, then I See Clearly: Selected Poems of J.V. Foix*. Transl. by D. Rosenthal. New York: Persea.
Venuti	(2019). *Daybook 1918: Early Fragments*. Edited and transl. by L. Venuti. Evanston (IL): Northwestern University Press.

1 Introduction

Summary 1.1 Why Write *This* and *in This Manner*? – 1.2 Three Suspension Points.

1.1 Why Write *This* and *in This Manner*?

Few authors embody the energies, hopes, struggles, and disappointments of the Iberian twentieth century as fully as J.V. Foix (1893-1987).[1] This book scrutinizes his lifelong creative endeavor, styled by him as 'poetry research'. Identifying as a 'poetry researcher', he consciously stepped away from the label of 'poet' and adopted terms that likely provoked intrigue and perplexity. His pursuit was more than a poetic quest; it was a thorough interrogation of a distinct mode of knowing, acting, and being. At its heart was the investigation, and poetry was both its means and object. The works born of this journey stand among the most singular and profound contributions to modern European experimental culture.

Over the course of seven decades, Foix persistently outlined and explored a new creative form of relationship with the world, in defiance of the dominant aesthetic and political currents of his time. The intensity

1 Pronounced [foʃ]. He never used his full name, Josep Vicenç [ʒu'zɛb bisɛns], to sign any published text.

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-924-5/001

of his literary output and vision stands in contrast to his apparently uneventful life, which was dramatically impacted by an unfavorable and unfeeling context. He never moved from his hometown Sarrià, about five kilometers inland from Barcelona, to which it was incorporated in 1927. His family ran a renowned local pastry shop, and he received a proper, bourgeois education. While still a kid, he climbed the nearby hills of Collserola with some friends when they heard that the famous romantic poet Jacint Verdaguer (1845-1902) had just passed away in one of the villas scattered in the forest. Allowed to pursue his interests in reading and writing from an early age, he was nevertheless expected to study Law at the university, as were many other young boys of his background, but he never completed his studies and instead spent more time voraciously reading at the library. Alongside modern intellectuals and dilettantes, he was a recurring presence in the Ateneu Barcelonès, a scientific and literary association in the city center. For several decades he could be seen daily on the train line that connected Sarrià and the capital city, where he would often leave behind his belongings, including personal papers and manuscripts.

Before the Spanish Civil War, he contributed to literary magazines and directed the cultural section of a large newspaper, but after the demise of the Republic and the destruction of the Catalan political and cultural systems, he was often the man behind the cash register at the Foix pastry shop. In 1946, he bought a small house in the fishermen town of Port de la Selva, in northeast Catalonia, and spent most summers there, sailing along cliffs and coves. He married once, to Victòria Gili, but she moved away in 1948 – divorce was illegal – and he stayed in their apartment in Setantí street for the rest of his life, where he would often be visited by friends, young poets and artists.

These are Foix's poetic spaces: the perimeter of a small town, the bustling city, the literary cenacle, the train car, and the rugged coast of a fishermen village. His works obsessively deal with the unexpected that looms in each of these spaces. An almost infinite number of blurry characters and dreamlike figures appear, stalk the first-person speaker, and cause a sudden, fantastic transformation of the characters, the objects, and the space. In both verse and prose, nothing and no one escape these processes of mutation, repeatedly frustrating a speaker who had wished for a clearer picture of himself and the world around him.

For a long time, his audience was a limited one. At least until 1960, appraisal came mostly from other poets, but none of his works had become widely known.[2] His puzzling poetic universe disturbed many readers, because it challenged the conventional images of the

2 In 1961, Foix received the Golden Letter, a prestigious, independent award given to the best Catalan book of the previous year. That book was *Onze Nadals i un Cap d'Any* (*Eleven Christmas Poems and One Year End* [L'Amic de les Arts, 1960]), where Foix combined his intricate poetic world with the rhythms and images from popular songs. His

realist narrator and the lyrical poet. The influence of literary cubism (Apollinaire, Reverdy) and the interest in the uncanny within everyday life, for instance in his two first prose collections, *Gertrudis* and *KRTU* (L'Amic de les Arts, 1927 and 1932), made people think of Parisian surrealism. And his classicizing sonnets and imitation of medieval syntax and style (either Occitan, Tuscan, or Catalan) in *Sol, i de dol* (Alone, and Mourning [L'Amic de les Arts, 1947]) left a lingering impression of impenetrability.[3]

In 1969, he gave a talk at the University of Barcelona in homage to the poet Carles Riba (1893-1959), author of *Estances* (*Stanzas*, 1919 and 1930) and translator of Homer, Plautus, Hölderlin, Poe, and Rilke, among many others. He was unanimously praised for the purity and depth of his lyrical verses. In his speech, Foix recalled an anecdote from around 1918. Riba curiously perused some of his unpublished prose texts and said, apparently dry and caring at once:

> "Why do you write this and in this manner?"
>
> "Do you find it dark?", I asked.
>
> "Neither dark nor clear, but rather toxic and distant, deprived of illation. As if you made me look at a landscape upside down, with the head between my legs". (OC 4, 291)

Foix was left speechless – Riba's erudition often had that effect, but his own verbose personality was difficult to appall. He thematized these questions in his own work and commented on them on several occasions. In the book *Catalans from 1918* (Edicions 62, 1965), among diaristic entries that captured the intellectual atmosphere of the early twentieth century, he mentioned his exchange with Riba. In this version, he only recalled seeing the revered poet frown while reading his prose poems:

> It seemed to me, and Riba said nothing about it, that I only strayed; the continuous transformations to which I subject the images were merely false simulacra and not the simulacrum in its integral purity that I attempt to transcribe. In Riba, I have seen the permanent. (*C18*, 118)

popularity skyrocketed thereafter, and many new readers appreciated both his witty, playful verses and his enigmatic, nocturnal landscapes.

3 Edicions L'Amic de les Arts was the press and publishing house that edited several of Foix's self-financed publications: *Gertrudis* (1927), *KRTU* (1932), *Alone, and Mourning* (1947), *The Unreal Omegas* (1949), *Where Did I Leave my Keys…* (1953), and *Eleven Christmas Poems and One Year End* (1960). In homage to this habit, *Desa aquests llibres al calaix de baix* (*Store these Books in the Bottom Drawer*, 1972), by the publishing house Nauta, and *Cròniques de l'ultrason* (*Chronicles of the Ultrasound*, 1985), by Quaderns Crema, included L'Amic de les Arts alongside their own names.

Alongside Foix's immense respect for Riba's depurated expression, there is an obvious and earnest concern about the nature and purpose of his own work. Stimulated by the inquiries of his peers, he dedicated numerous texts to his ideal conception of poetry, most of which were informed by his own practice.

In a short essay called "Some Reflections on One's Own Literature",[4] Foix confessed an act of betrayal. In his youth, he had committed to a very peculiar intellectual ideal, revealed in terms of absolute transparency: "I would be inexorable in realizing my personality, which I aspired to project, dematerialized, like a brief shadow that slipt over the sea" (*K*, 40; Venuti, 145). There are various forms of disappearance in the arts, from pseudonymity (Cendrars, Pessoa) to creative mutism (Rimbaud, Duchamp). The poet called his pen name "J.V. Foix" a "false pseudonym" (*K*, 40), and even though he wrote many of his press articles under actual pseudonyms, he never abandoned creative writing. His drive was a vitalist one. In the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche demanded from the artists the discovery and the exercise of a style fashioned by themselves, autonomous from any exterior doctrine (Nietzsche 2001, § 290, 163-4). The philosopher also considered blurriness, confusion, and disarray to be the main features of his time and argued that general collapse and destruction were required if humankind was to ever return to transparency:

> [W]e have no way of preventing people from *clouding* us, from darkening us […]. But we will do what we have always done: we take down into our depths whatever one casts into us – for we are deep; we do not forget – *and become bright again…* (§ 378, 243)

The desertion of his former commitment is described by Foix as a failure:

> For me, then, my literary production is a defeated protest, a phenomenon of spiritual dissociation similar to what men of science designate as the consequence of the death of an organism, with its bifurcation, total dispersion, even destruction. Total? (*K*, 40; Venuti, 145)

And just some lines above, Riba's questions resonated again: "There were moments when I repeated myself: Why write *this*? Why write *in this manner*?" (39). He felt unable to turn his personality into a natural phenomenon. He failed at rejoicing with a "silent flutter of wings" (40). Throughout his entire life, poetry would channel his

4 Originally printed in the last issue of the magazine *L'Amic de les Arts*, in March 1929 (Foix 1929a), reprinted in the newspaper *La Publicitat* (17-06-1932), and finally used at the end of 1932 as the prologue in his second book of prose texts, *KRTU*.

painful experience of defeat. Through his work, he showcased the bubbling unrest of his personality, overwhelmed by deep inner confusion and besieged by the impossibility of becoming one with an increasingly chaotic world.

In these proemial words to *KRTU*, he outlined the volume's three kinds of poems (*K*, 40-1): attempts – he called them *"applications"* – with "indisputable documentary value"; poems where images are loosely arbitered "with the aim of disorienting their situation within the reality where they move or metamorphose"; and first and foremost those poems that "best represent the *retreat* (*refoulement*) from that initial ambition":

> In their realization, the classic phenomenon of intellectual liberation through the work of art is produced inversely: each new poem is a new element of intoxication which demands other poems with imperious exigency. It is a closed world whose irreal exoticism held me and whose prisoner I have long remained. (*K*, 41; Venuti, 146)

What kind of research is undertaken by this intoxicated and defeated individual? He is, according to these preliminary words, entrapped in an investigation that has no clear endpoint, for each poem is indelibly bound to the previous and the following ones: his strategies of transformation and accumulation keep him far from any "intellectual liberation" and do not grant him the chance of disappearing in his work.

1.2 Three Suspension Points

Foix's personality, embodied by his first-person speaker and by his spaces, objects, and characters, multiplied in each poem, branching from text to text, from verse to verse. The poet and literary critic Gabriel Ferrater (1922-1972), one of Foix's most acute interpreters, drew attention to this imaginative procedure and called it the "uncountable multiplication of personality" (Ferrater 1979, 60). According to him, Foix's ever-transforming images corresponded to his ever-changing personality, which the poet failed to restrict to an organic, comprehensible, narrative. His scope was thus decidedly collective:

> When Foix says "I", and he has repeated this to me a hundred times in conversation. He says: "When I say 'I', I always mean 'we', because I believe my experience to be shared by all humankind". (Ferrater 1987, 56)

From the standpoint of poetic objects, the uncountable multiplication of personality corresponded with the objective emergence of the world's paradoxes. He relied on an expanded understanding of

knowledge, focusing as much on the statements of poetry as on their modes of appearance and relation (Vogl 2015). Both the 'I' and the objects of the world are subject to dispersion through these multiplying processes of transformation. Foix's poetic practice, in spite of Ferrater's own perspective, appears close to Rimbaud's famous "I is another": "The first study of the man who wants to be a poet is the knowledge of himself, complete. He looks for his soul, inspects it, tests it, learns it" (Rimbaud 1951, 254). The French-Spanish poet Claude Esteban summarized Foix's endeavor as follows:

> It is, of course, a rejection of all the apparatus of Symbolist poetry in order to return, as Rimbaud would say, to that famous task: to seek out the rugged reality and embrace it once again. (Esteban 1987, 47)

In poetry as in life, he was unable to assemble a total image of himself, but this did not deter his renewed commitment to his own practice in terms of research. Ferrater would call this combinatorial aggregate of juxtaposed singularities "a tallying of the impersonal threads with which a person is sewn" (Ferrater [1969] 2018, 16).

Foix rarely commented on the meaning of his verses or the real-life anecdotes and images that inspired them. He often added all sorts of paratexts to his works, but these tended to complicate the matter even more, due to their own lyrical and allusive nature. Deprived of exhaustive first-hand accounts on the poet's inspiration, the interpretive keys of his works are to be found almost exclusively within the poetic space, where failure and disorientation are thematized and where the inquiry on the role of the poet unfolds.

The first poem of *On he deixat les claus…* (Where Did I Leave my Keys… [L'Amic de les Arts, 1953]) bears a long title written in capitalized letters:

> I ARRIVED IN THAT TOWN, EVERYONE GREETED ME AND I RECOGNIZED NO ONE. WHEN I WAS GOING TO READ MY VERSES, THE DEVIL, HIDDEN BEHIND A TREE, CALLED OUT TO ME SARCASTICALLY AND FILLED MY HANDS WITH NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS (*OHD*, 159; Rosenthal, 55)

Dated from September 1942, it reflects the general state of devastation in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, and the loss of shared, civic, cultural touchstones (Carbonell 1991, 140-2). As the poet and critic Pere Gimferrer (b. 1945) argued, such a state of prostration "subjects the validity of art to interrogation" (Gimferrer 1984, 194):

What's the name of this town
With flowers on the steeple
And a river with dark trees?
Where did I leave my keys?
(*OHD*, "I arrived in that town…", 159, vv. 1-4; Rosenthal, 55)

The speaker does not recognize the town and remains a stranger to its residents. He does not remember his name (v. 9), where he came from (vv. 10-11), and his job (160, v. 26), but he clearly recalls being a poet:

Just look at the crowd in the square!
They must be waiting for me;
I, who read them verses;
They're laughing and they leave. (vv. 17-20)

The verse "Where did I leave my keys?" does not aim to thematically encompass what is a rather miscellaneous collection of poems. Foix selected it as the title of the book instead of "When I sleep, then I see clearly", which would become one of his most well-known verses. He argued that neither of them defined nor explained anything at all about the book (*OHD*, 157). To the critic Antoni Comas, Foix's choice shifts the focus from semiotics to poetics, for it reveals "an approach to the poetic technique, to the strictly creational phenomenon" (Comas 1968, 249).

The general lack of recognition and the questions posed by the speaker of the poem are recurring themes in Foix's work, oftentimes related to all sorts of phenomena of darkening and mutation. The defined historical circumstances that inspired this poem, however, highlight that Foix's poetry research is no simple manipulation of sound, image, and idea in pursuit of metaphysical understanding. The poet makes choices regarding the matter of his work, but the plural materials of his craft constantly evade his control, revealing that in the poetic endeavor, he is as much an agent as a patient. The verse – and title – *Where Did I Leave my Keys…* invokes the fragility and uncertainty that inspired Foix's practice for decades.

The speaker whimpers, fumbling for the keys – a mundane yet evocative gesture that summons an image of the poet, mere steps from his threshold after his habitual train journey to the city center, his hands patting down his pockets. Even though the town is apparently strange and unavoidably *unheimlich*, it is his own town, and the keys, "keys to his identity, keys to his poetry, anchor points" (Boehne 1980, 74), must not be far away, or entirely lost, but rather tucked and hidden in some inner pocket of the coat, or maybe left inside the house, and, hence, near at hand: "On a daybook scrap | My portrait strolls" (*OHD*, "I arrived at that town…", 160, vv. 29-30).

In a much later prose poem, written between 1970 and 1972, Foix seemed to engage in a long-distance dialogue with himself, as he attempted to give an allusive answer to the conundrum presented by the verse "Where did I leave my keys?". The poem is titled "Near at Hand", its name taken from its final three words. Foix used it to title the entire collection, subtly adding three familiar suspension points: *Tocant a mà…* (Near at Hand… [Edicions 62, 1972]). As the epigraph reads, this piece was written in tribute to the aforementioned Carles Riba.

The speaker is now just another inhabitant of the town, and the questions revolve around a specific limit of the collective knowledge, which materializes in the shape of an "ultrasecular Wall": "We all knew where the Wall was, but we had no clue what was behind it" (*TAM*, 457). Similar walls had made an appearance in earlier works:

> All of us, maidens and bachelors, gather every evening at the foot of the wall. We spend long hours there, listening to the sounds and songs coming from the other side. (*EDP*, 283)

And in the proemial words of *L'estrella d'en Perris* (The Star of Mr. Perris [Fontanella, 1963]), Foix had acknowledged that some of his prose poems came "from beyond the Wall and the Ultradream" (*EDP*, 250). The "ultrasecular Wall" might also remind the readers about one of Foix's first texts, "The village", published in *Gertrudis*: "No one has gone beyond the square, and no one knows what lies beyond the walls that close off the streets" (*G*, 19; Venuti, 27). This was a familiar atmosphere: during Foix's youth, as the poet himself declared, Sarrià's daily life had a remarkable liturgical aspect, and civil and social customs were formally organized by the cyclical rituals of the Church (Foix, Comadira 1985, 48). In "Near at Hand", Foix synthesized this theme with a mythical narration regarding the relationship between the town and that which lies beyond its reach:

> We saw arithmetical calculations, weeping suns and laughing moons, prophetic sentences in ill-arranged, transcendental verses, and commemorative hearts and phalluses. (*TAM*, 457)

Afflicted by some sort of "contagious fever, a peculiar disease of the soul" (457), the inhabitants muster the strength to tear the Wall down. The resulting *Entzauberung* of their world allowed Foix to highlight the permanent presence of the incomprehensible and the unexplainable, as well as the obstinate recombination of the forms of the sacred in the modern world:

> The cloud of dust obscured the day and terrified the villagers. At the dawn of the new, mild, bright, fragrant day, we all, young and old, of both genders, awaited: neither river, however, nor forest, pond, or beach. Neither right at the other side of the secular foundations of the wall nor well beyond them: there was no mysteriously elongated hole, no well with sinister blacknesses, no passage to astounding cliffs, no abyss with magnetic depths. There was just a clear *whole* without shape or color, a *white whole*. Its neutral whiteness was difficult to describe, and it attracted you, but not as if you were to collide against it, helpless, or as if you were to penetrate it like the cleaver of a butcher would cut through a country lard bread. (457-8)

Demoralized by the impossible vision of absolute clarity and the unbearable uncertainty it causes, revealing that the *white whole* is as inaccessible as the Wall, the villagers rush to build new walls from the ruins. The transgression is immediately counteracted by actions of restitution. The town's relationship with that limit, present in its absence, is now more nuanced:

> [The villagers] piled up materials from the ruins, but as soon as someone stepped on the ground where the Wall had enclosed the village from that side, they imagined chimeras and fled towards the square with the church, the bakery, the tavern, and the apothecary, or they headed to the hill trail. (458)

In this context of general disarray and confusion, the speaker adopts the first person plural and concludes the mythical narration with a call for a transhistorical and collective form of relationship with the mystery:

> This event, recorded in the archives, has given, in my people's land, a different meaning to the act of standing *facing the wall*, distinct from the disciplinary action in schools. Among us, vindicated testimonies, it signifies *facing*, even when close to home, an infinite filled with wonders and latent miracles. *Near at hand*. (458).

A single image of the poetic endeavor is revealed by the first poem in *Where Did I Leave my Keys…* and the first prose text in *Near at Hand…*: the research is likened to an uncertain adventure. It is characterized by a strong will of orientation and a relentless hope against all odds. A commitment engrained in doubt and mediated by an all-encompassing experience of failure guides these poetic essays. Zooming out from his puzzling images and examining their interplay with his general ideas on poetry and the standpoint of the poet, this book aims to analyze the correspondence between Foix's

aesthetic strategies and his poetic pursuit of knowledge. The investigation will rely on an expansive concept of 'realism',[5] which fuses reality and imagination, past and future, life and poetry in a practical and obstinate unitarian vision. In sum, the book seeks to provide a detailed account on the scope and objective of Foix's avant-gardist 'poetry research'.[6]

5 See Baßler et al. (2018), for a panoramic introduction to the complex relationship between modernism and realism.

6 The philosopher Joseph Vogl, drawing from a diverse tradition of philosophical aesthetics – from Bachelard and Deleuze to Blumenberg – defines the poetology of knowledge as follows: "An open concept of knowledge, plural and loosely determined, that seeks the specific correspondence between modes of presentation and objects of knowledge in order to describe the historical singularity of the orders of knowledge" (Vogl 2015).

2 Foix's Fragmentary Quest for Total Knowledge

Summary 2.1 Experimental Essays of the Modern Intellectual: "Meridians". – 2.2 Elusive Personality in the Unfinished, Total Project: *Daybook 1918*. – 2.3 Allusive Clarifications? Two Lullian Epigraphs in *The Unreal Omegas*. – 2.3.1 Real and Fantastic Likenesses. – 2.3.2 Obscure Likenesses and Lofty Understanding. – 2.4 Likenesses as Objects of Poetry Research.

2.1 Experimental Essays of the Modern Intellectual: "Meridians"

Foix was an engaged poet and, for the first half of his life, a very active public commentator. In 1922, the birth of a new political movement and the usual resorts of modern propaganda provided him with a platform for his political columns and literary critiques. Foix became the director of the cultural section of the old newspaper *La Publicidad*, recently acquired by Acció Catalana, a political faction that aspired to rejuvenate and reunite both progressive and moderate Catalan nationalists. The rebaptized *La Publicitat* served as a partisan newspaper throughout Primo de Rivera's dictatorship (1923-30) and the Second Spanish Republic (1931-39), and its activities ceased when the fascist army occupied Barcelona in January 1939. *La Publicitat* disappeared forever, and with it most of the poet's chances to agitate public opinion.

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-924-5/002

Foix's contributions to *La Publicitat* included foreign and local press reviews, political commentaries, passionate articles about aeronautics, occasional poetic pieces, book reviews, and short essays on literature and philosophy. He grouped his articles under different headers, depending on their common themes, and between December 1928 and October 1932, he wrote almost four hundred pieces under the title "Meridians". These brief notes were either anonymous or signed by a stylized, pseudo-classical form of their author's surname: 'Focius'. Usually consisting of a collage of literal quotations and paraphrases from other poets, artists, and intellectuals, Foix regarded the "Meridians" as gateways towards the global marketplace of ideas. The notions and events he curated were intended to engage in ongoing aesthetic or moral discussions. His goal was to widen the horizons of his readers and, at the same time, gain a foothold in international literary, artistic, and philosophical debates.

To the poet, the term 'Meridian' referred to the influence exerted by a cultural irradiation center, a city or an entire culture, over another city or culture that depended on it (Guerrero 1996, 177). The immediate antecedent of this meaning is to be found in the 1927 public polemic between two intellectual circles based on both sides of the Atlantic. On the one hand, Jorge Luis Borges and the contributors of the magazine *Martín Fierro* (1924-27), and on the other, Guillermo de Torre's circle at *La Gaceta Literaria* (1927-32). The former questioned the cultural ascendancy of Madrid and Spain over Latin America and sought to counterbalance it by emphasizing their intellectual affinity with French and Italian cultural *milieus* (Fleming 2010; cf. Martí Monterde 2024).

The choice of the word 'Meridian' was also forcibly mediated by Foix's predilection for the Latin world, which had been framed for decades – for example, by Jean Moréas and Charles Maurras' École Romane – as the intellectual antithesis of Northern European aesthetics. Foix wished for Catalan culture to become an autonomous node in the modern, Romance cultural net. One of his strategies, in that regard, was to assert the family resemblance and continuity within the medieval literary heritage of Western Mediterranean, ranging from Occitan troubadours and Tuscan poets to Catalan, Balearic, and Valencian writers. He owned a copy of Jean Moréas' *Réflexions sur quelques Poètes* (Mercure de France, 1912),[1] in which the author introduced his reflections on Petrarch with verses by Vauquelin de la Fresnaye, a sixteenth-century poet, to emphasize the Occitan-Catalan origins of Romance splendor:

1 *Foi-8-501*, BNC, Biblioteca de Catalunya. Barcelona.

> De notre Catalane ou langue provençale
> La langue d'Italie et d'Espagne est vassale
> Et ce qui fit priser Pétrarque le mignon
> C'est la grâce des vers qu'il prit en Avignon. (Moréas 1912, 50)[2]

On March 18th, 1932, the pseudonym Focius wrote a "Meridian" about some passage he had read ten years earlier. He reviewed "an article by Dora Marsden about 'Art and philosophy' that appeared in *The Egoist*":

> Marsden's point of view was that the artists express themselves obscurely because they have nothing to say that would allow them to be clear. […] If art and philosophy must shape life, they will have to institute the criteria that separates the real from the appearance. For Marsden, this proof is clarity. ("Art i filosofia", 18-03-1932, 3)

According to Enric Bou, Foix's patchwork functioned as a negative of his own aesthetic thought (Bou 2024, 56-9). His paraphrases highlighted his concern about clarity in poetic expression. With Marsden's words, Foix attacked the vagueness and mimicry of the "vane artist": "genius minds explain; they do not conceal, they offer themselves" ("Art i filosofia", 3). Several aspects of this seemingly inconsequential note are significant and will prove relevant throughout this study. Above all, the exact meaning of the pair 'obscurity' and 'clarity' in the hands of a poet so often regarded as a *sui generis* hermetic surrealist. But also, the relationship between poetry and life, or, to follow Foix's own fragments by Marsden, the role of poetry – alongside philosophy – in shaping life. And the complex criteria for distinguishing the real from appearances, one of the oldest philosophical debates of the West, which he approached with an expanded claim to reality that included appearances but required a renewed creative habit.

In a previous "Meridian", for example, Foix followed Philippe Soupault's arguments in favor of the fantastic in literature, and specifically in favor of the role it played in popular dime novels and *feuilletons*, featuring detective Nick Carter or crime mastermind Fantômas, inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's "wonderful poetry". These contrasted with English crime fiction – chiefly that of Arthur Conan Doyle:

> We must deplore – Soupault adds – that this trend of mediocre and mechanically written novels will hinder the arrival of the fantastic modern that had been glimpsed. In the age of photography, we cannot be imposed a reality that is just apparently real. We want to see, not believe. The literary, musical, cinematographic-pictural

2 "From our Catalan or Provençal language | the language of Italy and of Spain is vassal | and what made the young Petrarch remarkable | was the grace of the verses he learnt in Avignon".

> arts request today's fantastic, that nobody has yet been able to discern. ("Del fantàstic", 26-11-1929, 5)

Over a month later, Foix returned to the same topic, in a review of Emmanuel Berl's invective against Leibniz's systematism. Berl defended denegation as a form of resistance to universal constructs, championing poetry's engagement with sensory hallucinations as the only viable alternative:

> Lacking the energy to accept the annihilation of the object it observes, the eye closes, and only the poet is able to perceive the emergence of a universal, against which his dreaming protests. ("Només el poeta", 04-01-1930, 5)

These few examples showcase the centrality of appearances in Foix's reflections on poetry. The real provided by realists, photographers, or systematists seemed insufficient for an eye attuned to the sensory, the phantastic, and, above all, the fragmentary. Foix was, like other modernists, concerned about the impossible conjunction of lived experience and the "metonymic quality" of artistic and scientific realism, defined by Moritz Baßler (2018, 4) as the "total and automatic dependence on well-established linguistic, cultural and generic frames that enable a kind of automatic understanding". This concern echoed Nietzsche's warning in *The Gay Science*, whose aphorisms and seemingly disconnected fragments link, however, creative practice and a sacrificial form of speculation:

> *Life not an argument.* – We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we are able to live – by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith no one could endure living! But that does not prove them. Life is not an argument; the conditions of life might include error. (Nietzsche 2001, § 121, 117)

Derived from presocratic *gnōmai* (γνῶναι), proverbial literature, Pascal's *Pensées*, and other popular and erudite sources of wisdom from the West and the East, the apotheosis of fragment as a genre and vehicle for the communication of philosophical ideas occurred during Romanticism, as Friedrich Schlegel's *Athenäums-fragmente* (1798) showcase. Fragmentarism antagonized the architectonic philosophical systems of the Enlightenment:

> Confronted with the problem of *Darstellung* – how to construct an adequate representation of transcendental knowledge – the Romantics insisted that the only possible manner of doing so was in parts. (Hui 2019, 418)

Beyond the aesthetics of juxtaposition, common to several strands of the historical avant-gardes and to modernists, from Woolf to Borges, or the poetics of pseudonymity in Pessoa, Cendrars, and Jacob, among others (cf. Martens 2017), ineludible fragmentarism also informs philosophical and aesthetic radical innovations, such as Benjamin's *Denkbilder* and Heidegger's existentialism.[3]

Foix's works pendulate between two contradictory poles: on the one hand, the creative will to compose a poetic image of himself and the world that avoids the constraints of insufficient realism. Such an effort would validate poetry's heuristic and moral value in the construction of new ways of relating to oneself and others. On the other hand, however, the looming and unavoidable, even certified, experience of the futility of his purpose. Fragments will hardly ever allow the poet to attain any stable vision of totality beyond themselves (cf. Bou 2024, 24-5). An approach to Foix's poetic objects as fragments will unfold throughout the following two chapters, but his long-standing poetic project, the *Diari 1918* (*Daybook 1918*) is also noteworthy in this regard, because it will help contextualize the two mentioned creative poles, as well as their connective tissue – namely, the poetry research.

2.2 Elusive Personality in the Unfinished, Total Project: *Daybook 1918*

In 1981, the nearly eighty-year-old Foix agreed to the publication of a book titled *Daybook 1918*. Some years earlier, the publishing house Edicions 62 had launched a popular and widely distributed collection titled *The best works of Catalan literature* (MOLC), directed by Joaquim Molas, an influential scholar and critic. Volume 31 of MOLC (1980) was an anthology of Foix's poetry in verse, selected by the poet and critic Pere Gimferrer, who had written the first book-length study about his poetry in 1974. This *Daybook 1918*, volume 67 of the collection, included a substantial selection of prose poems taken from his books and periodical publications.

The title *Daybook 1918* had been an enigmatic presence, mostly in the form of absence, at least since Foix's first published book, *Gertrudis* (L'Amic de les Arts, 1927). In it, some prose texts were gathered under a section titled "Daybook 1918 (Fragments)". Three

3 Far from being a closed matter, in the second half of the twentieth century, the epistemic constitution and value of the fragment, as well as the presumed ontological primacy of the whole, have been critically scrutinized by a plurality of voices and traditions encompassing philosophers of history and art, such as Theodor W. Adorno (2005, 18), original, creative essayists such as Édouard Glissant (1990, 103-45), and poets like Anne Carson (2005), to name just a few examples.

sections of his second book, *KRTU* (L'Amic de les Arts, 1932), were also drawn from this personal diary, according to the author (cf. Veny-Mesquida 2004, 27). Decades later, Foix published *From "Daybook 1918"* (Joaquim Horta, 1956), prefaced by a prologue called "The Author's New Reasons":

> *The poems – likenesses or appearances – collected in this book are fragments of the "Daybook 1918", which consists of 365 short prose texts.* (*DD18*, 187)[4]

His subsequent books of prose poems, *The Star of Mr. Perris* (Fontanella, 1963), *Darrer comunicat* (Last Communiqué [Edicions 62, 1970]), and *Near at hand…* (Edicions 62, 1972), were also partial installments of the unknown diary. The 1981 edition of *Daybook 1918* included only 203 texts, however, and the poet often wondered whether other poems, old and new, might also belong to it (Bou 2024, 124-8). The poet's grand project, coveted by editors, publishers, and readers, would remain unfinished and, above all, shrouded in philological mystery and speculative interest.

Scholars agree that in his youth, between roughly 1909 and 1925, Foix scribbled diaristic entries in some notebooks, collecting anecdotes, visions, and thoughts. In many cases, these were early drafts of prose poems that he would later revise and publish. The reason to fixate 1918 as the date of the diary was never clarified, but it coincided with the year of the poet's first mature publication: "Peculiar Narration", an oneiric short text that appeared in the magazine *Trossos* on March 1918 and would later be included, after revision, in *Gertrudis*, as "Plaça Catalunya – Pedralbes" (*G*, 21).

These personal notebooks ended up becoming a myth, and friends and critics alike long wondered whether they contained a complete and accurate version of a *Daybook 1918* that was allegedly forthcoming. At some point between 1974 and 1980, when inquired by Molas and others about the possibility of publishing the notebooks, he burned them (cf. Quintana i Trias, Bou 2020). In addition to the reasonable doubt that these papers do not constitute a complete diary of the year 1918, the poet's deliberate imprecision in the identification, ordering, and attribution of the materials belonging to his long-standing project is a particularly interesting phenomenon. Bou contends that the poet's statements regarding *Daybook 1918* should be approached with skepticism, as Foix's poetic ideal might precisely require the project to remain both present and absent at once (Bou 2024, 128).

4 Guerrero (1996, 84) and Bou (2024, 43) have suggested that this number references other poetic annual cycles valued by Foix, such as Petrarch's *Canzoniere* or Ramon Llull's *Llibre d'amic e amat* (Book of the Lover and the Beloved).

The prose poems in *Gertrudis*, *KRTU*, *From "Daybook 1918"*, *The Star of Mr. Perris*, *Last Communiqué*, and *Near at Hand…* are not diaristic entries *stricto sensu*. As the editors and commentators have abundantly pointed out, they are neither dated nor written in 1918 (Veny-Mesquida 2004, 153-63; Bou 2024, 128-31). According to Antoni Martí Monterde (1998, 185), the productive persistence of the unfinished *Daybook 1918* implies a constant reassessment of the ways to dwell within the poetic word. Under this prism, the prose texts of the diary, just like the "Meridians" did with loan words, produce and discover new poetic objects, images, and thoughts. Their aim would be to satisfy the poet's desperate need of comprehension, regarding both his own personal identity and his poetic endeavor. With reference to Pessoa's posthumous *Livro do desassossego* (1982), whose blurred boundaries and multiple different editions let critics and readers enjoy a dense and intercommunicated web of texts, Bou highlights the kaleidoscopic nature presented by *Daybook 1918*, with the aid of Martí Monterde's words on the poet's fragmentarism:

Daybook 1918 is an unfinished work, a living work open to many readings and readers, not a lie, but containing a truth defined by Antoni Martí's words: "every prose text of the *Diari 1918* – we should rather say each one of Foix's poems, even – constitutes a fragment of an infinite experience, a sort of a brief adventure that hosts, in its fragmentary condition, all the elements of the global reflection to which it is incardinated" (Bou 2024, 134-5; Martí Monterde 1998, 147).

The incompletion of *Daybook 1918*, and its indetermination, are a reminder of the role that fragmentarism plays in Foix's aesthetics, on the one hand. On the other, this book also represents a creative bind between his literary production and his journalistic endeavor, which, as the "Meridians" showcase, relied on the accumulation of images and intuitions – both personal and borrowed – in a sincere effort to engage with reality through nuanced, intricate, and profoundly real, albeit fragmentary, poetic objects. This is perhaps the most relevant creative feature of Foix's poetry research, as a closer inspection of his poetry will precise.

2.3 Allusive Clarifications? Two Lullian Epigraphs in *The Unreal Omegas*

2.3.1 Real and Fantastic Likenesses

Foix rarely commented on the precise meaning of this or that other image in his puzzling poems, but his friends and interpreters continually asked him to reveal the factual details that had generated the verbal miracle. Instead, Foix introduced his works with very carefully selected, allusive paratexts. These offer interpretive clues that are as hermetical as the verses themselves. In addition to prologues and proemial words, as well as erudite and popular epigraphs, among these paratexts are long prose titles for some poems. All thirteen poems in his second book of verses, *The Unreal Omegas* (L'Amic de les Arts, 1949), are preceded by these long narrative titles. The second poem of the collection bears a remarkably straightforward and yet enigmatic title:

> CREIXELLS AND I MAPPED, AT DUSK, THE OROGRAPHY OF IMAGINARY PLANETS AFTER DEBATING THE CHRONOLOGY OF PLATO'S "DIALOGUES". AS WE STARTED THE MOTORCYCLE TO HEAD BACK HOME, PALMIRA ARRIVED, WEARING AN EXTRAVAGANT CRIMSON VELVET DRESS, AND THROUGH FALSE ROUTES AND LIFTING BRIDGES, SHE LED ME TO THE BALL (*LIO*, 2: 118)

Taken literally, no element of this title is especially fantastic. The sudden accumulation of events with no precise narrative coherence, however, hints at the images being successive, non-linear, dream-like appearances. *The Unreal Omegas* is often considered Foix's most densely symbolic work. Its poems are formally diverse, but they are preceded by a short text called "Excuses". The poet declared that the long prose titles are the actual prologue of the volume and that, by using them, he "tries to clarify the intention" of each composition (*LIO*, 115). In the "Excuses", he addressed the fragmentary condition of the selection, which appears connected to his way of understanding the poetic endeavor as a form of research:

> *The 13 poems included in this book are part of a larger collection. The author, who does not dare to alter, for the time being, his position as a poetry researcher, by favoring their inclusion in two volumes, believes he is facilitating their reading and, hopefully, their understanding.* (*LIO*, 115)

The poet's preoccupation with the possibility of being understood reveals that his research is no solitary enterprise, but that its communicative outcome is crucial. Right after these "Excuses", moreover, Foix created yet another intermediary instance between the readers and his poems by reproducing two quotations of the Majorcan medieval philosopher and theologian Ramon Llull (1232-1316).[5] These two epigraphs refer to the issue of comprehension and, more particularly, allude to the obscurity that looms over the processes of comprehension. As the critics have abundantly pointed out, this theme is nuclear to Foix's poetics in *The Unreal Omegas* and throughout his works, but a closer examination of the citations will provide introductory remarks about the position of his poetic objects in the axis clarity-obscurity.

The first epigraph reads:

> *From real likenesses descend fantastic ones, just like accidents, which depart from substance.* (*LIO*, 116)

It is drawn from the fourth book of the *Tree of Science* (Rome, 1295-96), the "Imaginal Tree". This whole 'tree' is, according to Llull, "about likenesses and impressions" (Llull 1917, 4: 151). Llull is a philosopher best known for having invented a combinatorial device, the *Art of Finding Truth*, with which anyone could, allegedly, answer the questions of all sciences without any further authoritative support, whether scholastic or biblical, and so discover and argue for the sustained presence of God in the creation. The underlying operative mechanisms of his *Art* required the user, or *artista*, to align all faculties of the soul, namely intellect, memory, and will, to the adoration of God, that is, to his intellection, recollection, and love. Thus, the philosopher envisaged a practical way of moving humankind to contemplation and of providing rational arguments to strengthen the foundations of Christian faith against heathens and disbelievers.

In the *Tree of Science*, Llull addressed the various sources and faculties involved in human understanding. The imaginal tree comes after the elemental, the vegetal, and the sensual trees, and while these three are 'real', the fourth one correlates with them analogously in form and function:

> The imaginative power, therefore, constitutes the point of contact between material reality and the rational soul and its organ is, in fact, situated between the anterior and posterior parts of the

5 Ramon Llull's sizeable influence on Foix has been addressed by Molas (1992), Rosselló Bover (2016), Cabré (2017), and Bou (2024), and has been the subject of my doctoral dissertation (Castella-Martinez 2023).

> brain, being all of a piece with the organs of sense, with the intellect and with memory. (Rubio 2008, 384)

In a pedagogical treatise known as *Doctrina pueril* (1274-76), Llull addressed the twofold function of imagination:

> [T]he soul with the imagination takes and puts in common everything offered to it by the five bodily senses, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, and offers it in fantasy to the intellect. (Llull 2005, 85, 5: 233)

Amador Vega (2002, 90), commenting on this paragraph, highlighted that these two moments of the imaginal activity correspond to a "reproductive or synthetic" stage, which collects "everything offered to it by the five bodily senses", and a "productive or creative" moment – in modern terminology –, in which a unique image is delivered in fantasy, which would be the site of the beginning of intellections: the images of fantasy become thus indispensable elements to processes of intellection and contemplation.

Llull's cosmovision, his contextual specificities, and his expressive needs, are of course very different from Foix's, and the quotations reflect that: he willingly altered their punctuation and decontextualized them to emphasize what was at stake for him personally in them. It is worth noting that, in the Lullian text, Foix finds an argument for the continuity between imagination and reality. The imaginative faculty discovers the potential presence of its own products in reality, with the aid of the senses. The fundamental hypothesis of this study regarding Foix's poetics is that he refuses to separate reality and fantasy into two binary, opposite planes. This is defended by the poet to Clara Sobirós in the celebrated letter that opened his *Obres poètiques* (*Poetic Works* [Nauta, 1964]), which is both a paratext and a poetic text by its own right:

> *[A]lways remember that I'm a witness to what I tell of, and that the real, from with I depart and live, with my insides burning as you know, and the unreal that you think you'll find there, are the same. Just as you are another and there are two of you – or more – and you have and are known by a single name: Clara*. (*LCS*, 5-6; Rosenthal, 3-4)[6]

Patricia J. Boehne (1980, 129) argued for the stylistic relevance of this passage:

6 This letter, written in 1964, reflects Foix's deep affection for the pseudonymous "Clara Sobirós", an experience he described as akin to "total love", as Carme Sobrevila, who published other writings addressed to "Clara", has explained (Sobrevila 1998).

> This 1964 statement summarizes Foix's personal ideas on his own style. He has bared his intimate preoccupations within the context of an *exemplum*, glossing his prose within the actual composition in an artful manipulation of multiplicity.

But the functional analogy between imagination and the other powers of the soul, and their relationship of filiation, only complicates the poet's terms regarding the difficulty of understanding his poetry, as well as the difficulty of understanding poetry at all.

When Friedrich Nietzsche recalled, in *The Gay Science*, that reality does not admit separation between the fantastic and the human, he also pointed out that naming was to be understood as a creative power "in order to *destroy* the world that counts as 'real', so-called 'reality'!", because "it is enough to create new names and valuations and appearances of truth in order to create new 'things'" (Nietzsche 2001, § 58, 70). If Foix perceived all poetization as a product of fantasy filiated from reality, a subsequent interrogation would follow, regarding the real nature of the fantastic likenesses that poetry tries to contain and aspires to understand. To Gaston Bachelard, all forms of dreaming are practical confirmations of the existence and unity of the real world, as revealed by the creative power: "I dream the world, therefore the world exists in the manner I dream it" (Bachelard 1968, 136; cf. Vogl 2015). Foix thematized this thought, among many other places, in his first book of poems, *Alone, and Mourning* (L'Amic de les Arts, 1947), together with a nuanced distance and prudence:

> And to walk through the shady dell,
> To listen to the whimpers of dews
> And to ask myself, doubtful, what is fictitious:
> The ravenous senses – smell, touch and eye
> That make my life gay – or the number, raw,
> And dry, and naked in divine nakedness?
> (*SIDD*, "At a Smooth Field…", 84, vv. 7-11)

2.3.2 Obscure Likenesses and Lofty Understanding

Turning now to the second of the Lullian epigraphs that open *The Unreal Omegas*, the unresolved relationship between reality and imagination is explicitly linked to the problem of comprehension. It reads:

> *The darker the likeness, the higher understands the intellect that understands the likeness* (*LIO*, 116)

This quotation is extracted from a novel called *Book of Wonders* (Paris, 1287-1289), usually known by the name of its protagonist,

Fèlix. This book follows Fèlix on a journey as he encounters hermits, sages and other wise people who share with him vast and detailed knowledge about the world and God. The peculiarity of this novel is that, just like in the "Exemplifying Tree", the fifteenth of the *Tree of science* (Llull 1923, 15, 341-448), all knowledge is rendered by way of exemplifying likenesses and moral narrations. The recurring narrative mechanism revolves around Fèlix's awe and astonishment at the wonders of the world and his unquenchable desire to understand it, fulfilled by the other characters.

At one point in the second chapter of the novel, Fèlix asks a hermit, "What is the being of the angel, and what is the thing that the angel is" (Llull 2011, 2, 14, 148). Twice Fèlix confesses his astonishment before the hermit's allusive narrations, and he complains about the difficulty of learning through likenesses. In the face of Fèlix's resistance, the hermit declares that he is willingly using allusive – and elusive – analogies to capture his attention, as well as to leave a lasting impression on him and stimulate his intellect. Difficulty is deliberately and strategically designed to require great effort on the part of Fèlix's intellect. Examples and likenesses do not offer direct solutions, but rather force the wanderer to depart from oneself and confront the world's secrets. They will require Fèlix to put into motion all the faculties of the soul – intellect, memory, and will – to transcend the limitations of one-sided understanding.

In this process of understanding by means of love, and loving by means of understanding, Fèlix and the reader grasp one of the underlying mechanisms of the *Art of Finding Truth*: "that the intellect wants what the will understands" (Vega 2002, 126). Llull's predilection for the didactic obscurity of examples aligns with the general purpose of his work. Ultimately understanding their enigmatic "good morals" serves to achieve a righteous delectation, which must always be connected to its final cause: understanding, loving, and remembering the ultimate truth, God (Badia, Santanach, Soler 2013, 413).

Without any sophisticate comprehension of Llull's gargantuan *Art of Finding Truth* or its philosophical and theological foundations, it is worth noting that Foix acknowledged the auxiliary function of Llull's examples, which he appreciated and enjoyed, as revealed by his review of the *Book of Wonders* for *La Publicitat*:

> The fable, the tale and the novelistic narration, on the one hand, and the use of rhyme and rhythm, on the other, are the means often employed by Llull to impact the reader's fantasy and awaken in them the interest for the topics he addresses. Contrarily to common belief, Llull is a practical man who never loses sight, almost never, of his immediate goals. ("Llibre de les Bèsties de Ramon Llull", 27-08-1933, 4)

There is a striking parallelism between Fèlix and the hermit, on one side, and between Foix and his readers, on the other. From the moment he began publishing his prose texts and verses in periodical publications and books, his interpreters highlighted their resemblance to surrealist expression and the hermetic *trobar clus* of the troubadours (Guerrero 1996, 147-8). These affinities hint at Foix's participation in a global creative tendency inclined towards difficulty and obscurity, preconized by Arnaut Daniel, the *stilnovisti*, and Góngora, and postulated by Johann Georg Hamann as a mode of reasoning against the grain of the Enlightenment.

Julien Benda reflected upon this tendency in *Du poétique*, and, like Dora Marsden, warned against what, according to him, might be aristocratic arrogancy masking actual indolence: "We search and maybe we find something, but we often regret having found it, for what we have found is miserable" (Benda 1946, 235). On the other side of this debate, however, T.S. Eliot's famous remarks about his times in *The Metaphysical Poets* (1921) seem to fit Foix's poetics: "We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*" (Eliot 1951, 289). To what he added: "Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results" (289).

Diverse critics and theorists have addressed the study of difficulty and hermetism as a characteristic trait of modern poetry, from Rimbaud and Lautréamont onwards.[7] Giuseppe Bevilacqua highlighted the co-implication of encrypted and explicit language in Paul Celan as a creative means to avoid the sterility of literary affectedness and to put into practice a communicative intention of one's own (Bevilacqua 1996, xiv). According to Michael Riffaterre (1982), difficulty does not split signification from meaning, but precisely from the absence of meaning, because it fosters consecutive readings and perspective shifts mediated by literary figuration. Under this light, the approaches to significative polysemy as connatural to poetic language[8] do not relativize difficulty but provide the necessary hermeneutic tools to face the deliberate significative experimentation of contemporary literature.

With an emphasis on negativity, opacity or equivocality, the creative strategies of twentieth-century poets pursue forms able to eschew the tropes of the inexpressible limit and of linguistic insufficiency, but they may also indulge in their thematization so that they

7 See, for example, Steiner 1978; Baldini 1989; Coqui 2015; Cussen 2022.

8 Such as the ones by Blumenberg ([1966] 2001a, 114-18; [1979] 2001b, 193-6) and Kristeva (1985, 60-71).

become patent (Wolosky 1995).[9] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a key figure in contemporary phenomenology, posited that the original and irreducible objectivity of artistic creations generates the speculative tension that both constrains and enables the possibility of understanding the incarnations of vision that transcend conceptual representation (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 105). In *Thomas l'obscur* (1941, revised in 1950), Maurice Blanchot had called for the dissolution of the traditional, metaphysical teleology regarding light and shadow, whereby the latter was an accident and a defective state of the former (Rosenbrück 2020, 93).

The philosopher Oliver R. Scholz is wary, however, of the metaphorical use of the semantic field of 'obscurity', as it belongs to the "prehistory and protohistory of hermeneutics" and, when used to explain the difficulties of comprehension, constitutes a tautological, insignificant circle (Scholz 2015, 97). The author cites a threefold classification of the possible difficulties in comprehension and the hermeneutical approach they require, by Jay F. Rosenberg (1981): to *complexity* corresponds analysis, to *incoherence*, integration, and to *indetermination*, more precise articulations. It will be necessary to outline the significance given by Foix to the metaphor of darkness to acknowledge his specific expressive needs and to detect, even if the proposed categories tend to overlap, that the author presents abundant aesthetic evidence of his will to encrypt and reveal a reasonable order – his own poetic proposal – under the signs of incoherence.

2.4 Likenesses as Objects of Poetry Research

In an essay known as "Some Considerations on Current Art and Literature", Foix defended the sincerity of his practice, and disallowed his affinity with the surrealists:

> When I write my prose texts – most of which I am averse to accepting as Surrealist, since I attempt to fix images of a living reality – I behave sincerely toward myself and my reader. I am therefore sincere insofar as I communicate experienced situations without fraud. From a strictly literary point of view, furthermore, I would dare to affirm that I am true. Still, I am convinced, on the level of

9 The notorious disagreement between Maurice Blanchot and Jacques Derrida over Antonin Artaud's poetics is a good example of this debate, because it outlines the points of tension between hermeneutical speculation and deconstructive criticism. While Blanchot (1959, 51-8) argued that Artaud's mad cries expressed the powerlessness of exteriorization and thus offered new spaces for thought, Derrida (1967, 341-68) understood the tortured writer's glossopoiesis, neither imitative nor discursive, as a vanishing point for negative dialectics, and as the destruction of any possible articulated repetition, any stability, and, consequently, any positivity.

> ideas, that this realism and this verism are not a universal reality. They are, in other words, neither the notion of Reality nor the notion of Truth. (*AC1927*, 2; Venuti, 136 [OC 4, 32-3])

In this regard it is worth quoting a classic appreciation made by the critic and editor Jaume Vallcorba:

> The apparent, surrealist opacity is nothing but a superior form of realism, in which the poet departs from real facts, subtly metaphorized, to build the framework of the poem. This has largely been the practice of a most ancient literary tradition, which, narrowed down to a strand most appreciated by Foix, the troubadours, we shall call "trobar clus" or "closed form". (Vallcorba 2002, 96-7)

Nevertheless, the relationship between the darkness of likenesses and the difficulty of the comprehension process might illuminate new meanings of Foix's identification with the Lullian astonished Fèlix. As mentioned above, *From "Daybook 1918"* opened with an explicit statement by Foix on the fragmentary and poetic condition of his prose texts, called "*poems – likenesses or appearances*" (*DD18*: 187). In the proemial words of *The Star of Mr. Perris*, the poet insisted: "appearances or likenesses, says the author" (*EDP*, 250), to which he added:

> J.V. Foix insists on telling us that his likenesses or appearances are the result of a disinterested experimentation that he enjoys as much as if he dared to try the adventure of a game of chance. (*EDP*, 250)

Foix did not only retrieve from Llull the notion of "likeness" to address his own practice of metaphorization, but he was also persuaded to circumscribe the results of his experimentation to the categories of "likenesses or appearances". He declared to Clara Sobirós: "*I move among appearances, and yours, multiple, dominates*" (*LCS*, 5; Rosenthal, 3). In his conception of poetry, likenesses do not convey the natural relation between an image and its referent, as per the realist standard (Bangert 2018, 128). Poetic likenesses resemble reality because their objects appear, proliferate, and transform in a similar way. Each likeness, due to this link to the whole reality, indetermined but unitarian, is a sign and a revelation of a possibility: that of describing reality partially and in fragments. Since he favored dark likenesses as means to uplift understanding, the role of such likenesses in his poetic proposal deserves to be addressed in depth.

3 From Images of Darkness to Perennial Twilight: *Gertrudis*

Summary 3.1 Introduction: Foix's Hyperconcrete Metaphors. – 3.2 A Tormented Lover and the Autonomy of Art: "Daybook 1918 (Fragments)". – 3.2.1 Enclosed Poetic Spaces. – 3.2.2 "No Work Is, in the Final Hour, Useless". – 3.2.3 Suffocating Darkness: Nothing Escapes Transformation. – 3.3 Frustration and Failure: "Plaça Catalunya – Pedralbes".

3.1 Introduction: Foix's Hyperconcrete Metaphors

This chapter will outline the metaphorical uses of darkness to refer to the hardships experienced by the poet in pursuit of stable knowledge of himself and of the world around him. According to Jordi Marrugat (2020, 503), the most immediate coordinates of Foix's rhetoric and poetry are those of post-symbolism. An influential example of this tradition is *La paraula en el vent* (The Word in the Wind, 1914) by Josep Carner (1884-1970). Foix's first compositions "are built as processes of knowledge of the experience in time, by means of love and poetry understood as an inner fight" (Marrugat 2020, 503). The main features of these works include apparent simplicity, metaphoric and symbolic density, intertextual richness, and an abundance of antitheses and paradoxes (503). Foix explored repeatedly the expressive possibilities of lyricism and the genuine correlation of experience in creation, and he acknowledged their stagnation upfront.

In order to explain why he would believe that darkness could be a necessary element in processes of understanding, and what is more,

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-924-5/003

higher understanding, obscurity will be singled out as the condition of possibility for a specific mode of vision and writing that Foix assumed as his own in the "*position of poetry researcher*" (*LIO*, 115). This standpoint serves as the means for an obstinate effort to find orientation in the world through a systematic practice of sowing dark likenesses, that is, through the approach to the fantastic fabric of sensual and intellectual perception – and the poetic appropriation of *phantasmata*. As Giorgio Agamben argued:

> [A]lmost all modern poetry, from Mallarmé onward, consists of fragments, as it alludes to something (the absolute poem) that can never be fully evoked, but only made present through its negation. (Agamben 1977, 40-1)

Pere Gimferrer, in his study on Foix (1984, 131-41), included a concise and erudite analysis of the nature of his metaphors. Against the extended prejudice that such a poetic proposal was solipsistic and private, or deliberately absurd, close to the automatisms of Dada and of some surrealists, Gimferrer pointed out that his metaphors were never "pure, non-logical images". The critic observed that obscure poets, such as Góngora or Mallarmé, kept their metaphors in tension between their enigmatic form and a concrete point of reference. They are "reducible" to factual reality, and that allows for their meaningful description, even though their purpose and scope may elude any given thorough explanation (134). Their extreme condensation, or, in Rosenberg's terms, complexity, may lead to the loss of essential bits of information that the hermeneut would need to put together in order to properly identify their referents. To Gimferrer, this is the main reason why a legend of total darkness enshrouded the poet (135).

Ferrater outlined a similar perspective on Foix's metaphors and compared them to Saint-John Perse's phantasmagorical effects, caused by "excessive precision" (Ferrater 1987, 58). In relation to this idea, which opposes formal affectation in favor of synthetic density of meaning, Foix would add: "To save bricks or words is the noblest and most austere venture of the builder and the versifier" (Foix [1971] 1995, 25; [OC 4, 443-9]). His images are meaningful, as Gimferrer argued, and they are, as declared by the poet himself and proven by Ferrater, concrete, precise, and real too. This is crucial to grasp the experimental nature of his poetic endeavor. Metaphors are obscure precisely because they are concrete, and because their genesis and purpose are rooted in the factual world, neither in gratuitous automatisms nor in pure mental abstractions. In his reading of a coetaneous poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, Vega referred to the "dislocation of sense" in his works, characterized by the mobility and originality of the images that express the "genuine ambiguity within the

human soul" (Vega 2021, 23). This angle will prove helpful in understanding the ubiquity of certain tropes and images in Foix's works.

Foix thematized the difficulty of comprehending words and experiences in his works. His difficult images and their dislocated sense articulate darkness at two interrelated levels: dark images are found in both poetry and in life, and the pathway that connects the latter with the former, that is, poetic creation, does not explain them within the framework of a teleology of clarity. As it will be shown, even though the clarification of the meaning of real – and fantastic – likenesses is the very object of the poet's practice, dark likenesses proliferate without remedy. Clarifying, just like understanding and distinguishing, are kept beyond the realms of possibility in the poetic space. Its objects seem inevitably pushed to mutation, to an indeterminate process of transfiguration and production of new likenesses, which are never fixated in form or relations.

Foix's poetic choices, framed by repetition and variation, approach existential and metaphorical confusion equally. His relational and objective poetics finds in the excessive plurality of the real, which is inaccessible to discursive logic, its poetic gravitational center. In a few words, the following sections will showcase that understanding loftily does not mean clarifying dark likenesses, but assuming their objectual quality of being impenetrable to discourse. The purpose of the quest for comprehension is not the certification of veracity of poetic propositions and worldly realities, but an emphasis on the ethical and practical dimensions of creative endeavor (Rosenberg 1981, 43). Foix took the risk of searching for a practice that allowed for a sufficient form of reasoning, in spite of the inevitable disorientation: "among fools and sages, to reason" (*SIDD*, "To Learn How to Narrate…", 72, v. 14).

3.2 A Tormented Lover and the Autonomy of Art: "Daybook 1918 (Fragments)"

3.2.1 Enclosed Poetic Spaces

In the first section of *Gertrudis*, known as "Daybook 1918 (Fragments)", darkness is a constantly invasive presence. It consists of twelve very short poems in prose with no individual title.[1] These prose poems follow one another as diary entries of a spiteful lover, tormented and frustrated because his beloved Gertrudis abandoned him. Her

1 Ten of the poems had already been published by Foix, but not as a collection nor in their definitive order. They can be found in an issue of *La Revista* (January-December 1926), and in issues 7 and 8 of *L'Amic de les Arts*, from October and November 1926.

inconsiderate laughter hurts him, and he begs for solitude after being defeated in the jousts of love:

> Raise high the walls of my street. Let them tower so high that at nightfall neither the murmur of the fountains nor the agonizing shriek of the trains might enter. See to it that my street measures the very width of my step. Form no openings in the walls, and lower every flag and pennant from the tops of the turrets. (*G*, "Raise High…", 11; Venuti, 5)

The first motif of darkness is not the night, which could be starlit or even radiant, but rather the personal enclosed space that the lover longs for, to give in to self-pity and to procure himself just a single joy:

> Grant me no more than the joy that remains at daybreak after my beloved's shadow has passed at midnight, the testimony of a red flower withering in the dimness, or a crushed shoe floating on the surface of a puddle. (*G*, 11)

In the first poem, he had already declared his thirst for vengeance and his will to erect a space of his own that allowed him to resist the narrowness he perceives in treason: "The ceiling will not be, as now, so very low" (*G*, "I Wounded…", 11; Venuti, 3). His bitter isolation makes him wish to be deprived of hearing – not only seeing – "neither the murmur of the fountains nor the agonizing shriek of the trains" (*G*, "Raise High…", 11; Venuti, 5).

Darkness and occultation affect equally natural dews and trains, two recurring images throughout Foix's works. In the last verse of a sonnet from *Alone, and Mourning*, Foix wrote: "The new inflames me and I'm in love with the old" (*SIDD*, "I Like, at Random…", 74, v. 14; Rosenthal, 7). Analogically, the natural and the artificial are as intertwined in Foix's poetics as the old and the new. When invoked together, fountains and trains double down on total deprivation: the speaker deadens both subtle and deafening sounds, and in sum rejects anything that could bring about change, birth, and renewal. The disappearance of the dew that springs from the rock, and the vanishment of the passing train, synthesize an image of immobility and of the interruption of time. From inside the walls with no windows, this voluntary captive is only comforted by the beloved's death, evoked by the sordid images of the decaying flower and the abandoned shoe.

This intensification of violent imagery culminates in the act of assassination in the third poem: "As for Gertrudis, she lies dead at the foot of the abyss where I hurled her headlong" (*G*, "She Assured Me…", 11; Venuti, 7). Writing is condensed into words that exude hopelessness, where the subject alone is at stake. Despite this grim image, Gertrudis reappears in the following poems and in other

sections of the book. Thus, Foix dispels the chronological illusion that might accompany a collection of texts gathered under the title "Daybook 1918 (Fragments)", while at once reinforcing their intimate and confessional tone. The scraps of the personal diary are disorganized and incomplete. Just like the hyperconcretion of the metaphors prevented or difficulted a surefooted identification of each image's real referent, the fragmentary condition of these prose poems serves a similar goal: it dispels the illusion of chronicity as a positive, unilineal phenomenon (Kermode 1967, 56). As the reader is prevented from reading any complete version of the ill-fortuned love affair, Foix de-emphasized the narrative relevance of the prose texts and conversely enhanced their oneiric nature[2], which destabilizes the meaning of facts and multiplies their possibilities of poetic objectivation. This is immediately perceived as a task of prospection or immersion in the instability of processes of comprehension of the world and of oneself.

Early approaches to Foix's prose poems, such as those by Tomàs Garcés (1901-1993) and Guillem Díaz-Plaja (1909-1984), in 1932, noted the poet's rhyme and rhythm strategies in order to avoid easy and formalist solutions. Díaz-Plaja even suspected that when Foix revised his own texts, his absolute priority was the destruction of any rhythm that was too mellifluous (Díaz-Plaja 1932, 5).[3] Antonio Rodriguez took a similar approach when addressing the *poeticité* of Max Jacob's prose texts in *Le cornet à dés* (1917), compared with those by Baudelaire and Mallarmé, which Jacob felt were too constrained by narrative coherence:

> This criticism does not mean that prose poems cannot contain narrations, but that it is necessary to divert them from their narrative purpose […], through an "atmosphere of dream" that manages to provoke a "doubt", without relying on the frameworks of dreaming […]. The immersion is in them much stronger, the instability more persistent. (Rodriguez 2012, 343)

2 Joan Ramon Resina argued that Foix's writing had no relation to Breton's programmatic automatism, but that he was rather his forerunner in a specific sense: the relocation of poetic activity to the indecisive territory between wakefulness and sleep (Resina 1997, 33).

3 This topic has attracted considerable critical attention. Lluís Montanyà (1936, 55) claimed that the poet obeyed a melody that flowed from something more intimate than words. Gabriel Ferrater, in his 1966-67 lectures at the University of Barcelona, compared Foix with Pound and Brecht due to their shared strategy of separating the notion of verse from the notion of mellifluousness or harmony, replacing the latter with the notion of semantic solidity (Ferrater 1987, 64-5). Regarding the poetic nature of Foix's prose poems, cf. Terry 1985, 100-5; Morris 1986, 135-9; Castells-Cambray 1987, 113-14; Geisler 1988, 70; Gavagnin 1991, 153-5; and finally Quintana i Trias 2016, who focused on the narrative and occultation resources in *The Star of Mr. Perris*.

In one of the "Meridians" (22-01-1930), Focius gathered several authoritative appraisals of Max Jacob from the French press, and quoted Apollinaire's opinion on his apparently simple yet odd poems:

> Max Jacob's lyricism is flavored by a delicious style, sharp, bright, and often delicately humoristic, which makes it somewhat inaccessible to the arrogant lovers of rhetoric and of the System: those who consider rhetoric and not poetry. ("Max Jacob", 22-01-1930, 5)

Nearly twenty years later, the poet adopted a similar polemic tone to praise Jacob's compositions in the first issue of the magazine *Ariel* (1946):

> [His poems,] so bright, annoy the pharisee and baffle the pretentious, but the philistines put on a laughter and would want us all to laugh with them. They ignore that humility is, to the purest among poets, the expression of highest wisdom. (Foix 1946, 16 [OC 4, 133-4])

The polysemy of brightness and clarity serves Foix to highlight the proximity of surrealist fantasy and supernatural intuition, that is, the religious element in Jacob's works: "From the surreal to the supernatural, exceptional spirits breeze through" (Foix 1946, 16). Vallcorba noted that, in 1918, Foix's close friend and poet Joaquim Folguera (1893-1919) had already perceived an intimate affinity between Jacob and Foix, especially in regard to their shared enthusiasm for paradoxes ([Folguera] "Poesia catalana" 1918, 89). Vallcorba (2002, 58) expanded on Folguera's parallelism and added to it that both poets were "displeased by the mimetic nature of poetry" and had "faith in the possibility of the creation of autonomous and independent literary universes".

3.2.2 "No Work Is, in the Final Hour, Useless"

The quarrel around the autonomy of art and bourgeois taste is crucial here. Foix's permanent attacks against various modes of formalism and, above all, aestheticism, echo the deliberate antagonism against it led by many avant-gardists (see Bürger 1984, 16-48; Marcuse 1977; Bru, Martens 2006). He opposed the consideration of art as an autonomous, self-sufficient phenomenon, and despised its institutionalization, aimed at the appeasement and distraction of the public. Nevertheless, avant-gardist solutions did not seem to convince him. In the first issues of the magazine *Monitor* (1921-23), directed by Foix and Josep Carbonell (1897-1979), the poet vehemently argued that art had to abandon the illusion of autonomy, for it only

led to apoliticism, which was its most undesirable feature (cf. Foix 1921, 1 [OC 4, 21-5]). In the 1925 essay called "some Considerations on Avant-Garde Literature" (*AC1925*), published in the second issue of *Revista de Poesia*, he returned to this same topic. With the futurist experience especially on mind, he argued that the avant-gardists had merely substituted the dictum 'Art for Art's sake' with "Adventure for Adventure's sake" (*AC1925*, 68 [OC 4, 28]). Moreover, he claimed that they lacked the idealism that had been cherished by the romantics, as well as their humanitarianism (*AC1925*, 68). Foix concluded this article with a blunt judgment:

> [O]ne would advise them to stop writing. If their literature does not exercise the beneficial social function that is assigned to it […] why waste so much paper, so much useless book? Don't ask them. They'll answer, if they like you and want to be polite, that it's for sport. (*AC1925*, 68)

A few months earlier, Breton had published his *Manifeste du surrealisme* (1924), defining surrealist practice as follows:

> Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express – verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner – the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern. (Breton 1969, 26)

Meanwhile, Catalan avant-gardists read and commented on the famous lecture by the critic Henri Bremond at the Institut de France. According to Bremond, pure poetry presents itself as a practice akin to prayer and mystical contemplation, as it overcomes transcends rational discourse and confronts mystery directly, without mediation. In summary, poetry led poets to grasp the infinitely superior, invisible reality:

> Real, unitive knowledge, we say, of the two activities that the entire present work aims to compare to one another. In both, in the poet and in the mystic, there is grasping, possession of the real. (Bremond 1926, 211)

The writer and journalist Lluís Montanyà (1903-1985), who would sign the avant-gardist *Yellow Manifesto* together with Salvador Dalí and the critic Sebastià Gasch (1897-1980) in 1928, praised Bremond's efforts to remove rhetoric paraphernalia from French poetry, and considered him the leading theorist of an aesthetic revolution (Subiràs i Pugibet 1999, 217). The critics Josep Maria Castellet and Joaquim Molas argued however that Bremond's discourse was rooted in the

long tradition of romantic art and symbolism, and that the adventure of 'pure poetry' was the epigone of intellectualist symbolism (Castellet, Molas 1963, 92). Foix is thus not an epigone but a renovator of these discourses. Much closer to Jacob than to Bremond, the poet claimed a social and public space of intervention and engagement for poetry, stemming from its direct connection with mundane reality. This is why, when commenting on Breton's *La position politique du surrealism*, he stated:

> Art, then – and poetry –, according to Breton […] pursues its own revolution. With independence from any immediate, political or social revolutionary end. This conclusion, for us, is not a bolt from the blue. ("Notes sobre llibres" 1935, 31)

In the 1925 essay on avant-garde art (*AC1925*), Foix positioned himself against the absence of political and social implications in the works of certain previous artists, "to whom avant-gardism was a clever game, an aesthete's indulgence, a display of literary exuberance (Apollinaire)" (*AC1925*, 66).[4] This attitude is, for Foix, the complete opposite of avant-gardism. Yet, as though Guillaume Apollinaire himself had spoken directly to him with the lines: "Soyez indulgents quand vous nous comparez | A ceux qui furent la perfection de l'ordre | Nous qui quêtons partout l'aventure" (1918, 199), Foix ended his essay with a tone of conciliation. He blessed the artistic autonomy sought by some avant-gardists with subtle slyness:

> No work is, in the final hour, useless. Less still boldness of spirit. Dadaism was an exercise in irresponsibility. Here you have the athletes who have most profited from it: the Surrealists. Leave them to their orgy: the neophyte's madness! Balance regained, they will discover a few images that are fresh and new, quite useful, and they will free the imagination from the dregs that infect it. (*AC1925*, 68; Venuti, 141[5] [OC 4, 29])[6]

4 Foix was being deliberately polemic when he refused to call Apollinaire or Salvat-Papasseit avant-gardists. Joan Ramon Resina (1997, 12) argued that he did not agree with their apparently absolute creative freedom, tied to ludic experimentation, but nevertheless always reintegrated in an ordered and appeasing tradition. See Balaguer 1997, 56-61; Marí 2002, 206-22; Santamaria de Mingo 2007, 115; and Marrugat 2009, 226, for Foix and Folguera's intense interest in and sincere admiration for Apollinaire.

5 Lawrence Venuti translated a later stage of this text, published in *L'Amic de les Arts* in 1927 (*AC1927*), but this paragraph remained untouched.

6 In a 1985 interview, Foix acknowledged having drawn from Breton "some principles that served my literature", while introducing other, less "subversive" ones, that the leader of Parisian surrealism lacked (Foix 2014, 226). In his old age, the poet sought to de-emphasize the subversive and engaged features of his poetic and political standpoint

3.2.3 Suffocating Darkness: Nothing Escapes Transformation

The dense, oneiric tapestry of *Gertrudis* is no antic of a neophyte. Foix conceived ardor and freedom as positive values to be harnessed by the poet, the politician, and the journalist alike (*AC1925*, 68). Pure psychic automatism is almost never among his poetic coordinates, nor is a revelation of the mechanisms of thought exempt from aesthetic or moral concerns (Bou 2024, 53). In the orgy without apparent end of dadaists and surrealists, however, he perceived that poetry had a social function that escaped the immediate intentions of their authors. The concession "no work is, in the final hour, useless" does not insinuate an acquiescence of automatic and irreflective artistic practices, but an idea of the nature of poetry transcending style. Foix was well aware of the importance, the impact, and the renewing potential of surrealism, as is proven by a project of his – unaccomplished –, of publishing an anthology of surrealist literature with illustrations by Miró or Dalí.[7]

Gimferrer eloquently explained that *Gertrudis* is constituted by an "almost obsessive system – typical of oneiric processes – of *leit-motive*, repetitions, interrelations, and corresponding references", and that it is a "tapestry of complex relationships, superimposed and interwoven" (Gimferrer 1984, 12). The collection of these poems proposes the kaleidoscopic reading of disorganized and fragmentary entries of a diary. While many avant-gardists reacted to the existential ennui with the most dangerous acrobatics of the soul (*AC1925*, 68 [OC 4, 28]), Foix instigated the proliferation of the fantastic and the unbelievable in the 'poetic real' (*DC*, "On the Poetic Real", 780-2), for both the fantastic and the unbelievable were as real as the words – fountains, trains – used to present them.

Inside this hermetic labyrinth without initiation rite, the speaker is suffocated between walls, the abyss, and the night sky, which condense the intimate mystery of the meaning of his actions: "Or is it that so many thousands of stars glittering in the celestial blackness fail to exalt the joy of my solitude?" (*G*, "She Assured Me…", 11; Venuti, 7). In this poem, the third of "Daybook 1918 (Fragments)", darkness thickens and becomes inevitable: everything is endarkened. It is unclear whether this utter darkness is the result of the erection of the tallest walls that secluded the spiteful lover in the previous poem, but the longing for solitude seems fulfilled:

during the first decades of the century, following a strategy of particularization of his own approach to avant-gardism, as will be outlined below (cf. Bou 2024, 59-68).

7 Salvador Dalí connected Foix with the Parisian surrealists. In a letter from around October 15th, 1933, Dalí wrote: "Dear friend Foix: As soon as I arrived in Paris I told Breton about your project, and he is very interested" (cf. Santos Torroella 1986, 113).

> The stables lie empty, as do the houses. Only my horse and I wander the village, night and day, through the labyrinth of its shadows. (*G*, 11)

The "abyss", the "celestial blackness", and the "shadows" of the town and of the objects mirror the general darkening of everything around the poet, including his black horse. The horse, a traditional phallic symbol, insinuates sensual unrest and frustrated concupiscence in the paintings of Füssli (*The Nightmare*, 1781) and De Chirico (*Lotta di centauri*, 1909),[8] and it also signifies the poet's thoughts and words (Boehne 1980, 27). In the third poem, it is singled out, as the others and their riders vanished, but the image of the horse is also a crucial element in the unceasing transformations. In a different poem, the cathedral frequently visited by Gertrudis mutates, "and in its place, vastly deserted, stood a statue of my horse in polychrome glass, gleaming in the faint rose windows of the hillsides" (*G*, "How Many Times…", 12; Venuti, 9). This monument to onanism glows and keeps the scene in a *chiaroscuro* that proves indispensable for guaranteeing some kind of visibility, but under no circumstances a definitive orientation for the speaker, who stumbles amidst equivocal, transformed elements.

The philosopher Dietmar Kamper referred to the space and home of existence as an "ewige Dämmerung" ('perennial twilight'). With this metaphor, he aimed at outlining life in the borderlands, characterizing forms of dwelling that are always mediated by uncertainty and aimlessness. To the cartographic desire emerging from a life lived in *chiaroscuro*, Kamper indicated its corresponding poetic figures: "But of course people do not only dwell. They also make expeditions, excursions over the limit of the middle realm" (Kamper 1995, 63). A significant number of Foix's poems are vertebrated around diverse forms of adventure amidst eternal twilight. Josep Romeu, in his prologue to *From "Daybook 1918"*, considered this a fundamental feature of his poetics: *"At the basis of his stance, at the very onset of Foix's departure, is the enthusiasm for risk and the attraction for the adventurous research*" (Romeu 1956, 9).

Along these adventures, alarming and discomforting voices that come from the outside often appear as distinctive elements of the enshrouding darkness. These are thematized by the poet as anonymous talk, plural and impersonal, and they are always regarded with skepticism. These sources of unreliable reasons – and even just

8 Bou explained that Foix kept a painting by his childhood friend Josep Obiols, made in the style of De Chirico: a naked young man riding a horse on a beach (Bou 2024, 109). In one of the "Meridians", dedicated to Chirico, Focius highlighted his secret and fragile voluptuosity, regarded as a primitive power that brings humankind closer to beasts. The poet also pointed out Chirico's plastic sensation of loneliness, shared with Böcklin, Lorrain, and Poussin ("Chirico", 04-05-1932, 3 [OC 4, 546-7]).

noise – are in stark contrast to the speaker's obsessive process of contraction:

> She assured me that two hundred young men lived in the village, each the owner of a black horse like mine. But I scrutinized their stables, one by one, and I exposed her ruse. (*G*, "She Assured Me…", 11; Venuti, 7)

> They told me you had resumed the ancient custom, returning to the temple every day. Yet today when I arrived there, the temple had disappeared. (*G*, "How Many Times…", 12; Venuti, 9)

> They had told me that behind the curtain you would be rehearsing a new circus attraction, but the curtain hid only a very high wall enclosing the hypothetical gardens of the great castle where the moon dissolves, every night, in piperidine. (*G*, "At Six in the Afternoon…", 14; Venuti, 23)

The last quotation, from the eleventh of the prose poems, refers explicitly to the vanishing and transformation of exteriority, that is, of the beloved and her own space, suffocated by the density of confusing and darkening images of the poetic space. Josep Maria Balaguer believes that Gertrudis exceeds by far the category of mere pretext or ideal, and that she harnesses a living reality which manifests itself in direct opposition to the ideals and desires projected onto it (Balaguer 1997, 66-7).

From the beginning to the end of the eleventh poem there are images related to the theme of darkness. The beginning incardinates the action:

> At six in the afternoon – not twelve at night – we laid the dusty frames against the corner so that they might cast their violet shadow over the entire street. (*G*, 14; Venuti, 23)

Immediately, two darknesses, cosmic and human, come together and begin to overlap: "at nightfall, […] a row of shadows sketched biblical landscapes in phosphorescent traces" (*G*, 14). The poem states that only an hour has passed, but oppressive darkness is already total, and Gertrudis' disappearance and transmutation culminates in death and dismemberment:

> I called, without response, at every house; I followed the tunnel, in vain, from one end to the other. At seven, however, when I went off to moan about my misfortune in the gloom of the stable, I discovered the proprietor in mad Miquel's back room, under the stealthy light of an oil lamp, holding your severed head, where he was trying on several subversively curled wigs. (*G*, 14)

This image conveys the possibility of violence against female characters and is therefore intimately related to the cruel lover. Such forms of violence, consisting of deformation, mutilation and putrefaction, were not exceptional in the *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics, in artists like Raimon Casellas and poets like the young Foix (Sobrer 2003, 182). To Gabriella Gavagnin (1991, 161), these violent images are to be connected directly to the thematization of impotence:

> These images thus depict a shattered reality, scattered into a thousand fragments, impossible to reassemble. In it, establishing contact or communication proves to be impossible.

Whether understood as a labyrinthic tapestry or as a shattered mirror, plurality associated with dismemberment, anonymity and indetermination, is a key feature of *Gertrudis* and of the thematization of darkness. It prevents the resolution of the conflict and keeps the satisfaction of desire in permanent tension:

> May doors and windows be walled up. May no flags fly above the tower. May seaweed grow monstrously and block passageways. (*G*, 13; Venuti, 17)

Gertrudis' lovers, the rivals, multiply too, and their deaths open no future expectations and cause only incremented bitterness:

> Deep in the pools of his pupils, however, I saw you with the flower at your lips and the weapon in your hand. Why have you abandoned me, Gertrudis? (*G*, "When We Were Standing Together…", 14; Venuti, 21)

In addition to the multiplication and overlapping of confusing figures, the polyphony of anonymous voices contributes to the oppressive disorientation as well, due to their unreliability and instability. They continuously lead the poet to encounter transmuting, disturbing objects that only enhance his utter loneliness (Boehne 1980, 42).

3.3 Frustration and Failure: "Plaça Catalunya – Pedralbes"

Foix's early prose poems do not offer much hope regarding the attainment of a safe, secluded space for the speaker, in which to hide from concerns and failure, and from which to eventually reconstitute a coherent image of himself and of the world. This pessimistic tone pervades throughout *Gertrudis*, as shown by its last poem, "Christmas Story".[9] The lover desperately looks for his beloved Gertrudis, fol-

9 Published beforehand in the ninth issue of *L'Amic de les Arts*, in December 1926.

lowing a pointless mountain route and encountering the most unusual characters:

> I heard the noise of voices and hearty laughter, which I believed came from revelers who were heading home, but it was in fact caused by hundreds of night watchmen, ecked in festival garb like the one from my neighborhood and laden as well with their nocturnal gear. The hilltop was crowned not by any ruined castle, which I had imagined to be the site of the ballroom where my darling spent her evenings, but rather by a gloomy barracks for carabiniers. (*G*, 29-30; Venuti, 104-5)

Several previously mentioned poetic motifs converge in this poem. The speaker is captive between walls, a prisoner in his own home and village: "Every passage was closed" (*G*, 29). Despite his isolation, unrest does not end, and the images of natural and artificial exteriority become threatening, thus revealing an unquenchable desire: "Why was that absurd bloom of poppies at the height of the walls, beyond reach? […] But where was the railroad? Where were the trains?" (*G*, 29).

This desire that never abandons the disoriented speaker is frequently thematized in *Gertrudis*, and throughout Foix's works, with the narration of a departure from the enclosed space, in which the subject ventures out in a state of almost complete bewilderment, to face utter confusion and ever-transfiguring signs. Besides the framework of unrequited love, other poems in *Gertrudis* convey such adventures in a more straightforward way. In the poem "Plaça Catalunya – Pedralbes", the earliest in the book, the pretext is a bizarre tram ride that, apparently, should return the poet from Barcelona to his hometown, Sarrià. The tram has no driver, and only the inspector accompanies him. The features of this man mutate as soon as the text begins: "he was wearing a beard, and I could have sworn his face had been shaven when he appeared before me" (*G*, 21; Venuti, 33). From the tram, the landscape and all its images are unknown to the puzzled and anguished speaker: "I caught only three cypresses close to the Gràcia station, slipping by, but they were completely displaced" (*G*, 21).

The situation closely mirrors the futile trip through hills and valleys described in "Christmas Story". The equivocal voices of the anonymous multitude lead the poet into a world of nocturnal transformations, and the character of the "watchman" resembles the tram inspector, for he acts as his guide but, a moment later, he becomes a swarm of people trying to chase him through the forest. His machinic features also accentuate through the narration, thus emphasizing the impossibility of communication or the satisfaction of the speaker's desire. When they try to understand where they are and how

they got there, the identification of space is made impossible by an endless list of extravagant names, leading to total decomposition of linguistic significance:

> The watchman closed his eyes and said: "No, no. Nak, Nak, Nak… Nagpur, Nak, Nak… Nakhitxevan."
>
> I followed him: "Pp. No, before: Dj, Dk…" I had lost the meaning of the vowels, however, and was ignorant of their value, even their spelling. (*G*, "Christmas Story", 31; Venuti, 106)

Such graphic dissolution of sense is analogous, as Bou asserted, to the decomposition of the name "Gertrudis" in Foix's second book, *KRTU* (Bou 2024, 96). In the first edition of *Gertrudis*, in 1927, the title page displayed a drawing by Miró: a horse, a star, and a feminine figure, circled by an irregular line, as well as the letters of the name of the beloved, which are progressively reduced in size until they become completely unreadable (Bou 2024, 96). And in the poem "KRTU", in the homonymous book, Foix prevented the possibility of recognition of the beloved by the meaningless combination of these already condensed letters:

> Farthest away, four men disappeared on the horizon, each of them laden with a hefty letter of the alphabet. Read together, the different letters spelt a mysterious name: KURT, URKT, TRUK, UKRT, TURK, KRUT… It belonged to the main character in my dreams.
>
> "We shall be late to the ball", I would have said at that point if my speech had answered to my thought. (*K*, 50; Venuti, 112)

Dissolution, confusion, and depersonalization, they all point at what Marco Alessandrini called the "unattainable inexhaustibility of desire" represented by Gertrudis (Alessandrini 2017, 92). Miró's design on the book's cover is not that different from the ink wash drawings by Dalí printed at the side of the "Christmas Story" published in *L'Amic de les Arts*.[10] The character depicted in the first of these simple, black paintings is identified with a subtitle: "*…the night watchman…*" The dark, bipedal shape wears a cape and carries exaggeratedly big keys, but it lacks any facial features ("Conte de Nadal", December 1926, 11). Dalí was acting as a pioneering hermeneut of the words: "The watchmen all looked and carried themselves in ways that made them identical to my companion" (*G*, "Christmas Story", 30; Venuti, 105).

10 *L'Amic de les Arts* (1926-29), was a monthly magazine published in the city of Sitges, founded and directed by Josep Carbonell (1897-1979), J.V. Foix's close friend. It was a pioneering avant-garde magazine that covered both literature and the arts, while also commenting on local news and life (Kent 2012, 147-8).

The frustration of love and the impotence of recognition are two of the most prominent vectors of desire in *Gertrudis*, and they conflate into a deeper suspicion about the impossibility of finding stable enough realities, both in poetry and in life. As Patricia Boehne synthesized: "we are left with a wavering doubt as to what is real, a vague sense of the folly and disillusionment in the quest for beauty, truth or Gertrudis" (Boehne 1980, 28). Foix's strategic blocking of every chance to provide a stable image of the human being resembles the notion of 'anti-myth' attributed by Hermann Broch to Kafka and Joyce, due to their skepticism about the mediumistic nature of poetic creation and to their thematization of *Hilflosigkeit* as a form of impotence (Broch 1955, 164).

The frenetic transformations left behind by the poet in each prose poem, such as the dislocated cypresses near the Gràcia station in "Plaça Catalunya – Pedralbes", showcase the ambivalence of the adventures. They invoke both hope and hostility, and the frustration of expectations built around them does not prevent the poet from venturing out again into the unknown. When they end, he is usually enclosed again in an oppressive space of discomfort, as invaded by darkness as the claustrophobic and useless refuges in the first section of *Gertrudis*. The open space of the adventures and these suffocating spaces are Foix's two forms of thematizing helplessness.

"Plaça Catalunya – Pedralbes" explicitly addresses the destruction of the speaker's identity that happens during the adventure, and it articulates it by means of a very peculiar space of darkness and enclosure. The tram inspector forces the speaker to get off and walk in some indeterminate forest. There, he tortures him and forces him to wear a cilice made of cast-metal letterpress types. The inspector's mutating identity changes once more, always unstable, but now reveals a name – that of Josep Maria López-Picó (1886-1959), a renowned, religious poet:

> I found myself facing the poet López-Picó, who, appalled at being discovered in his crime, immersed his arm in the dark cloud that oozed around us, blackening his hand to soil his face and disguise it. (*G*, 21; Venuti, 35)

The executioner darkens his bloody face and transforms again while leaving the scene: the process of recognition remains incomplete, and all logical expectations built into the narration fade. The poet is left on the floor, bruised and wounded, surrounded by the enigmatic "dark cloud". The inspector-executioner-poet López-Picó has turned into a single, menacing eye that gazes upon him. The final paragraph pushes the paradox of fulfilling the original desire for solitude to its extreme, for the apparent consolation is, in fact, a narration of the speaker's annihilation – alone, in the dark, rendered insignificant:

> The poet had disappeared in front of me. A hint of gaiety brought round my heart while the hair shirt loosened itself from my body. The ex-inspector's eye was another star of an unwonted glitter. It distilled a honey that softened my lips and, in singeing the thread of my memory, exalted me to the heavens while intoning the most charming canticles of Scheherazade in a gesture of gratitude. (*G*, "Plaça Catalunya – Pedralbes", 22; Venuti, 35)

The starry night reappears, bringing with it the futile sensation of protection that it evoked in the third poem of "Daybook 1918 (Fragments)": "Or is it that so many thousands of stars glittering in the celestial blackness fail to exalt the joy of my solitude?" (*G*, "She Assured Me…", 11; Venuti, 7). The joy and honey that dulcify the speaker's lips while the cilice detaches from his body are analogous to the thousand scintillating stars that praised his solitude. In both cases, but especially in "Plaça Catalunya – Pedralbes", any contentment is destroyed by the perception that agonizing solitude is insufficient to correspond to an inexhaustible desire. The vanishing of the body and the burning of the "thread of my memory" that result from the poet's "divinization" are signs of a funerary rite, accompanied by a song descending from the sky, "in a gesture of gratitude" that embraces and comprehends the entirety of life at the moment of death.

Balaguer interpreted Scheherazade's song as a testament to the possible resistance against destruction and sacrifice. He argued that the narrator of the poem discovers that the false reality insinuates an authentic one, and that only amidst the ruins of the former can one enter the latter. Literature, according to the critic, is the instrument for destroying the former false reality, because it reveals its falsehood to the mind (Balaguer 1997, 63). The emphasis on demolition may also be evidence of a subversive, creative stance derived from the writings of Reverdy or Apollinaire. However, it is noteworthy that the singularity of Foix's narration lies in the obscure communication it establishes between poetic and real matter due to their obscure confusion. His accumulation of unusual images builds a segment of reality that remains as confusing and obscure as its factual referents. In the bitter irony of the narration of one's own death, a vitalist pulsion remains even if the poet attempted to find guidance in annihilation. Far from that, his poetic objects provide only confusing and mutating images that overlap with a puzzling and ever-transforming real world. The poet is trapped in the inevitability of adventure, renewed with every loss, disappearance, and incomprehensible event.

In Foix's early prose poems, unrequited desire made an impotent and frustrated lover wander from an enclosed, purportedly impenetrable, private space to other equally suffocating places. Violence against Gertrudis and against himself, as well as the continuous transformation of characters and settings, prevented any comfort.

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that darkness is thematized as a precondition of the confusion and indetermination of the narration, and as a veil that eventually enshrouds the narrator in the assumption of his failure and the frustration of his desire. In the section called "Notes on the Sea", still in *Gertrudis*, dark objects will reappear intimately connected to the questioning of the possibility of finding stable poetic images to provide some sort of knowledge. A close reading of these poems will allow scrutiny of the poetic objects that correspond to Foix's frustrating but endless adventures.

4 A Poetics of Accumulation of Likenesses
From the "Notes on the Sea" to the *Stone Poems*

Summary 4.1 Introduction: Neither Chaste nor Mutilated, nor Academic Images. – 4.2 "I Worship the Nothing in Myriad Images". – 4.3 Realism and the Proliferation of Metaphoric Material. – 4.4 Poetic Objects as Material Novelties.

4.1 Introduction: Neither Chaste nor Mutilated, nor Academic Images

The "Notes on the Sea" are a group of six remarkably short paragraphs that were originally put together in *L'Amic de les Arts* in 1926.[1] In that context, these notes were displayed to the right of a painting by Cézanne, *La Maison Maria avec une vue du Château Noir* (ca. 1895). On the previous page, Sebastià Gasch published a three-column essay devoted to the piece by the painter from Aix-de-Provence. Gasch was a detractor of Cézanne's approach to painting itself, which he accused of relying only on the senses and not on a preconceived and strongly interiorized idea of composition, derived from architectonic laws, "the offspring of number and of reason" (Gasch 1926, 4). Without mentioning it, Gasch echoed some elements of the

1 Published in the sixth issue of *L'Amic de les Arts*, in September 1926.

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-924-5/004

aesthetic doctrine of 'arbitrarism',[2] popularized by Eugeni d'Ors some years earlier. It consisted in the imposition of a balanced, intellectual dominion over the work, which would free creators from sensory contingency and place them equally distanced from romantics and realists (Ors, "Sobre una alusió", 1906, 1). To the critic, who titled the article "Cézanne's Tragedy", the painter's works must be comprehended in tragic terms, because he constantly revised, repeated and variated his paintings in pursuit of a balance between forms and colors that he could never find. In sum, Gasch accused Cézanne of lacking an intellectual method of painting, thus mixing up Nature and Art.

As mentioned above, Foix's poems wonder – often explicitly – about the modes of knowledge and the possibilities open to the senses and to reason regarding poetic composition and existential questioning. However, he did not completely align with Gasch's radical separation between Nature and Art, nor did he consider the former to be just "a dictionary of forms" for the artist (Gasch 1926, 4), but rather the source of the communication to which the poet corresponds in the composition. In the prose poems gathered under the title *Quatre nus* (Four Nudes) and included in the first collection of Foix's *Poetic Works* (Nauta, 1964), a poetological statement is laid out in a straightforward manner:

> I want to say, with the ambition of grasping, between desire and dream, many images that murmur to the ears and are sensual to the soul. (*QN*, 287)

Each poem unfolds an image derived from a previous verse of his own, cited as an epigraph: a tree, a rock, a girl, and a horse become the objects of deep poetic exploration. But Foix filled the poems with dark likenesses – that is, with disorganized, accumulative, and decontextualized images, and with recurring transformations and disappearances. From these operations result simple images – hardly sketches – that the poet called "Nudes": "the dry sketch of a tree" (*QN*, 288), "a monolith without alphabet or horoscope" (*QN*, 289), "a naked girl" (*QN*, 291), and "the body, of divine appearance, […] of a horse that neighed quietly" (*QN*, 292). And the poet concluded:

> Thus: rock, tree, horse, pugilist, or girl, naked, are neither chaste nor mutilated, nor academic, but are, for those who know how to contemplate them in their permanent ground of butcher's broom, pure. (*QN*, 292)

2 With *arbitrarisme*, thinkers like Gabriel Alomar (1873-1941) and Eugeni d'Ors (1881-1954) rejected romantic spontaneity, instead championing reason as the sovereign arbiter of the rules of creation beyond perception and representation.

It is worth noting that Foix continuously sought poetic answers to the questions raised by the common consideration of real and fantastic likenesses as obscure. Boehne (1980, 69) interpreted that "existence for Foix departs from a concrete reality, but only acquires a temporary semblance of a specific reality for the beholder". This temporary semblance, offered to himself and to the readers in a fragile form of communication, asserts the resemblance, difference, and relation between real and poetic objects, which is actualized and brought to the foreground by poetic practice.

According to both the initial and the final statements of *Four Nudes*, to understand loftily means to contemplate pure forms that reject academic conventionalisms and, at the same time, "murmur to the ears and are sensual to the soul". These are not dry, intellectual *schemata*. Since at least Baumgarten pointed it out, in poetry, the sensual and the imaginary fall under the common regime of perception and aesthetic knowledge.

4.2 "I Worship the Nothing in Myriad Images"

The short prose poems of "Notes on the Sea" do, in some way, nothing more than what the title suggests. They superimpose perceptions, opinions, and sayings about the sea, coming from an array of diverse and extravagant characters. There is nothing systematic about these notes: they are always concrete and not particularly homogeneous or coherent. The speaker's first person, which can be both singular and plural, is part of the thematized space, and the transforming landscapes and objects disorient him just as much here as in the poems mentioned above. Foix wished to avoid conventional, symbolic formulations that could lead to the consideration of poetic space as a formal pretext. The unexpected juxtaposition of images enables the communication of frustration and disorientation. The first of the "Notes" reads:

> The surprise occurred when, after spending much effort to remove the scenery where various maritime motifs had been painted, we discovered the mysterious corral of the black horses. Come nightfall, they wander the beach by the thousands, a star on their foreheads. (*G*, 25; Venuti, 41)

Expectations are set, focusing on the efforts needed to overcome obstacles and attain some form of revelation that lies beyond a space which, though not literally a cave, harbors deceptive realities. These falsehoods are uncovered by those attempting to dismantle the structures supporting the paintings. In the first half of the poem, all significant terms point toward a maritime and theatrical reinterpretation

of the traditional theme of knowledge as revelation – or unveiling. The surprising conclusion of the text subverts the logic of the poetics of genius, as the thwarted expectations of ἀλήθεια give way to the discovery of the most unexpected wonders beyond understanding.

Foix interrupts the traditional dramatic structure of narration, which typically fosters the readers' belief in the possibility of encountering a revelatory meaning in the lofty heights of the suprasensible. The speaker's failure in the processes of comprehension and satisfaction of desire is, however, not absolute; rather, it underscores, through poetic means, the acknowledgment of the permanently unstable condition of both life and poetry. The latter is consequently revealed as the medium that illuminates this instability through an accumulation of a particular kind of poetic object: the wonder that arises from each attempt at unveiling.

The task of the poet is thematized with the aid of enshrouding darkness, shared between closed and open spaces. It is not a coincidence that the space beyond the painted theatre supports transforms into a nocturnal scene, in which black horses ride and mirror the stars above. The pen, from which the dark animals sprouted, is "mysterious", as it is also the source of proliferation of dark likenesses. Carles Miralles pointed out that "the black horses represent a world beyond appearances, shaped by the sea, to which the 'I' in the poems must have access" (Miralles 1993, 95). While it is clear that poetry grants access to other realities, these are hardly ever a world "beyond appearances", because appearances and likenesses are their very own fabric. Foix's poetic practice does not represent a different reality, but rather brings poetic matter into existence as reality, as a reality that is certainly different but inextricably united with the totality of reality – material, immaterial, poetic, imaginative. The discovery neither removes any veils nor overcomes appearances; it merely reveals its inherently confusing nature.

When this note on the sea is compared with the final two verses of the poem "The Difficult Encounter", from the book *Where Did I Leave my Keys…*, its negative language showcases the fragile and fleeting opportunity to escape self-referentiality and avoid discursive language:

> In night's rustlings upon beaches
> I worship the Nothing in myriad images.
> (*OHD*, 169, vv. 17-18; Rosenthal, 49)[3]

3 Rosenthal's translation interpreted the emphatic "el Res" as 'the Thing'. It is true that Foix continuously uses 'no res', the negation of all things, but 'res' preserves its original Latin meaning only in a few very specific cases and commonly means 'nothing'. Rosenthal acknowledged and emphasized – perhaps a bit too much – the ambiguity of Foix's choice, which is hopefully preserved and rendered more precisely as "the Nothing".

Agamben traced this tradition to "Farai un vers de dreyt nien", by the Provençal Guilhem de Peitieu, a prominent example of poetry understood as a mediation between wakefulness and sleep, addressing the unrest caused by the perception of the emptiness of language (cf. Trueba 2018, 194). This unease had long been shared by religious apophasis, which utilized negative discourse about God as evidence of the inadequacy of conventional theological language to encompass its divine object (Turner 1995, 20-5). Foix occasionally adopted terms and notions close to nocturnal mysticism, derived from the *Psalms* and the *Song of Songs*, and spectacularly exploited by Early Modern Spanish mystics, and employed them in service of linguistic and semantic strategies of displacement and transformation:

> We, dwellers of the new city, have no night, and we have never
> [known what our night is.
> In the night of the Night,
> The abysses of darkness are light to us.
> (*DLCB*, "Blinded by the True Night's Brightness…", 325, vv. 16-18)

Among the sonnets of *Alone, and Mourning*, the quest for the discovery of some stability in the poetic signs and its frustration is metaphorized as immaturity, embodied in the figure of an arrogant adolescent destined to err:

> Like the wandering boy through rooms
> And among sages, hurting from unrest,
> Rises sublimely and affirms Virtue
> And on the morrow weeps treasons under the willows
> Just like that I, a grown man, inebriated with words,
> Affirm the Good, and right away the Evil, and, enthralled
> By the merry fights of cults, or cunning,
> I proclaim the false to be true. And in many fables
> Pride dominates; but I am not elated
> And, penitent, I try out a compromise
> Between the bright Reason and the craving of my fibers.
> Oh, fool! I look for light in my sleep, imprecise,
> And I am then great, and I exalt myself, or submitted,
> I call myself: "Miserable", and I light a pyre with my books.
> (*SIDD*, 78)

Foix's playful irony is indebted to the transcendental weight that irony bears since Friedrich Schlegel and the romantics, as a sign of the mysterious connection between the highest, supernatural images and the humblest ones, in a paradoxical gesture that reveals poetry's intrinsic mystery and mediumistic scope (Geisler 1988, 76; 2016, 156). The same sensation of misery, tied once again to childhood and to the inevitable

darkness that veils the origin and the destination of one's own life, appears in the sonnet that reads, in the first two verses: "Miserable and sad I go deep into the dark | Ice on the eyes and exiled from the plaza" (*SIDD*, 108, vv. 1-2; Boehne 1980, 60). Unquenchable desire is the opposing, resisting force, enabling movement through the shadows into the multiplying appearances: "But I crave salt, mistletoe, and rime ice | Through river basins – and with pleasure! And I flee, and I return" (vv. 5-6). The last tercet in "Miserable and Sad…" manifests the religious dimension of Foix's last sonnets of *Alone, and Mourning*. The speaker, turned into a preaching believer, accepts his own undoing and his transformation into a missionary, a child, and an illiterate, but only if his divine interlocutor – expressively invoked with a capital letter – shares with him the real nature of finitude (Romeu 1985, 72):

> Fix, Lord, my limits and their confines,
> Surround me swiftly, and I will put on
> Child's clothing, and awkward speech.
> (*SIDD*, 108, vv. 12-14; Boehne 1980, 60)

Needless to say, this prayer remains also unrequited, while the poet dives deeper and deeper into the dark (Boehne 1980, 59).

4.3 Realism and the Proliferation of Metaphoric Material

Confusion, as has been argued, is intimately related to the overflowing darkness of the world around the poet, his own interior space, and the metaphoric matter with which poems are built. Each discovery, that is, each process of transfiguration of poetic objects, leads to a state of darkness that is remarkably close to indistinction, but never thoroughly. The fifth of the "Notes on the Sea" reads:

> As the ball comes to an end, sky and sea form a single darkness. The last star founders on a frightening reef, and at the line of the horizon a vague phosphorescence lingers from the arabesque of stony coral, so monstrously enormous. (*G*, 26; Venuti, 49)

Even though Foix's poetic objects do not adequately and comfortably fit into the formal philosophical categories of clarity and distinctness, they are neither absolutely impenetrable nor impossible to distinguish. The "vague phosphorescence", just like the "thousands of stars glittering in the celestial blackness" (*G*, "She Assured Me…", 11; Venuti, 7), and the "light in my sleep" (*SIDD*, "Like the wandering boy…", 78, v. 12), showcase that the metaphors' condition of darkness – the higher they are, the higher understanding climbs up despite their obscurity – is a condition of visibility.

Foix's poetic use of oneiric images is most often a thoughtful creative practice, in which the deliberate exploration of the automatic depths of dreaming is connected with images derived from personal memories, everyday life, and facts read on the newspapers. In an interview from the 1980s, he stated:

> dream holds an advantage for us in that it doesn't give us the entire poem, but rather one of its elements. Sometimes, this element isn't the most important one – it may just be a fragment of the dream or a possible dream. (Foix 2014, 106)

This idea pervades Foix's lifetime, particularly in the first half of the century, whether as a creative branch of psychoanalytic practice, a consequence of the willful Nietzschean verb, or a nuclear element of Bergsonian metaphysics (Sansone 1962, 14). In the ninth poem of *Where Did I Leave my Keys…*, the tone is celebratory, and the speaker identifies with a foolish dreamer journeying along apparently familiar routes that are nevertheless subject to the usual processes of transfiguration, transforming into new paths never before taken.

> When it rains I dance alone
> Dressed in algae, gold, and fishscales.
> There's a stretch of sea at the turning
> And a patch of scarlet sky. (*OHD*, 167, vv. 1-4; Rosenthal, 43)[4]

Sea and sky, which were a single darkness in the fifth of the "Notes on the Sea", now meet again at the turning of the road. Wearing a dress crafted from odd maritime attributes, the speaker finds himself in the rustic landscape of a coastal village, between streets and houses and close to fields and hills. This fragmentary image of the horizon is presented as a fleeting and partial vision seen at the bend or the corner. This is an unsettling space that denies a comprehensive view, as readers walk the path alongside the fool. In the second stanza, a frantic rhythm of transformations affects him, driven by various stimuli and desires:

4 Regarding this poem, Albert Manent commented on Foix's automatic creative process and its relationship with oneiric visions. He recalled that he and other friends were present when the poet, out loud, improvised this piece, departing from one of its verses: "Crazed by a sweet poison". This rules out the possibility of the poem being originated by an oneiric vision immediately transcribed (Foix 2014, 74). Díaz-Plaja (1932) and Montanyà (1936) had highlighted Foix's creative spontaneity, but Veny-Mesquida, who scrutinized all philological evidence of this and other poems, requested caution to the hermeneuts allured by Foix's almost magical ability to improvise long poems. According to the critic, Foix would have had the structure of most compositions already built on his mind – if not in writing – before letting them bloom, either all alone or with friends, with the images and motifs he encountered along the way (Veny-Mesquida 2004, 92).

When I laugh I look hunchbacked
In the pool beneath the threshing floor.
I dress like an old gentleman,
I chase the custodian's wife,
And between pinegrove and kermes oak
I plant my banner.
With a sack-needle I kill
The monster I never name.
When I laugh I look hunchbacked
In the pool beneath the threshing floor.
(*OHD*, 167, vv. 11-20; Rosenthal, 43)

In the third stanza, he closes his eyes, but the processes of transformation do not cease. He conversely transforms into various natural elements. As he embraces the darkness of vision and his own confusing yet willful actions cease – he submerges himself in the world of dreams –, he takes no further distance from surrounding reality:

When I sleep, then I see clearly
Crazed by a sweet poison
With pearls in both hands
I live in a seashell's heart,
I'm a fountain on the canyon floor
And I wild beast's lair,
– Or the waning moon
As it dies beyond the ridge.
When I sleep, then I see clearly
Crazed by a sweet poison. (vv. 21-30; Rosenthal, 43-4)

Such a closer connection suggests a renewed expectation of understanding and communication, opened by the acknowledgment of the common darkness that veils both sea and sky, both life and poetry, both sleep and wakefulness. A poem from 1963, titled "Pictorial value of the forestal rhyme", and first published in the collection of works by Nauta (1964), thematizes this topic, as the speaker wonders about the fleeting appearance of light amidst distinct likenesses: "Will light spark | Amidst image and word?" (AP, 502-3, vv. 33-4). The accumulation of likenesses does not only connect the terrestrial and the celestial, but it also expands in all directions and gives way to the question:

Will light spark
Amidst image and word?
The stone, is it a flower
Whose juices are nourished by the stars?
Pollen: is it the flock?

> Bark: is it a bustling world
> Amidst jolly foams
> And salty pools?
> Sand: is it a starry sky
> With golden trails?
> Heathers: are they the downfall
> For strange, impenitent people? (vv. 33-44)

The expectation of glimpsing light between word and image explicitly addresses the complex relationship between the sensible and the intellectual in poetic expression. Through Foix's repetitive and kaleidoscopic questioning, both spheres converge due to their common origin and the continuous integrity that unites them. The poet wonders whether poetry is a fruitful medium to contribute to the scintillation of light and, consequently, to the finding of some communicative value between fantastic images and between those and the real ones. "Pictorial value of the forestal rhyme" positions Foix in a hybrid stance amidst the overflowing omnipresence of images in the modern world: his expanded concept of poetry allows words to elaborate on imaginal attributes and bring new images into existence.[5] Thirty years before the publication of this poem, Foix highlighted the visual ideal of poetry in an article in *La Publicitat* (27-08-1933):

> If a pinch of disorder elevates good poetry and vivifies it towards the mystery, is it not perhaps due to the fact that poetry is an emulation, in a certain sense, of painting? *It emulates, it does not imitate. Hence, the already underscored coincidence of the plastic "discoveries" made by modern poetry and painting.* ("Pintura i poesia", 27-08-1933, 4)

The poet thus manifested the wide imaginal and verbal significance of metaphors, and he pointed out that such a conception of poetry allowed for the consideration of its products as intertwined with images and other objects. In "Pictorial value of the forestal rhyme", the accumulation of questions disrupts the most common mechanism of construction of a metaphor. Such a suspension of poetic convention prevents the enclosure of any object within a passive, accessible unit of meaning, and turns both terms of the metaphorical construct into likenesses, metaphors descended from but not reducible to any real referent. Foix was clearly opposing the autoreferential aesthetics of representative realism, to which he imputed coldness, solipsism, and miscommunication:

5 Rafael Santos Torroella believed in the solidarity and interpenetration of the arts present in Foix's poetry. He understood that the plastic materiality of his images generates 'presences' and concretions, which demand from readers immediate adhesion, just as painting or sculpture demand it from the spectator (Santos Torroella 1984, 19).

> O chills of the sphere
> And the monomorphism!
> The frivolous killers
> Of the literalist spies. (AP, 503, vv. 45-8)[6]

And alongside them, he spared no critical remarks against other kinds of poets:

> The apparent magnates
> Of the graphism and the enigma
> And of the flaccid scribbles,
> The laureate chorists
> Of the vague landscape
> And of the untouched grotto,
> And the technicians bewitched
> By metamorphosis. (vv. 49-56)

Foix confronts, all at once, the versifiers who imprudently dissolve interrogations in favor of formal and conventional effects, as well as those who believe they can transmute the real world through mere words. In the fictional *Lletra a En Joan Salvat-Papasseit* (Letter to Joan Salvat-Papasseit [*Serra d'Or*, March 1962]), addressed to his late friend and avant-gardist poet (1894-1924), Foix was discreet but firm:

> What can I say? There is perhaps something more of poetry and chance – lyrical, radiant or epicurean, or tragic, harmful, and sinister – in today's mobile reality than in the bucolic and anachreontic descriptions of any florifier,[7] from any faction and any era. (*LJSP*, 246)

In "Pictorial Value of the Forestal Rhyme", Foix carefully displayed concrete and particular objects, either mineral, maritime or vegetal, as well as their corresponding pairs, in a non-dichotomous

6 In the fifth issue of *Trossos*, from April 1918, the "Remarques" on avant-garde art, published anonymously but written by Foix, displayed a severe criticism of realistic literature and an appraisal of cubist analysis: "And there you have it, that today's Art is an art of great *reality*. We must, however, understand *artistic reality*, and not realism, which is the genre we despise the most" ([Foix] "Remarques" 1918, 8). According to Marrugat (2009, 226), this fragment and opinion correspond to Foix's formation period within the postsymbolist cultural *milieu*.

7 The *Jocs Florals* are annual poetry contests inspired by those held in Toulouse between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Re-established in Barcelona in 1859, they awarded prizes for patriotic, romantic, and religious poems, reflecting romantic values. Foix and his contemporaries used the term 'floralista' (here 'florifier') pejoratively to describe poets who clung to outdated, conservative styles and unremarkable aesthetics, and who sought only fame by participating in such contests.

relationship, according to which one member of the pair must vanish or lose preeminence for the other term to fulfill its metaphorical role: "Sand: is it a starry sky | With golden trails?" (AP, 503, vv. 41-2). Always from within the scope of poetic words, which have since now been proven remarkably insufficient to provide any stable image, Foix's faith in the scintillation of light amidst the rhymes never faltered, as he proposed a form of vision that was not limited to imaginal correspondence between signifier and signified, nor to arbitrary lyrical manipulation. It is precisely the interrogation, that is, doubt and uncertainty, that continually reopens the possibility for playful and experimental poetry research.

Rather than falling silent in the face of the limited clarity that poetry could offer about the world's and one's own confusing nature, Foix embraced the proliferation of metaphorical material. This kept both himself and his poetry in a perpetual state of *chiaroscuro*: open to the distant glow of the horizon or the faint twinkle of the dark, open to an eventual, perhaps minimal, attainment of meaning. Rather than abandoning his poetic practice and burning all his books – a ubiquitous threat throughout his works – he layered perplexing images, unfolded without hierarchy, viewing them as dark likenesses that, one after another, or perhaps side by side, described reality, including poetic and fantastic realities, with unspeakable faithfulness. As he remarked in his essay "Some Considerations on Current Art and Literature":

> No one can avoid the fact that I consider my prose texts to be realistic while demanding legitimacy for an appellative that has been appropriated by those who so delightfully cultivate infrarealism or the false copy of a reality, a human notion of reality, before which a great number stand with eyes closed and heart paralyzed. (*AC1927*, 3; Venuti, 136 [OC 4, 33])

The critics Joaquim Molas and Josep Maria Castellet, who championed social realism, commented on this point in their 1963 anthology of Catalan poetry. They believed that Foix was a writer "of realistic intentions, who, due to an expressive insufficiency, had to erect an entire rhetorical edification", the autonomous poem (Molas, Castellet 1963, 91). In his poems, according to them, the intervention of oneiric and magical, rationalist and mediumistic, elevated and popular elements, together with realistic components, leads to an abyss between "the truth initially sung and the poem", impossible to overcome, which completely disorients the reader (91). Two years later, Castellet (1965, 69) defined realistic poetry as a practice oriented "*to the artistic understanding and experience of an objective reality that is independent of us*". Most of Foix's aesthetic statements and creative choices can be understood within this framework, as his

practice is consistently imbued with the hope of grasping reality, both within and beyond the poetic realm. His verses and prose poems, in turn, form a continuous, unfolding exploration of objective reality. However, Foix never considered objective reality to be independent from us, and he always underscored the unity and interrelation of the real and the fantastic in poetic space (Boehne 1980, 86).

4.4 Poetic Objects as Material Novelties

As the authoritative voices gathered by Foix in the "Meridians" and elsewhere show, 'realism' is no univocal term, and its claimants and detractors change over time, pivoting around the possibility of somehow rendering an accurate image of reality through artistic means. The philosopher Christoph Menke (2011, 311-14) noted that in 1968, Theodor Adorno claimed that Samuel Beckett had to be labeled a 'realist'. According to the philosopher, the writer accurately displayed reified life, as well as the deprivation of any means of resistance against omnipresent social regression, in a literary practice that surpassed all forms of mimesis. In his critique of the notion of objectivity in the Enlightenment, Adorno highlighted that corporeality was the crucial epistemic moment that blurred any intellectual, totalizing claims. Even the faintest trace of absurd suffering signifies a complete denegation of the philosophy of identity, prevents its satisfactory resolution, and exposes its mythological and theological foundations (Adorno 2004, 203).

Similarly, the "Notes on the Sea" form a palimpsest of diverse and peculiar opinions, drawn from disparate voices. Together, they create not but a kaleidoscopic image of the sea that darkens and blurs the line on the horizon. Thus, each narration might represent an enactment of the fall foreseen by Nietzsche's madman for the assassins of God in *The Gay Science* (2001, § 125, 119-20). George Steiner (1989, 83) defined art as "*the maximalization of semantic incommensurability in respect of the formal means of expression*". In the creative movement, the bewildered speaker remains inevitably exposed. In Foix's own words, the poet is constantly on a journey, embarking on an adventure. The line of the horizon blurs, and a compass would be useless: he is always exposed to frustrating processes of understanding:

> I cannot, in the night, and on an adventure
> Write the Name on the front of the wall
> That conceals the Everything from me at the impure hour.
> (*DLCB*, "I Cannot, in the Night…", 322, vv. 11-13)

The combination of very different elements, freed from the expectations of a totalizing mimesis, keeps the possibility of finding an extraliterary correspondence open. The realistic "false copy of a reality", conversely, remained oblivious to its own limitations. With no line on the horizon, the entire realms of dream, the domains of the invisible, and the space of the unprecedented, which were often neglected in the field of experience by the "human notion of reality", expand now the range of objects near at the poets' hand.[8]

In the second of the "Notes", a boatman, an "Anglican priest", points out that the world, "the great unknown among men was a spherical fish bowl wandering through celestial space for the diversion of the angels" (*G*, 25; Venuti, 43). In the third, some "fishermen" are momentarily raptured by the vision of "celluloid figures, strange and *sui generis*, projecting themselves obliquely in long, immeasurable shadows shaped like cones and cylinders". Their response is as imaginative as it is puzzling:

> The fishermen, after recovering from their surprise, affirmed that they were the skeletons of stars, expelled from the depths of the sea when that phenomenon was produced. (*G*, 26; Venuti, 45)

Further below, the passionate immersion of "a multitude of men and women, naked as the sea itself" (*G*, 27; Venuti, 51) in the coastal landscape, is disrupted by an unforeseen interruption of expectations. The improper adjustment between exterior objects and human sexual fantasy is manifested:

> They thought their brown skin would prove to be an aphrodisiac to the sea, arousing its double, hermaphroditic passion. But the sea modestly withdrew beneath its golden mantle where the captive shadows of the multitude weave, with vague, vainly obscene images, an irregular fringe. (*G*, 27)

The frustrated challenge concludes with the withdrawal of the sea towards a golden veil, a *chiaroscuro* generated by "the captive shadows of the multitude". The poet despises the frivolous, bourgeois attempts of these men and women to expand their voluptuosity, and labels their images as just "vague, vainly obscene". Among the shadows and in the indefinite and blurry line on the horizon, he hopes to find a meaning that is, however, always fading. The common element in all

8 During the first decades of the twentieth century, during Foix's youth, a vast array of previously invisible realities was brought to the foreground by the arts, experimental sciences, and occultism. Through rigorous, imaginative, and deceptive means, microbes, dreams, and spirits suddenly appeared before everyone's eyes (Dalrymple Henderson 1995).

the "Notes on the Sea" is precisely the proliferation of vague images that do not exhaust the significance of the sea, nor inscribe its attributes within a logic-discursive framework. On the contrary, the disappearances and the transfigurations, as well as the incessant hammering of the frustration of desire, reveal once again that Foix is not trying to dispel the obscurity of his likenesses. Each exercise of recognition becomes fragile and futile:

> On the far shore, way over on the far shore, we remembered […], way over on the far shore, on the far shore, likewise with raucous laughter, we endeavored to remember, standing before the country with the orange sea, which century it was when all four of us once discussed which planet contains the sea where the three of you and I, all in black, and laughing, once strained to remember. (*G*, 26; Venuti, 47)

Foix's poetry is concrete and hermetic at once. It admits critical and biographical assessments of each separate image, and it even seems to be shaped in such a way that it posed a deliberate challenge to its contemporaries, who would have to discover each form's real referent. But the infinite variation and transformation of his images, obsessively multiplying, capture the liveliness of his practice, which is not reducible to the mere identification of such contingent signifiers. Paul Celan, perhaps even more hermetic, offered in each poem a *verzweifeltes Gespräch*, a desperate conversation, entrapped between the contingency of existence and the conviction of the communicative possibilities opened by poetry (Eldridge 2016, 198). Celan's neologisms "produce a semantic surplus, as if meaning more than anyone could comprehend according to the classical model of a whole superior to its parts" (Bruns 2020, 686), but they also maintain a sort of tension between disorientation or miscommunication, and the contingent context that might reveal their meaning.

Foix deemphasized and hid the expressive mechanisms of mimetic referentiality by means of an accumulative unfolding of a hermetic, semantic excess. In a few words, he professed a lack of clarity.[9] The real referents of his images were always near at hand, and they formed a *collage* shaped by his own experiences, anecdotes heard on the streets, newspaper chronicles and telegrams, and visions of all kinds (Santos Torroella 1984, 20). Even though these hermeneutic keys are gradually fading, and more biographical details become inaccessible to those who were not contemporaries of the poet, the

9 "Ne nous reprochez pas le manque de clarté puisque nous en faisons profession" ("Let no one blame us for lack of clarity, since we profess it") are Pascal's words, cited by Celan from Lev Shestov in *Der Meridian* (1960). With them, Celan highlighted the poet's habit of distancing themselves into the strange and the remote, so that an encounter may be fostered (Celan [1960] 2003, 46; cf. Vega 2011, 123).

significance of his poetic practice, his choice of darkness, or distance, as a mode of communication, remains open. As suggested, the corporeality of Foix's poetic objects partially explains his understanding of the poetic endeavor, thus making his forays into sculpture or *objet trouvé* particularly noteworthy.

In 1946, Foix bought a small property in the coastal village of Port de la Selva, on the northern side of the Cape of Creus. He had first visited the area in 1925 – five years before Dalí began sojourning in nearby Port Lligat – and, after acquiring the house, he would invariably spend his summers there (Guerrero 1996, 344-5). The poet enjoyed sailing on a small boat, navigating across rocky shores and islets around the cape, and contemplating the abrupt shapes of cliffs and the foamy encounter of land and sea. During these years, he took several rocks with him, selected for their inspiring and unusual forms. Later, these became known as *Poemes de pedra* (Stone Poems). He placed them on platforms and gave them titles such as *Nile Boat* (*PDP* 1, 39) or *Bather Lying on the Rocks* (*PDP* 24, 83). A single exhibition of the *Stone Poems* was ever arranged during Foix's lifetime, in 1961, at the Fòrum Vergés in Barcelona (Salvo Torres 2006, 13).

Each one of these objects is, just like the written poems or each metaphor in them, both a fixation and a variation at once of some found reality. Beyond the genealogy and taxonomical classification proposed by André Breton and Paul Éluard in the entry "Objet" of the *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme* (1938),[10] Foix's approach to coastal rocks as poetic objects illuminates his general conception of poetry. In 1932, Foix commented on surrealist objects and vehemently opposed Miró's approach (cf. Salvo Torres 2006, 20-3):

> they are data for the finding of other marvelous objects with their own automatism. Are these investigations not futile, however, because of the fact that true surrealist objects are given in a state of Nature, and that only in this state they are not art but document? ("[Joan Miró mostrà…"], 21-04-1932, 5)

Thus, Foix favored unaltered objects and embraced the complete omission of any explicit intentional mark, allowing appearance – or, more precisely, apparition – and nature to merge through the contingency of the encounter. Even though they all similarly criticize

10 "Only a very careful examination of the numerous speculations to which this object has publicly given rise can allow one to fully grasp the current allure of surrealism (*real and virtual object, mobile and mute object, phantom object, interpreted object, incorporated object, being-object*, etc.). At the same time, surrealism has drawn attention to various categories of objects existing outside of it: *natural object, disturbed object, found object, mathematical object, involuntary object*, etc." (Breton, Éluard 1991, 18-19).

retinal art's overloaded conventions, Foix's position regarding the *objet trouvé* lies somewhat between the pure nakedness of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven's *Enduring Ornament* (1913), a simple, rusted iron ring, and Marcel Duchamp's already stylized *Bottle Rack* (1914). The one who finds the objects is the poet, but these objects "in a state of Nature […] are not art but document?". Their living presence is determined by their fortuitous encounter, which is a process of selection and rejection, that is a displacement. Foix did not argue that the true surrealist object had to remain in a "state of Nature", but that it was constituted as such by its nature as a "document", which the artistic gesture dislocated but did not rectify.

The stone poem *Abduction* (*PDP* 17, 71) resembles in shape and volume Giambologna's famous sculpture *Abduction of a Sabine Woman* (ca. 1580), displayed at the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence. This clear resemblance exemplifies the concrete nature of Foix's metaphors while highlighting the fortuitous and accidental connections forged by the objects of reality. The artist points them out and tries to fixate them; such a gesture neither encloses nor determines the plural significance of the forms completely. Sylvia Plath devoted a poem, titled "Poems, Potatoes" (1958), to the inherent resemblance of poetry, potatoes, and stones, as they are all *sturdy* and *blunt*. She vindicated for poetry an original space of its own and emphasized the opaque and concrete materiality of her verses. Her metaphorization strategy alludes to the potentially infinite productivity of such a conception of writing:

> More or other, they still dissatisfy.
> Unpoemed, unpictured, the potato
> Bunches its knobby browns on a vastly
> Superior page; the blunt stone also. (Plath 2012, 21, vv. 10-13)

Plath's comparison of poems to potatoes is not just an ironic gesture of humility. Like the *Stone Poems*, her metaphors synthesize complex visions on poetry and its conventional units of meaning. In his celebrated essay *The Dehumanization of Art* (1925), the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset demanded that poetry be granted the domain of evasion:

> Metaphor disposes of an object by having it masquerade as something else. Such a procedure would make no sense if we did not discern beneath it an instinctive avoidance of certain realities. (Ortega y Gasset 2019, 33)

Such an evasion, however, has a creative dimension. In a previous, shorter essay from 1914, Ortega reflected upon the real entity of metaphors, and drew inspiration from a verse by López-Picó, who said that

the cypress "is like the ghost of a dead flame": "One shall note that the likenesses on which metaphors lean are always inessential from the point of view of reality" (Ortega y Gasset 2017, 169). The geometric likeness between the cypress and the flame is irrelevant, for such a straightforward resemblance has nothing to do with the poet's aim in the process of metaphorization. The resulting object assumes an almost absolute distance from its real referents, which are nonetheless necessary:

> It is all about creating a new object, that we shall call the "beautiful cypress" in contrast with the real cypress. To reach it, the latter must be subject to two operations: the first one consists in freeing us from the cypress as a visual and physical reality, in annihilating the real cypress. The second one consists in giving it that new and so delicate quality, which grants it the feature of beauty. (Ortega y Gasset 2017, 169-70)

The philosopher Graham Harman referred to this article by Ortega and argued that metaphors showcase the substantial dissimilarity between likenesses, unfolding an indeterminate array of possible relations with anyone and anything that perceives and feels them. This, in turn, affirms both objects' real, separate entities:

> This new being may be constructed out of feelings, but given Ortega's object-oriented concept of feeling, it is actually a new thing that has entered the world, and not just a private mental state of mine. (Harman 2005, 109-10)

This interpretation is interesting because the disposal or disappearance of images is one of Foix's most recurring techniques. Its purpose is not to avoid certain realities but to face the perennial proliferation of new objects that is common to poetry, to dream, and to life. His unforeseen images, which appear disorganized and purposeless, eliminate the substantial caesura between literary and real objects, as well as between fine arts and creation, either natural or human.

Various examples taken from Foix's poetic works have shown that poetry's metamorphic and material condition, articulated from his very first prose poems through a never-ending process of horizontal juxtaposition of metaphors generating new objects, is intimately related to the consideration of poetic space as real space, as real as life and dream. His creative goal is neither to convey his feelings nor to reveal the "actual functioning of thought", in Breton's words ([1924] 1969, 37). The poetic space remains described as exterior, confusing, and indecipherable, much like life and dream. Arthur Terry (1985, 123) drew attention to Foix's own words in regard to the "objective

reality of poetry" in a prologue to *La nostra nit* (1951) by Albert Manent (1930-2014):[11]

> [P]oetry, in spite of the chaos of tendencies and conventions that appear to affirm the contrary, is exterior to us. By this I mean that there is a poetic reality, with its own magic and its own singular mystery, which that who investigates its secrets [...] tries to describe. (Foix 1951, 9)

Terry pointed out that Foix's poems do not describe "the world of 'regular' experience" and added that in such a poetic space

> one acknowledges that reality is only revealed by the words. This means that apparently objective things do not exist outside the language, and that this is what determines their condition of "things". (Terry 1985, 123)

While the recognition of the poetic space's substantial independence is accurate, there is one detail – particularly evident in the "Notes on the Sea" and the *Stone Poems* – that must not be overlooked. To Foix, the possibility of considering poetic likenesses 'real' necessarily implies the analogous consideration of dark likenesses in the world and oneself as 'real', for they are the substantial matter from which the former descend:

> Inner life or outer life, subjectivity and objectivity, are not perchance, my dear Manent, autonomous worlds, but a sole entity, which is the one that the poet experiences. (Foix 1951, 11)

In this prologue, moreover, Foix upheld an unchanging idea of the poet, transcending ages and overcoming styles, conditioned by this fundamental conception of poetry. And he did that by dislocating the axis of clarity and obscurity, as has been exemplified above, allowing for the emergence of an accumulative, obsessive poetic practice grounded in the dark likeness of the confusing:

> There are no illuminated poets, because they are the ones who illuminate, or obscure poets – they are blinded by so much clarity –, or accursed poets, for the kingdom belongs to them. Every poet is chosen, and the bad one is chosen because he lacks gifts. The poet is always the same throughout the centuries, and, as a speleologist or an aeronaut, he is a seer in the nocturnal midday and an

11 Manent is a representative of the younger generation of poets and artists who admired Foix and visited him regularly, both in Barcelona and Port de la Selva. See their letters (Foix, Manent 2015).

> oracle of the solar dream. A seer and oracle of what has been given to all since the beginning and forever, not of anything personal, as uncouth souls might wish – oh, human frailty! –, haruspices of their own insides. But their omens foretell their imminent death. (Foix 1951, 10)

Julien Benda offered a beautiful definition of the poets who are able to combine aesthetic sensibility and elevated moral ideals, leading them to become the fiercest defenders of human freedom: "They have achieved this success of affirming human dignity without sacrificing the values of dream and mysticism" (Benda 1946, 175).

This section has shown that Foix's expansive and inclusive approach to poetry, which weaves together material reality, lived experience, dreams, and visions, reflects his intention to embrace everything that belongs to the world. His threefold classification of poets is not a systematic categorization of mutually exclusive standpoints. An overarching comprehension of the poetic stance surpasses usual taxonomy, as it encompasses both introspective and expansive practices, and is connected to an attentiveness to paradoxical and unexplainable images arising in both day and night. Having addressed Foix's poetological notion of 'likeness' and exemplified its particular mode of relation with reality, the following chapter will exemplify the meaning and purpose of poetry research and of such an apparently atemporal and unitarian conception of the poetic standpoint.

5 A Helpless Desire of Unity: *Alone, and Mourning*

Summary 5.1 Introduction: The Ambition of Poetry. – 5.2 Poetry between Experimentalism and Analogical Thought. – 5.3 As It Is in Wakefulness, so It Is in Dreams. – 5.4 Practice and Doubt.

5.1 Introduction: The Ambition of Poetry

Foix was always resolute on this point: his poetry had to be understood as research, and he had to be considered a poetry researcher. His practice was an instrument for investigation and discovery. In a 1935 article in *La Publicitat*, titled "The Ambition of Poetry", the poet implicitly commented on Charles Baudelaire's notions of particularity and universality in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* (1863). His initial concern was the "current fragmentarism" ("Ambició de la poesia", 03-03-1935, 4), as he had already mentioned in previous articles: "one of the characteristics of our time is not only spiritual and material dispersion […] but the *will of dispersion*" ("Passió d'unitat", 23-04-1933, 3). Citing the cause of civilization, he scolded his peers:

> Their will of dispersion harbors no unity born of coordinated love, which is the highest achievement that indicates mature civilizations. ("Passió d'unitat", 3)

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-924-5/005

Foix was here not referring solely to the Catalan cultural system, but Bou (1989, 239) noted that it was characterized, during the first decades of the century, by a general coalescence of contradictory voices and tendencies.[1] Aesthetic juxtaposition, which was a feature of his cultural *milieu*, was also an ideal poetic standpoint.

Consequently, in "The Ambition of Poetry" he lamented the quarrels between schools and factions, both regarding aesthetic matters and the function of poetry: "intellectualists and irrationalists, positivists and mystics, Thomists and Augustinians" ("Ambició de la poesia", 4). To him, poetry is a singular yet collective activity of the soul, unfolded amidst the turmoil of each age as a movement of "correction": "Each time and its people 'correct' excesses and faults, invariably. Through the centuries, the activity of the soul in its plastic or rhetoric expression is an eternal correction" (4). As Eliot and many others had stated, complex times made complex poetry almost inevitable. Foix emphasized a feature of poetry that, according to him, was shared by all those who lived in such confusing and fragmentary times, beyond styles and schools of thought: "But we have all agreed that present-day poetry was, to many, 'a means of knowledge'". He added: "The ambition of poetry is to satisfy itself as an immediate instrument of research" (4).[2]

Thus, instead of fighting warring styles with an ism of his own, Foix wished to assert an intimate connection between aesthetic choice and the poets' ethical commitment to themselves and the world. This is showcased in the literary article "… In Finely Cut Verses and Rounded Stanza", published in 1936 in *Quaderns de Poesia*,[3] in which he commented on his peers' inclination towards free verse:

> A poet can, without facing rejection from anyone, transcribe or describe, in Classic, Academic, Naturalist, Realist, "Cubist", etc.,

1 An example of this is precisely a publication led by Foix. In the last issue of the magazine *Trossos*, from April 1918, in which he anonymously wrote some remarks about various strands of avant-gardism (Foix 1918), he also featured a poem by the classicist and formalist López-Picó, a prose poem by the dadaist Tristan Tzara, an ink drawing by Joaquim Torres Garcia (1874-1949), a classicist-leaning artist, his own first version of the poem "Gertrudis", an unclassifiable writing by the futurist Luciano Folgore, and a calligram by a lesser-known poet called Vicenç Solé de Sojo (Foix 1918, 2-6).

2 He repeated this statement in the first issue of the *Quaderns de Poesia* ("Poesia i revolució", 1935, 3), as well as in two more occasions: in 1965, in the context of a talk in the Sant Lluc Artistic Circle of Barcelona: "The ambition of art and poetry would be to satisfy themselves as an immediate instrument of research" (*AC1965*, 156). And in 1970, in the prologue to his book *Last Communiqué*, he emphasized the systematic, heuristic nature of such a form of research: "The ambition of poetry, in these years we try to make use of it, is to satisfy itself as an instrument of discovery, or as a method of research" (*DC*, 782).

3 Revised and published again as the prologue of the book *Near at Hand…*, in 1972 (Foix 1972, 5-9).

> following their certitude – or taste –, the very cliff, or the playful creek, or Emília. What would be demanded to them is to be masters of their own wit. ("… en versos ben tallats…", 1936, 3)

Just a few lines above, he said: "I cannot keep it a secret: in poetry, I love all tendencies" (3). He understood literary schools not as doctrines, but as genres:

> [T]he attempts of literary cubism, remember the calligraphic essays, were – are – to me not fleeting trials, local in time and passing, but a poematic modality as valid as the one justified by the sonnet. (3)

Afterwards, he underscored his commitment to poetry research, as a standpoint overarching styles and techniques:

> It is certain, I admit, that I use, if suitable, free verse in automatic rhythm. It is also the fact, and I have confessed to it, that for some time I have written poems on a frank level of exploration. (It is not Maragallian spontaneity!)[4] It scarcely satisfies me to call myself a "poet", and not at all that I am put in the same boat with florifiers and sentimental dilletantes. Rather: investigator of poetry. And it is not for convenience and comfort but because I believe in my own determined capacity for research and discovery. (3-4; Boehne 1980, 126)

Foix committed to his poetry research and, as mentioned above, would not dare alter such a stance because he adhered sincerely to the detection and presentation of the unity encompassing the fragmentary dispersion of experiences and expressions, including poetic ones. In his exposition of poetic sentiment, Benda commented on the "universal communion" brought to the foreground by some contemporary poets, who invoked a sort of moral pantheism and a will to embrace the entirety of artistic creation:

> However, I find this more in Whitman's universalism, with its naivety, joy, generosity, and freedom, than in that of Claudel, who, seeking to understand the possession of the world only through adherence to the Catholic Church, fundamentally belongs to the political realm. (Benda 1946, 100)

4 Joan Maragall (1860-1911) was one of the most important late romantic Catalan poets. He used the term 'living word' to refer to popular, spontaneous, and intuitive poetic creation.

Foix's research is a variation of the quest to fulfill and showcase this universal communion in poetry. Even though he loved all tendencies, he despised frivolous rhetoricians. Mastering one's own wit has little to do with formal excellence, as stated in the following article and reiterated in *Four Nudes*:

> Many rhetoricians are unfairly called poets. Poetry is, however, creation. Neither the rhetorician nor the academic cannot be considered, as such, poets, regardless of how precise their versification is. ("Retòrica i poesia", 18-10-1933, 4 [OC 4, 61])

What matters is the unitive intention outlined above: "Faith in knowledge is the poet's faith. The operation to which they give themselves is an operation of love" (4). Instead of formal frivolity, Foix favored a form of nakedness also found in premodern art. He invoked and praised the recursive and coarse style often found in authorities like Dante, chiefly in the *rime petrose*, in the poet Ausiàs March, as well as in Llull and other artists:

> O, Raphael, among all, the Divine,
> Brueghel, however, and Bosch, eternal and hard!
> Before the sea my pleasure is *art clus*.
> (*SIDD*, "Four Colors Arrange the World", 78, vv. 12-14)

To distance himself from frivolous versifiers, Foix also revisited Rimbaud's idea of the poet as a seer, as the thief of fire awaiting the coming of a universal language, and as the creator of the 'new' – new ideas and forms (Rimbaud [1871] 1951, 256). In another article against rhetoricians, he paraphrased extensively the poet and essayist André Rolland de Renéville, who wrote *Rimbaud le voyant* in 1929 and would edit his complete works in the Pléiade collection in 1946. From Rolland's interpretation of Rimbaud, Foix highlighted his belief in the poets' Promethean condition, as well as in the delicate yet receptive poetic comprehension of the universe:

> And while we cannot hope to hold the absolute within our consciousness, nor, at the same time, preserve our personality before it, we shall often remember: "To equalize is to understand". ("Poesia i coneixença", 26-04-1933, 4)

This maxim, attributed to Raphael, had appeared in Balzac's first installment of *Illusions perdues*, *Les Deux Poètes* (1843, 59). Among Nietzsche's notes that were to constitute *The Will to Power* (1906), the aphorism, quoted from Balzac, had been used to affirm the impassible equality among the "aristocrats of intellect" (Nietzsche 2017, 530). More precisely rendered, the maxim reads: "To understand is

to equalize (or to raise to the level)". In Foix's hands, and taken from a review on Rimbaud, Raphael's maxim is to be understood as a variation of the same issue addressed by the notion of 'correction' mentioned above: poets must aspire to unfold the homogeneous activity of their art throughout the ages. Regardless of style or school, the emulation of Raphael, Dante, or March's eternity and hardness – that is, the ambition and endeavor to raise to the level of excellent poets and artists of the past was understood by Foix as an 'operation of love' because it prevented poetry from falling into frivolous imitations of reality, and because it maximized the possibilities of mastering one's own wit. In other words, it allowed poets to unite in a universal communion that, in such times of hardship, viewed poetry as a means of knowledge:

> It overcame its quasi-localism – poetry is anti-florification – and has become an ethics, a philosophy, an affirmation independent of traditional rhetoric, ethics, and philosophy. And it also opposes philosophy *as a new method of metaphysical understanding*. ("Ambició de la poesia", 03-02-1935, 4)

Vallcorba commented on Raphael's maxim in relation to the principles of analogical thinking. He and other scholars have interpreted Foix's recurring use of transfigurations and accumulation of unexpected images as evidence of analogical procedures taking place, in line with surrealist aesthetics (Vallcorba 2002, 78). The following section will address the role of analogy in Foix's poetry research, which aims at describing reality as an expansive unity, that is, as a totality open to new ideas and forms, which only *a posteriori*, allows for an analysis of the analogical relations established by poetic objects and reality.

5.2 Poetry between Experimentalism and Analogical Thought

There is a short section of the book *KRTU* (1932) known as "Introductions", in which Foix grouped three profiles of public figures and close friends: Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, and the painter and stage director Artur Carbonell (1906-1973). Rather than being mere biographical accounts, these texts narrate an anecdote and adopt the form of a prose poem, thus hosting unexpected metamorphoses and disappearances. Dalí's "Introduction" was written in 1927 and published in the tenth issue of *L'Amic de les Arts*, to which both friends contributed regularly. In it, Foix recounted his experience as a visitor of Dalí's recent individual exhibition at the Dalmau Galleries in Barcelona (31-12-1926-14-01-1927), exploring the relationship between art and reality, while subtly embedding his own perspective on his friend's paintings within the unconventional narration.

Vicent Santamaria de Mingo emphasized that Dalí's theoretical development during his 1927-29 stay in Barcelona was significantly influenced by Foix and the Sitges circle of artists and intellectuals associated with *L'Amic de les Arts*. Around these years, the young Dalí was still pursuing a style of his own, as he was not yet affiliated with the Parisian surrealist group and was just laying the groundwork for his paranoiac-critic method (Santamaria de Mingo 2007, 114). In the poem, Foix first introduces a curious character:

> Only a few days ago, at the corner of my house, a dextrous adolescent holding a briefcase packed with books quietly offered me beautiful first editions: herbaria with chromo- lithographed plates, prolegomena to biology, naturist formularies, even celestial charts and atlases of historical geography depicting the stages in the mysterious formation and disappearance of the Atlantic continent. He was also carrying reproductions of the most singular images gathered from the platforms of the subterranean avenues of predream. (*K*, 57; Venuti, 116)

The young man hands the narrator an invitation to "the Dalí exhibition at the Dalmau Galleries, and a blank catalogue" (57), and it is not until the following day, when he is already on his way to the exhibition, that he is struck by the realization:

> [T]hat the adolescent from the previous day bore a rare resemblance to the painter Dalí, who he indubitably was, although his necktie was camouflaged and his eyebrows were ingeniously lengthened. (57-8)

The transformations do not cease: a group of schoolgirls wearing fake wings guide him to the entrance of the exhibition by leaving camphor balls along their way. The fearful doorman turns into a kind, long-bearded gnome, and the corridor of the Galleries display the strangest taxidermized birds. After a short exchange with Dalí, who refuses both the labels of cubism and surrealism: "It is painting, if you please, painting" (58; Venuti, 117), the narrator takes another look at the exhibition and, astonished, praises the artist: "I had the distinct awareness of being present at the precise moment that a painter is born" (58).

The vivisected animals are then replaced by fabulous "physiological landscapes", unexpected and subversive images. At seven o'clock – oddly enough, not at midnight –, from each canvas, "the famous phantoms" emerge: "It is a beautiful spectacle: subtle, they cover you with their veils and infect you with their immateriality" (58). Dalí's pre-surrealism exalted an evocative oneirism with stylized

neo-cubist shapes (Descharnes, Néret 1989, 20-6; cf. Bohn 2002b),[5] as exemplified by *Still Life. "Invitation to Dream"*, *Figure between the Rocks*, or *Girl from Figueres* (1926), all exhibited at the Dalmau Galleries.[6] There is undoubtedly a slight undertone of amused irony in Foix's observation that the exhibition was "a beautiful spectacle". The poet was surely pondering Dalí's acrobatics and wondering whether they were the neophyte's madness, but his admiration for his friend's gift for the transformative and the unexpected was sincere. In addition, the ghostly presences that transcend the pictorial space and spread their immateriality in the common plane of reality hint at Foix and Dalí's shared adherence to the rejection of metaphor and the poetic object as an analogical placeholder or rhetorical ruse. Santamaria de Mingo synthesized such a conception of the surrealist image as follows:

> The surrealist image, as a plain, objective assertion of an inner vision, is thus opposed to metaphor as a literary transposition of the exterior world by means of analogy or as a simple rhetorical game. (Santamaria de Mingo 2006, 82)

Foix admired Dalí's ability to fixate appearances in painting. In *Comment on devient Dalí* (1973), the latter would describe his art as "handmade photography of extra-fine, extravagant, super-aesthetic images of the concrete irrational" (Descharnes, Néret 1989, 34), which would help the artist gain access to the true reality of the world, either intuitively, unconsciously, or mystically.[7] For Foix, metaphors were "more than the other reality, the only reality" ("Eternitat de la poesia", 17-03-1933, 3), because their condition of appearances was what put them in continuity with extraliterary reality, equally composed of likenesses. He did not separate real appearances from fantasies, dreams, and inner visions, and treated them not as objects belonging to two distinct planes with unequal significance relative to a supposed hidden 'true reality'. He considered surrealists, thus, to be actually irrealists:

5 Willard Bohn wondered about the influence of De Chirico in Foix's interpretation of Dalí's ghostly visitors, quoting an article André Breton had written on De Chirico six months earlier: "When he reached the other side of the bridge the phantoms came to meet him" (Breton, cited by Bohn 2002b).

6 Catalogue numbers P 172, P 182, and P 189 (cf. Catalogue Raisonné 2019).

7 Around 1928, greatly influenced by the Parisian surrealist doctrine, Dalí transitioned from Bergsonism and an emphasis on pre-rational intuition as means of artistic objectivation – generally praised by the Sitges circle of *L'Amic de les Arts* – to Freudian concrete psychology (cf. Santamaria de Mingo 2006, 81-2).

> Isn't the modern irrealist line, in painting and poetry, a manifestation within the modern atomism of eternal spiritualism, "refoulé"? ("Eternitat…", 3; Boehne 1980, 122, cf. Santamaria de Mingo 2010, 188)

André Breton's surrealist program, against the grain of representative and imitative artistic traditions, was an eclectic sum of notions derived from psychoanalysis and ethnography, as well as from the Marxist, anti-bourgeois revolution of values and life conditions. As far as the epistemic claims of art were concerned, it regarded the open, dark fields of the preconscious and the unconscious as gateways towards a new understanding, one that turned the actual state of things into meaningless appearance:

> Against a hedonic art produced by the "painter's craft" and nourishing the speculation from which one took care to distance oneself, Breton proposed that artists gave access to "abstract understanding", so that they recalled "the barbarity of living". (Joyeux-Prunel 2017, 406)

The leader of Parisian surrealism believed that unchained imagination, deliberately oriented toward the limits of representation and their corresponding mental states, manifested in art the hidden and revolutionary truth of the actual functioning of thought. The uncharted territories of dream and the vast indetermination of an obsidian mirror were ideal spaces for such operations, as others before Breton had seemed to suggest, from primitive shamans to the mystics and the romantics.

Rimbaud's *alchimie du verbe* aimed at overcoming pale reason and embraced the possibility of a new vision of the unknown by means of the *dérèglement* of the senses,[8] that is, their derangement or dislocation. Breton regarded his proposal as a sort of philosopher's stone, allowing him to paradoxically conflate autonomous automatisms with programmatic systematism. The alchemical tradition served as a powerful metaphor for the creative tools available to resist and overcome the moral and philosophical constraints of Western art and thought:

> [T]he philosopher's stone is nothing more or less than that which was to enable man's imagination to take a stunning revenge on all things, which brings us once again, after centuries of the mind's domestication and insane resignation, to the attempt to liberate once and for all the imagination by the "long, immense, reasoned derangement of the senses". (Breton [1930] 1969, 174)

8 In Rimbaud's famous letter to Paul Demeny (15-05-1871), known as *Lettre du Voyant* (Rimbaud 1951, 254).

The dislocation of the senses and the access to an understanding that had been historically repressed manifest Breton's trust in an analogical solidarity between the planes of the possible and the real. The enfranchisement of imagination allows for a fruitful rejuvenation of the relationship between poetry and reality, as its newly found relations constitute new images for a new consciousness and articulate an aesthetic and political revolution (Ballabriga 1995, 136-44). The surrealist dark and indeterminate bedrock of unconscious realities is the source of the unexpected, the excessive, the spontaneous, and of all that surpasses the lucidity of representation. Poetization is the analogical practice of discovering unforeseen new relations that reveal the deeper significance of reality beyond common sense (Pla 2003, 106). According to Bohn, artists must connect the world at hand with the unknown, as they are able to give form to the shapeless:

> To be effective, the analogy must remain undetected on the surface but must trigger a response at a deeper level. This explains the reader/viewer's involuntary shudder on encountering one of the more powerful images. (Bohn 2002a, 147)

In the *First manifesto of surrealism* (1924), Breton singularized the role of the artist with a reflection that asserted art as a vehicle of revelation of ideas that complete and transform reality via the introduction of the marvelous in history:

> [I]t partakes in some obscure way of a sort of general revelation only the fragments of which come down to us: they are the romantic *ruins*, the modern *mannequin*. (Breton 1969, 16)

Such structural analogical thinking is, in the end, a form of dualism, and the intervention of the poet resembles the traditional mediumistic practices fueled by illumination or inspiration, already present in the doctrines of German idealism[9] and in Baudelaire's *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* ([1863] 1980, 685), among others.

For Foix, these thoughts would fall under the category of irrealistic because he did not regard creation as the revelation of an otherwise inaccessible reality by means of poetic analogies. He understood that such procedures were only able to address some realities while disregarding others. As mentioned above, this feature aligned

9 Schelling understood art as the real consummation of the union of the finite and the infinite, and as a mode of actualization of the indifference of the Absolute in the world (Henrich 1964, 131). In a 1907 article, György Lukács referred to this as 'panpoetism', that is the romantic substitution of lived reality by an all-encompassing *Weltanschauung* of the soul (Lukács 1984, 91-2).

surrealist aesthetics with traditional religious poetry. This realization, which will be the object of further scrutiny below, was crucial in the poet's carving of an overarching notion of the relation between poetry and reality. His practice was nourished by very different sources, all of which he considered equally real. The poetic likenesses constituting poetic reality had to be understood, then, not as vehicles for the revelation of any truer reality but as signs of the fundamental and complex unity of the real. The philosopher Miguel Beistegui argued that metaphors display a permanent tension with reality in modern art due to the crisis of metaphysical representation, which was pioneeringly put into question by modernism. According to him, such indeterminate and irresolvable tension manifests a sort of Heraclitean harmony, which is constitutively metamorphic: metaphors are irreducible to any exterior reality, and their fruitful relationship beyond representation is precisely made possible by their heteronomy (Beistegui 2012, 165).

In the sonnet "It Is Through My Mind that Nature Reveals Herself", from *Alone, and Mourning*, Foix turned again to the bewilderment caused by contradictory and fragmentary images of reality obtained by the senses and by the intellect. According to Josep Romeu's interpretation (1985, 30), this poem proves the primacy of the mind over the senses in Foix's cosmovision. His processes of poetization are likened to the ascent of real matter toward a subtler poetic realm, one governed by the poet:

> It is through my Mind that Nature opens herself
> To my hungry eyes; through her I know myself immortal
> Since I order her and, on either side of evil,
> Time is one and by my order lasts.
> Thus I am man. And I separate all sustenance
> From my languor. […] (*SIDD*, 80, vv. 1-6; Boehne 1986, 283)

These first verses have a clear intellectualist tone and have informed Romeu's interpretation. It has also been pointed out that 'mind' is the most repeated word in *Alone, and Mourning*, with six appearances (Parramon 2004, 423). Foix reminded the reader that the intellectual dimension is what makes us human, and with these five and a half verses, he erected a wall not unlike the ones in *Gertrudis*, futilely designed to shield him from the harm wrought by confusion. The verb "separate" synthesizes his will to oversee nature and rule it from above, and the capitalized "Nature" is nothing but the concept that is apparently under the Mind's control. The following verses, however, unfold the tragedy of the ruling mind, analogous to the unrest of the solipsistic, enclosed voice:

Thus I am man. And I separate all sustenance
From my languor. In it the Unreal
Is neither sleep, nor dream, nor Ideal,
Nor mad yearning for future attainment.
Rather it is the present, time and place as well,
And the sweet flame in my own fire,
Made of desire without plaint or profit.
(*SIDD*, 80, vv. 5-10; Boehne 1986, 283)

From within the mind and surrounded by substantivized forms of darkness, dream, ideality, and desire, the speaker realizes that these are not the menacing, destructive powers he once believed them to be. They reside for the most part inside the mind, and they are its children, for it is among the secret rulings of the intellect that dark, dream-like, ideal, and desired forms are produced. From an exclusively mental space, conversely, the "Irreal" is represented by present and finite life: concrete time and space, along with the willful affirmation of finitude, signified by sweet self-immolation. The mind would deliver the poet from it, but the cold and aseptic mental order is manifestly insufficient when compared to one's own inner fire. As in *Four Nudes*, poetic images must be pure, that is, autonomous from the doctrines of any determined aesthetic school, and they must always simultaneously murmur to the ears and be sensual to the soul. As capitalized initials fade, concepts reveal their impotence, and the poetic endeavor is described as a slow, concrete game:

From concrete beauty I create my ardent game
At each moment, and mid centuries I move
Slowly, as the rock facing the dark sea.
(*SIDD*, 80, vv. 12-14; Boehne 1986, 283)

"Mind" and its object, "Nature", are overwhelmed by "concrete beauty" and the present, which escape without remedy a mental construction that promised immortality. The poet, like the coastal rock, is subject to constant and yet almost imperceptible movement. They both face the dark, ever-changing sea and its multiple forms, which always exceed the mental concept of the Irreal and fuel the very pleasure of life, finite but worth living. Foix refused to choose between the mind and the senses, preferring instead to host the virtues of both sources of knowledge in poetry, just as he did with clarity and darkness, and with dream and wakefulness. This embracing standpoint allows the objects of mind and life to accumulate and pile up atop of each other, constituting the poet's most usual objects of desire. The author of the *Stone Poems* compared his endeavor with the existence of a rock. He assumed, thus, that while the mind can produce wonderful images of its own with little to no contact with the sensory world,

the present and finite life would remain out of its reach forever, but near at hand in poetry.

Enric Badosa may have overemphasized the mediumistic scope of Foix's poetry:

> The revealed knowledge is not an ordinary thing that J.V. Foix has merely metaphorized: it is something new on its own stand, in itself, and whose novelty is enhanced by the creative power of the word. (Badosa 1989, 73)

His remarks are nevertheless interesting, because they highlight the novelty of poetic products, as well as the openly heuristic aim of the call for poetry research. The "Notes on the sea" and the *Stone Poems* showcased that Foix, in alignment with thinkers like Bergson, believed rational discourse was ill-suited to engage with or manipulate the products of poetry.[10] Art was not an extension of discourse; its forms and products opposed the foundations of Western thought. Specifically, the philosophical framework of conceptual adequacy between the objects of the mind and those of reality was seen as inadequate for describing the relationship between poetic artifacts and reality (Blumenberg 1964, 20).

Manuel Carbonell, influenced by Heideggerian thought, argued that Foix's poetic goals were vision and the unveiling of authentic reality:

> He, like any authentic artist, is the one who helps, by means of analogical images, to make the invisible visible. This is the reason why he defines himself as "pilgrim of the invisible". Foix's poetry seeks one of the supreme goals that have always been sought by great literature: to unveil the authentic face of reality. (Carbonell 1991, 39)

Textual evidence scrutinized up to this point clearly suggests that the poet laid out a specific mode of creative relation with the world, grounded in and sustained by unstable and metamorphic metaphors. Carbonell believes that such a proposal is a dialectic journey from the essential to the accidental, firstly, and then a way back from the newly discovered poetic forms to the essence of reality (Carbonell 1991, 39). Along the lines of Badosa and Carbonell's Platonic conceptual framework, Romeu understood Foix's poetry research as an ascensional journey to transcendental 'Reality', too. According to him,

10 Dieter Henrich observed a point of coincidence and a shared commonplace between the aesthetic thought of coetaneous reformist Marxism, represented by Benjamin and Lukács, and Heideggerian existential phenomenology, despite their conceptual differences: "However, they both adhere to utopia-bringer, richer art, which, like the Homeric epic, glorifies and unveils the healed world in image and song" (Henrich 1966, 13).

however, the encounter with the transcendental Verb in a "new and bright way" happens "inside the degraded, worn-out, disassembled, blurry and false language" (Romeu 1996, 37).

Santamaria de Mingo, who wondered about the similarities between Foix's likenesses and the classic and surrealist notion of "simulacra",[11] proposed interpreting Foix's poetry conversely as an "inversion of Platonism", and as a statement in favor of the sophists and the surrealists, due to their adherence to the changing world:

> [T]he poet becomes a creator of a new reality entirely yielded to the caprices of imagination, in which the simulacrum, as a disturbing *Pseudos* between the real and the illusory, is constituted as an affirmation of the wonderful and its truth. (Santamaria de Mingo 2010, 194)

Foix adhered persistently to his realism, and affirmed the equal dignity of the illusory, the intellectual, and the fantastic, alongside the objects of the ravenous senses. What is at stake is not the systematic development of analogical thinking, but a practice of discovery that allows for an *a posteriori* assessment of the analogical relations between the most diverse beings. Fantastic likenesses, whether poetic or oneiric – and those that lie in between, such as surrealist automatic images – all descend from real likenesses, and no framework of adequation can make sense of their position within reality, for they are laid out horizontally, deliberately avoiding hierarchization. Foix's poetry does not reveal transcendental reality, and his research consists rather in the discovery and persistent actualization of the complex unity of the fragmentary real, so that the disoriented human beings – the readers together with him – may eventually find a glimpse of purpose and assurance, even if fleeting, amidst the confusing world.

5.3 As It Is in Wakefulness, so It Is in Dreams

Alone, and Mourning is a book of sonnets. Foix declared that the manuscript had been delivered to the printing press when the Spanish Civil War began. The book was published in 1947, even though its cover read "1935-1936" in order to avoid being intercepted by dictatorial censorship. In the years between 1936 and 1947, Foix revised and reworked the poems, which had been written between 1913 and the first half of the 1930s. The sonnets are not dated individually, and

11 Foix gathered four prose poems under the title "Simulacra" in the twentieth issue of *L'Amic de les Arts* ("Simulacres", 1927, 2). These would be later be found in the section "Return to nature" from *KRTU* (*K*, 47-8).

in the proemial words, the poet reminded the readers that the dates would not give them much information: "The ones that appear to be most different might be coetaneous", and that the most academic and highbrow turns of language might not necessarily be older (*SIDD*, 69).

"Slow, this book gathers the sonnets written by the author in 1913, 1916, between 1918-1923, and 1927", reads the beginning of the prologue. In "It Is Through My Mind…" (*SIDD*, 80, v. 14), poetic practice was also described as "slow". Its objects, that is, the poems, are "concrete beauties" with which the poet plays facing the dark, wide sea. Structurally, the sonnets are grouped into six sections, each following a thematic focus. In the initial two sections, the majority of poems typically narrate a journey, whether through hills and valleys or at sea. During these adventures, the speaker actively seeks appropriate means to articulate personal confusion and the disarray of the world. The opening sonnet sets the tone:

> Alone, and mourning, and with ancient tunic,
> I often see myself through dark solitudes,
> In unknown meadows and slate covered hills
> And deep valleys that hold me back cunningly.
> (*SIDD*, 71, vv. 1-4; Boehne 1986, 275)

The subsequent three sections focus on various stages of secular love, oscillating between expressions of longing tinged with bitterness and moments of intense sensual vitality. In contrast, the final section shifts the focus of desire toward God, introducing a sense of urgency as the speaker's prayers are met with silence. Beyond the particularities of each group of poems, they all constitute tireless essays on the emergence of the paradoxes and incomprehensible realities of the world, which the speaker futilely tries to fixate. The usual mechanisms of his poetry – disappearances, transfigurations, and sudden frustration of desire – pervade the book and leave the speaker in a recurring state of indecisiveness and bewilderment. The adventures of life, love, and salvation are equally difficult and apparently incomprehensible, but they all find in poetic creation an opportunity to commence, which offers a regained hope for their eventual consummation.

The fifth sonnet of the book conveys the ambiguity of the poet's bewilderment exemplarily:

> Brown and bareheaded, and barefoot, roving,
> On a dark day, along deserted beaches
> I wandered alone. I imagined inert
> Forms without breath or name, and their appearance.
> And I saw, upright before their grave,
> Strange men with opened heads,

A stream of blood on their uncertain shadows,
And a night sky hardening their features.
Between sighs, my mind asked
If I saw clearly: were the ill-fated images
In me or in wild nature?
And I ask myself again a thousand questions –
Fictions – and I indeed live them! –, do they enslave
The mind, or are they its celestial paths?
(*SIDD*, 73; Boehne 1980, 53)

This poem follows the structural rules outlined above: the speaker remembers the time when he wandered alone and barefoot along the beaches. There is a striking difference between the images he "imagined" and the ones he "saw", even though they share the disturbing features of death. The inert forms he imagined are unrecognizable and multiply in a sort of mental picturing of their reproductions. The sensual ghosts he saw are manifestly dreadful, and their shapes solidify under the sky. As was also the case in "It Is Through My Mind…", mental and sensual likenesses are different in nature, even though they must all be traced to the same reality from which they originate. And so, the poet remains astonished, as he cannot easily comprehend or come to terms with the paradoxical nature of the images that appear before him, whose features, either shapeless or gruesome, deter any optimistic approach to an eventual understanding of the world. Consequently, the speaker is left only with the lingering doubt that embraces all his production, regarding poetry and its potential to become a mode of acknowledgment and understanding of reality (Boehne 1980, 52-4).

The previous sonnet, "Through the Blackness…", has a similar structure, but its narration refers explicitly to an oneiric vision. The ambiguity of fiction is here established as an ambivalent paradox, in which the speaker is both restrained and free:

Through the blackness I see a thousand open roads
And eyes shut, at night, I reach safe port
The ice is hot and nothing is confused.
(*SIDD*, 72, vv. 1-3; Boehne 1980, 53)

In the realm of paradoxes, the unexplainable is not confusing, but no eventual resolution of the ambivalence is imaginable. Paradoxes do not dissolve in the poetic space; instead, they accumulate atop one another, regardless of the poem's matter. In short, neither the desperate existential narration nor the marvelous oneiric adventure delivers the poet from his profound state of disorientation amidst real and fantastic paradoxes. To keep the eyes closed and follow a thousand open roads in the dark is as senseless as asking sight for clarity

and accuracy. The sensible doubt regarding fiction presented in the last tercet of "Brown and bareheaded…" matches this sonnet's central paradox, in which the poet declares that he is restrained and ubiquitous at once:

> Limbs linked I strive for the opposite place
> And the hardest rocks are pillows and flowers;
> I am in Paris, and amid wild meadows, in Lladurs,
> Both clothed and naked, and on uncertain streets.
> (*SIDD*, "Through the Blackness…", 72, vv. 5-6; Boehne 1980, 53)

Foix's references to a "dark day" and to the obscure luminosity behind closed eyes are poetic variations of the classical image of the night. Its vastness and disproportion to the human mind allowed thinkers and poets, from Pascal to Novalis, to address the highest, inapprehensible yet intuitable truth. From Hölderlin to Rilke, moreover, it allowed poets to explore the crepuscular space of absence and precariousness that pervades modern human life (Blumenberg 2022, 208).

Darkness is, yet again, the connective tissue of Foix's diverse poetic spaces: nighttime and daylight are equally crepuscular, fragments of one and the same vital continuity that prevents desire from being quenched, as well as clear and distinct ideas from being formalized and fixated:

> The Real, then, what is it? Since in full sun

I travel dark canals; and in the crowd,

> Am in wide deserts, lost […]. (*SIDD*, "Through the Blackness…", 72, vv. 9-10; Boehne 1980, 53)

As mentioned above, Foix avoided commonplace rhyme and rhythm, as well as conventional sources and subject matter. He brought paradoxes to a non-integrative conjunction. This alone did not allow, however, for a complete picture of the universe. Instead, it materialized contradiction as such; it hosted it without dissolving it and acknowledged it as something neither to be discarded nor reconciled with any given image of the universe, but as an integral part of reality. The incompleteness of this endeavor is revealed by two key features of Foix's poetics: on the one hand, conspicuous and explicit doubt regarding the world and poetry's role in it, and on the other, the call for permanent activity – that is, for everlasting research:

And I ask myself again a thousand questions –
Fictions – and I indeed live them! –, do they enslave
The mind, or are they its celestial paths?
1. (*SIDD*, "Brown, and Bareheaded…", 73; Boehne 1980, 53)

Instability and dislocation of sense prevent the poet from following the journey toward a complete understanding of himself and the world. The products of poetry offer no lasting consolation or shelter to the wandering subject. Around him, in nature, in poetry, and in himself, images proliferate. They are utterly dark yet not entirely impenetrable. The 'I' in the poems is moved by a primal ambivalence: impotence and unquenchable desire coalesce and force him to journey inward or outward while piling up, retrieving, and leaving behind likenesses and transfigurations. These allow the poet to discover and materialize the paradoxical nature of life, dream, and imagination. Foix's experimental poetics never fully relinquishes hope of understanding. The dual movement of imprisonment and freedom, which is to be understood as the outcome of each act of poetization, resembles the troubadours' understanding of desire, which secularized the striving for an inaccessible present, rooted in the Biblical nuptial tradition of the *Song of Songs* and the *Psalms*.[12] His practice is similar to the effusion of love in Cavalcanti, who, according to Jean-Baptiste Brenet (2021, 68), was captivated by love's singular corporality and developed an obsessive physical relation with its image.

With the guidance of the old masters, Foix traced the roots of his unrest – his own, yet not unique to poets – to a central paradox: permanent frustration and dissatisfaction compel him to continue his inward and outward journey. In this state, the integrity and sincerity of poetry research are at stake, as the practical and experimental dimensions of poetry are thoroughly emphasized.

5.4 Practice and Doubt

Foix's explicit desire to find guidance and resolution amidst proliferating sensual and intellectual forms has led many scholars to interpret the purpose of his work through a Platonic lens.[13] Rather than fitting

12 Lluís Duch (2012, 129) considered this human, paradoxical structure of desire as a foundational feature of human beings, which he synthesized with the expression "*ens finitum capax infiniti*".

13 Regarding this interpretive strand, Badosa (1989, 73), Carbonell (1991, 39), and Romeu (1996, 37) have been mentioned. Gimferrer (1984, 125-6), Terry (1985, 129), Guerrero (1996, 350), and Vallcorba (2002, 79) also inscribed Foix's poetics in a sort of programmatic ascension framework, moving from the inessential to the essential, which eludes regular perception.

into a framework of intellectual or spiritual ascension – according to which regular perception, both sensual and intellectual, uncovers its truest, hidden analogical correspondence in a different reality plane, by means of poetization – his accumulative poetics relies on experimental recursion. Much like the desperate lover in *Gertrudis*, who wished for the tallest walls to enclose him, the speaker in *Alone, and Mourning* finds himself trapped without remedy in the recursive adventures unfolding before his eyes. Neither disappearances nor transformations quench his ever-renewing desire, and so he finds himself captive of the disorganized array of images that irresistibly allure him.

The desired yet difficult pursuit of knowledge is likened, in the second sonnet of the book, to a programmatic commitment (Sansone 1962, 13), by which the poet would avoid passing aesthetic influences and produce enduring, imperishable verses:

> If, fugitive from foreign ways
> I could compose in harsh night, mourning,
> The love of All and Nothing, disregarding
> The dark and rare, and in the coarse style
> Of those who in vernacular spoke sovereign
> – Oh Llull! Oh March! –, and with clear hand,
> Rustic, though severe, I could rhyme
> For those to come […] (*SIDD*, "Oh! If Prudently…", 72, vv. 7-9; Boehne 1986, 277)

The analogy between his poetic endeavor and the coarse clarity of authorities like Llull and March is, however, suffused with negativity from the outset. The sonnet presents three conditional clauses headed by 'if', yet none have a result clause. The verbal forms reveal that none of the actions mentioned by the speaker is put into practice. Their frustration predates the beginning of the poem itself, and such a poetic project appears to be defeated before it could even be enunciated. The only form that such an idea can adopt is an incomplete yet wishful conditional clause – and poetry can certainly host that incompleteness. The poet is bound to address the dark and the strange, and he is therefore fated not to ever be 'clear'. As Ilaria Zamuner (2017, 7) pointed out, Foix's delight for medieval coarse expression is to be connected to his much later words comparing the core of his poems with a "hard and diamantine project" (Foix 1984, 8). The image of the poetic speaker as a coastal rock battered by the dark sea found a counterpart in another telluric variation: these are both images of slow and almost imperceptible, natural processes of transformation of matter, either through erosion or immense pressure. His aspiration for perdurability and permanence does not exclude change and instead wishes to join the rhythm of rocks and diamonds, of Llull and March, in their harmonic and slow movement

through time. The first tercet of "Four colors arrange the world", in the first section of *Alone, and Mourning*, reads:

> A different diversion I don't know nor seek, for me;
> Barbaric I know my time, and with the years I lean into it,
> My blood boils, and what I want is confusing.
> (*SIDD*, 78, vv. 9-11)

Creative practice is perceived as an irreplaceable last resort, and as the only occupation the speaker can turn to. This tercet provides an answer to the earlier question regarding poetic endeavor, in which the poet wondered whether fictions enslaved the mind or if they actually paved glorious pathways for it (*SIDD*, "Brown and Bareheaded…", 73, vv. 12-14). Far from acknowledging the latter, the speaker's commitment to poetry takes on the form of a survival technique. He must give in to such helpless practice because he is irresistibly pulled into the vortex of a chaotic world. The boiling blood hints at frantic, delirious sensuality, rather than anger, and the object of desire remains, as usual, confusing.

The alliteration in the first tercet between the verbs *bull* ("[it] boils") and *vull* ("I want") allows for the reading of a diagnosis about the times of need in which the poet is immersed: "what boils is confusing". The great variety and complexity of present times must produce, as T.S. Eliot had warned, various and complex, but above all confusing, poetic results. As has been noted throughout the study, this is perhaps the only relevant correspondence that precedes the heuristic task of poetry: the ominous obscurity of sense. This is also manifested in one of the last sonnets of the book:

> With dark chants I exalt dark skies
> And nameless stars, shadow, and beech.
> (*SIDD*, "To the Diviner I Go…", 111, vv. 9-10)

Foix's poetization of his personality crisis, announced in *Gertrudis* and *KRTU*, is complemented by *Alone, and Mourning*'s metaphysical unrest. They generate a space of realistic indecisiveness and irony that neither minimizes the opposition between the senses and the intellect, nor rips the fabric of reality in two:

> I am, then Adam: and you are Eve! And we are thirsty,
> And that which has scent and touch, who knows if it lives?
> And we shall at all times bathe in the same river.
> (*SIDD*, "With Fleshy Eyes…", 76, vv. 12-14; Boehne 1980, 55)

Hierarchies dissolve and likenesses accumulate, and a deeply human appraisal of inconsistency and limit emerges and overflows. The sonnet "At a Smooth Field…", cited earlier in this study to highlight Foix's

expansive poetic embrace of the objects of the senses, the mind, and the unconscious, concludes with a reminder of the fragile indecisiveness to which such an idea of poetry leads:

> At a smooth field to enjoy the strict landscape
> But to tremble with the wheat and the poppy
> And with the hue lit by the new dawn,
> And to revere Nature, the heart subdued
> Before the Mind that dictates measure,
> And to walk through the shady dell,
> To listen to the whimpers of the dews
> And to ask myself, doubtful, what is fictitious:
> The ravenous senses – smell, touch and eye
> That make my life gay – or the number, raw,
> And dry, and naked in divine nakedness?
> And inside the gorge, which hosts the murmurs,
> Vanishing reverberation of water and field,
> To grasp the Present made of mind and of You. (*SIDD*, 84)

The "Present" opposes the "strict landscape" of the first verse, as an intensive form of lived time that eludes concepts and schemata. The capitalized "You" is not an abstraction or antonomasia, but rather an expressive graphic carving of the real and concrete presence of the speaker's desired company. This final verse condenses the unfulfilled expectations of the poem: the possibility of maybe finding in sensual and intellectual love the reconciliation of opposites, not through synthesis, but through kaleidoscopic composition.

The poet's movement is consistently dubitative. Even in his most expansive affirmation of an enthralling adventure, death and incompleteness loom menacingly:

> One must take risks on land and sea, and in new art,
> Kiss a soaked body beneath cinnamon trees
> And drop dead at thirty-three, just like Alexander!
> (*SIDD*, "Bring on the Oars…", 95, vv. 12-14; Rosenthal, 14)

In the tenth poem of *Where Did I Leave my Keys…*, called "Perspective of the Other Landscape", the speaker wonders: "Will I be a shepherd at a wide clearing | Or a sailor in the blazing night?" (*OHD*, 168, vv. 16-17). He acknowledges his ability to make use of the dark things of the sea and the bright things of the land to articulate his poetry research. Thus, he gains the courage to initiate and reinitiate the difficult task of recognizing himself as a poet, both when he seeks fragile cover and when he leaves for another adventure:

Oh, eternal day, eternal still:
Through a clear vineyard or in a dark cave
I chance upon myself alone, who am the Absent.
Of algae and salts, bluenesses and palms
I make thinking (*OHD*, 168, vv. 21-5)

The product of Foix's thought is neither a philosophical system nor a method of knowledge, but a creative practice composed of fantastic likenesses that arduously attempts to contradict defective realistic accounts on reality, whether philosophical or poetic. It is a movement that remains permanently suspended, overwhelmed by doubt and loss. At each step, it is incapable of solving the instability and the paradoxes of ever-changing life:

Amidst the umbrageous carobs and the sunflowers
[at the lighthouses;
Everything is so clear that we even fail at talking to each other.
Let's write new verses with fossilized signs!
Let's paint immature nakedness on archaic sheets!
(*LIO*, "On a Lone Freshwater Boulder…", 122, vv. 24-7)[14]

As a wandering town fool, a passionate lover, and a sailor in uncanny waters, the poet embraced the practical task of thought, and he unfolded it in his art by means of the combination of visions and perceptions without a predetermined endpoint. Thus, he built something new, forever different from but irreversibly connected to the concrete reality of the world. Foix's poetry is inventive because it serves as a means of discovery and fixation of the infinitely variable. In Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's terms (1991, 166-86), it "reterritorializes". They reference Virginia Woolf's description of the "saturation of each atom" to explore how creation enables openness to novelty. Each atom, saturated by the poet, hosts the infinite variability of reality, including the absurd and the sordid, and eventually constitutes itself as a novelty. Foix's understanding of the relationship between poetic and real forms mirrors the way he considered that fantastic likenesses were rooted in real ones, deriving and descending from them. In his works, he offered continuous variations of the poetic commitment to walking the celestial paths of fiction, an endeavor that involves moving, displacing, and recombining forms, in spite of the disappointment and despair that result from facing darkness and incomprehensibility time and time again:

14 The last two quoted verses (vv. 26-7) are Rosenthal's opening epigraph for his anthology of poems by Foix (1988). The translation of the two preceding verses (vv. 24-5) is by the author.

> From Time, freedmen, and hierarchs of Number,
> Unlawful merchants of astral manufactures,
> Arms as a cross, in maternal vineyards,
> We are March ghosts and silt for agaves.
> (*LIO*, "On a Lone Freshwater Boulder…", 122, vv. 33-6)

Foix never abandons the inquiry into the meaning of poetic production. Disorientation, coupled with a genuine inclination toward wonder, is not merely a dramatic device but, above all, a sincere means of expressing perplexity. The plurality of phenomena, cosmovisions, schools, and styles demands from him the accumulation of likenesses in poetry, unity unfolding only negatively yet vibrantly in the expectations that each poem opens. The dispersion of light threads in vague phosphorescence signifies the poet's unwavering commitment to his research. Uwe Japp highlighted Robert Musil's distinction between classical and modern ironic relationships with knowledge, which allowed him to address unsolvable disorientation by means of an obstinate yet fragile interrogation: "*Socratic* is: presenting oneself as ignorant. | *Modern*: being ignorant!" (Japp 1983, 320). Foix undoubtedly inscribed himself in this strand of ironic thought derived from Romanticism: his juxtapositions and associations of that which is above and that which is below destabilize any cosmovision that might lead to an appearance of certainty, as pointed out by Eberhard Geisler (2016, 160): "The mirroring reflection has ultimately brought about the disappearance of meaning. The logos that was once divine is now nullified".

The disorientation that neither causes the wonders of the world to vanish nor disappears itself is, thus, essential. It represents a particular way of anticipating and hoping.[15] Ingeborg Bachmann, in the first of her "Frankfurt Lectures" (1959-60) described it as follows:

> We have spoken of a much-needed stimulus that for the time being I cannot identify as anything other than a moral one in plain view of all morality; we have spoken of a propulsive force to be imparted to an idea that initially couldn't care less about its trajectory, an idea that desires knowledge and desires to attain something through language and through working through to the limits

15 In *La pensée philosophique créatrice de Pascal* (1925), by Douchan Nedelkovitch, a book owned by Foix (*Foi-8-270*, BNC, Biblioteca de Catalunya. Barcelona), the philosophical activity of the author of the *Pensées* is linked to the experience of profound irony, to which Foix might have felt deeply attached: "And this is undoubtedly the most real reason for the diversity, complexity, and multifaceted nature of this activity. For thought, as it is doubt and personal inquiry, must, as creative irony, 'turn in every possible direction'" (Nedelkovitch 1925, 27).

> of language. For the time being, let us call that something *reality*. (Bachmann 1993, 192-3)[16]

In *Catalans from 1918*, Foix introduced several public figures of his time by means of diaristic entries grouped by themes and characters. These pieces, which did not belong to *Daybook 1918*, were highly observational prose texts that reflected the intellectual life in Barcelona around the year 1918. They recounted Foix's encounters with painters and writers with whom he had close contact, such as Carner, Riba, and Salvat-Papasseit, as well as anecdotes about them, their activities, and opinions. In an entry dated January 1st, 1913, the poet narrates a conversation with some acquaintances during a stroll. They discuss the state of modern art and culture at a time when writers, artists, and intellectuals often carried the torch of civic ideals of order and progress, in alliance with the social and political elites. This cultural movement, known as 'Noucentisme', had conservative, classicizing tendencies, and was best represented by Eugeni d'Ors and his close collaboration with statesmen like Enric Prat de la Riba, who led the regional government of Catalonia between 1914 and 1917. In this context, Foix is bewildered by his friends' confidence in their own aesthetic and creative doctrines:

> I, less of a radical, and perhaps not much of a *noucentista*, would be too kind towards those who sincerely stray due to unheard-of speculations. I am myself ill-prepared too. So much reading will perhaps lead me to lose writing. They, in their activity, feel more confident than I do. Amidst reason and fantasy, I have my head spinning, and there where they reassure themselves, I doubt. (*C18*, 63)

His early doubtfulness already corresponded to the understanding of the impossibility of fixating voluptuosity, incoherences, and the expressive needs of his personality, through conventional linguistic and stylistic means.[17] In a brief note in the "Meridians", Foix highlighted again the creative force of doubt, as well as the bond between poetry and research that it fosters:

> Doubt. – "Melancholy and sadness – *Lautreamont says* – are already the beginning of doubt". "William James preaches – *Bertrand Russell says* – the 'will of believing'. I, as for me, preach the 'will of doubting'". ("El dubte", 27-11-1931, 5)

16 Translated by Douglas Robertson (Bachmann 2017).

17 Marrugat emphasized that Foix and Folguera developed an affinity for French avant-garde objectivism because they held positions close to arbitrarism, which thrived during "Noucentisme", in contrast to the vitalist spontaneity of the epigons of late Romanticism, such as Joan Salvat-Papasseit (Marrugat 2020, 615).

In poetry, the will to doubt reveals the co-implication of the never-coinciding opposites discovered amidst the research practice. The extremes and their nuances are affirmed, but only temporarily, for they pile up atop one another time and time again in the form of dark likenesses. This chapter focused on the coherence between Foix's predilection for open stylistic experimentation and the thematization of research in *Alone, and Mourning*, beyond analogical and platonic readings. The next chapter will approach the epistemological implications of the poetic standpoint he championed, aiming to outline the practical commitment inherent in his poetry research.

6 "Some Considerations" on the Poetic Standpoint

Summary 6.1 Introduction: An Evolving Essay on Art and Literature. – 6.2 Reality, Totality, Unity: Freud *versus* Balmes. – 6.3 Pluralistic, Experimental Realism.

6.1 Introduction: An Evolving Essay on Art and Literature

As scrutinized in Foix's works, the poet entrusted productive imagination with the task of shaping poetic reality through words. This reality depended strictly on actual, material reality, encompassing a broad, generous idea of reality as both autonomous and external, on the one hand, and as lived experience of all sorts, on the other. Visions, dreams, anecdotes, and newspaper chronicles, they are all displayed in his poetry horizontally, as novelties that continuously shape the relationship between his own personality and the world. He unfolded in his own poetry such a productive conception of the generation of likenesses because it allowed him to acknowledge the unity and continuity of poetic and real worlds.

In this chapter, Foix's poetic words regarding the creation of fantastic likenesses, as well as creative imagination as a means of experimentation and research, will be considered alongside one of his most complex yet informative critical texts. It has been cited above

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-924-5/006

using the first words of its title: "Some Considerations", and that is because it is a text that he rewrote and repurposed several times, from 1925 to 1965. Throughout the years, he modified and expanded his perspective about the relationship between literary creation and knowledge, as well as about the fallible, recursive, and arduous features of his practical standpoint.

This essay's first appearance was in 1925, in the second issue of the *Revista de Poesia*, with the title "some Considerations on Avant-Garde Literature" (*AC1925*). In 1927, Foix reused several paragraphs of that article and added some new ones to compose "Some Considerations on Current Literature and Art", which were published in the twentieth issue of *L'Amic de les Arts* (*AC1927*). Under this exact same title, and with no modifications, he reprinted a selection of these paragraphs for *La Publicitat*, appearing in the cultural pages of the newspaper on March 1st and 3rd, 1932 (*AC1932*). Lastly, he undertook a thorough revision of the materials elaborated between 1925 and 1927 almost forty years later, on the occasion of a public lecture delivered in the Sant Lluc Artistic Circle, the most relevant Catholic association of artists in Barcelona. In this final installment, the text was known as "Some Considerations on Current Art and Literature" (*AC1965*).[1]

Foix's thoughts on the art and literature of his time have already surfaced in this study. His equal opposition to bourgeois art for art's sake and to avant-gardist experimentalisms leaning on mental and verbal automatism did not entail a simple condemnation of avant-gardist adventures. He did not submit to a simplistic dualism in regard to the social function of literature, and he tried to argue for its collective dimension transcending contextual political and aesthetic doctrines. Scarcely thirty days after publishing "Some Considerations…" in *La Publicitat* (*AC1932*), he reflected upon the dichotomy between artistic gratuity and utility:

> Over the theory of art for art's sake and that of useful art; between the theory of art and poetry at the service of a caste, fatherland, or class ideology, and that of art and poetry as means of expression or pure experimentation; there is, today, [the theory of] art and poetry as an activity of the soul. It is fought by nationalists and proletarists, it is rejected by "realists" across all

1 In the last decades of his life, Foix revisited earlier texts and reprinted them in different contexts, as a means of asserting the stability and continuity of his poetic project and of his worldview. The prologues to *Last Communiqué* (1970) and *Near at Hand…* (1972) are the short essays mentioned above, "On the Poetic Real" and "… In Finely Cut Verses and Rounded Stanza", which had been published in the *Quaderns de Poesia* in 1935 and 1936. Foix, who for decades had drawn poetic inspiration from his youth notebooks and published thoroughly revised texts of *Daybook 1918*, also recycled and recontextualized his critical texts. Cf. Cornudella 2000, 780-5; Veny-Mesquida 1993, 9.

> fields. Confusion is inevitable. In such a choice, an eternal question is at stake: whom to serve? ("[De l'esnobisme i el periodisme]", 31-03-1932, 3 [OC 4, 51])[2]

His ideas aligned, as expected, with the rich tradition of romantic art and symbolism, extending into the twentieth century through the influences of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Nietzsche, and Freud, all of whom elevated the poet's creative task to one of the highest dignity and originality. In 1930, Foix published a translation of a fragment from Rimbaud's *Lettre du Voyant* as one of his "Meridians":

> Always full of Number and Harmony, these poems will be made to endure. At heart, it would still somehow resemble Greek Poetry. Eternal art would fulfill its functions; for poets are citizens. ("Lletra del vident", 23-12-1930, 5)

He also found many interlocutors within several strands of contemporary French thought. As highlighted by Guerrero, Samuel Jankélévitch – Freud's first French translator – must have aided Foix in the comprehension of the bound between the psychoanalyst and Nietzsche, regarding the creative task of introspection. In another of the "Meridians", from 1931, he stated this connection:

> To S. Jankélévitch, Romanticism did not die with Nietzsche, and while there are romantics (and everything makes us think there will be romantics as long as there are people) humankind will not cease to be captivated by the problem of personality. "Among other merits, Nietzsche prepared the ways for an explorer of the 'I' […]". ("Nietzsche-Freud", 14-04-1931, 4; cited by Guerrero 1996, 190)

Regarding poetic access to a better understanding of personality, Foix also drew on sources as diverse as the surrealists, Benda, and Blondel, and placed particular emphasis on Bergson's ideas. Foix's approaches to this philosopher and his commentators are consistently present in the "Meridians" (Gómez i Inglada 2008; 2010, 147-50). In a note titled "Bergsonian Spiritualism", Focius referenced the conservative critic Pierre Lasserre's hopes regarding the possibility of "finding God again in ourselves" by means of the analysis of the least natural actions and the most exalting sentiments. Such a philosophy, though unattainable at the time being, would have been allegedly announced and prepared by Bergson's ideas ("Espiritualisme

2 This title appeared only in the fourth volume of the *Complete Works* [OC 4], edited by Manuel Carbonell under the supervision of the poet. In *La Publicitat*, the piece had no particular title but was published under the usual header of the section: "Les idees i els esdeveniments" (Ideas and Events).

bergsonià", 22-12-1929). In a much later interview, Foix considered his work as a "derivation from Bergson's philosophical standpoint regarding the freedom of the soul" (Foix, Comadira 1985, 22), as pointed out by Gómez i Inglada (2010, 147). His poetry research translates the idea of the free activity of the soul, "*a cry of liberty*", as stated in the "Letter to Clara Sobirós" (*LCS*, 6; Rosenthal, 4). Thus, it hosts and fosters a *sui generis* form of intervention in the public space.

This understanding of poetry was mediated, as has been showcased throughout previous chapters, by a distinctive concept of 'realism' that Foix staunchly favored. In the 1965 lecture, he reminded the audience that his realistic standpoint faced many challenges: "At some point, between 1930 and 1935, some believed that the world had to forsake the figurative and plastic arts" (*AC1965*, 168). According to the poet, forty years after the fact, neither surrealism nor abstract art had found comprehensive ways to address the complexity of reality, from its deepest mysteries to its most superficial details. Even though the reasons for their failure differed, the outcome was, to Foix, the same: trends, schools, and styles faded, while a more fundamental poetic movement remained, that is, a willingness to understand inner and outer reality without arbitrarily separating them and confining them within contingent concepts and categories. Such a perspective encouraged Foix to establish a seamless continuity between his early aesthetic judgements, often imbued with an avant-gardist, polemic tone, and his later reassessments of his own poetics.

6.2 Reality, Totality, Unity: Freud *versus* Balmes

In *AC1927* and *AC1965*, Foix warned against the inevitable contradiction conveyed by the idea that reality and perfection are bound by a relationship of identity. He referred to the Spinozian equation: "Reality = Perfection", corresponding to the univocal being or *natura naturans*, and argued that:

> if the reality we attribute to a poem or a painting depends, within literary history, on their being more real or less real, and if, as other philosophers maintain, Perfection is not humanly attainable, the notion of Reality becomes a Superreality for us, before which we always find ourselves falling short. (*AC1927*, 3)

In *AC1965*, rather than using the term "Superreality", to express the insufficiency derived from the misguided equation, he opted for a more general term that dissuaded the audience from thinking solely about surrealist poetics: "the notion of Reality becomes for us an Other Reality, before which we find ourselves falling short" (*AC1965*,

162). Subsequently, his focus shifted from the absence of univocity in 'reality' to the conceivable scope of his investigation:

> No one can avoid the fact that I consider my prose texts to be realistic […]. (*AC1927*, 3; Venuti, 136)

> No one can avoid the fact that I consider my productions to be transcriptions of a reality, that is, to be realistic. (*AC1965*, 162)

The poet dismissed the epistemic claims of the so-called realists and argued that they tended to narrow down the objects they represented in fiction to an arbitrarily selected set of phenomena, while disregarding the 'irreal' illusions of the mind and the unexpected marvels of the world. Foix identified this as "infrarealism or the false copy of a reality, a human notion of the real" (*AC1965*, 162). As Romeu stated (1956, 12), he configured "another reality, which is surprising and as authentic as the other". As a likeness or an appearance, it never severs its bond with the fragmentary whole from which it is drawn. Foix's poetic worlds are fantastic likenesses descended from real likenesses.

In *Matière et memoire*, Henri Bergson articulated a similar critical approach to the hegemonic contemporary understanding of realism. He outlined the conceptual foundations for his proposed continuity between body and soul, grounded in the action of pure perception, in contrast to Kantian aesthetic reasoning (Bergson 1991, 58-65):

> The simpler realism makes of this space a real medium, in which things are in suspension; Kantian realism regards it as an ideal medium, in which the multiplicity of sensations is coordinated; but for both of them this medium is given *to begin with*, as the necessary condition of what comes to abide in it. (Bergson 1991, 231)

Foix defended his position as a genuine realist in *AC1927*, facing accusations of being a follower of Breton's movement. The context of *AC1965* was remarkably different on all fronts. Art was soon to be taken over by postmodern aesthetics, described by Fredric Jameson "Surrealism without the Unconscious",[3] and, when revisiting his thoughts on a comprehensive poetic approach to reality, he emphasized not only its fundamental unity, but also his role as a crafter of likenesses of reality, which remains invariably singular amid

3 "Surrealism without the Unconscious: such is the way in which one is also tempted to characterize the newer painting, in which the most uncontrolled kinds of figuration emerge with a depthlessness that is not even hallucinatory, like the free association of an impersonal collective subject, without the charge and investment either of a personal Unconscious or of a group one" (Jameson 1991, 173).

ever-changing phenomena. At the beginning of the 1965 lecture, this perspective is articulated in different terms:

> The artist and the poet, honest before humankind and naked, standing before nature, place themselves in front of the highest of realities, which remains unknown to the false realists of the immediate real, the naturalists, due to a lack of love. (*AC1965*, 154-5)

These lines can be compared to the essayistic piece "On the Poetic Real", which took its final form as a prologue in *Last Communiqué* (Edicions 62, 1970). The definition of the poet is similar and elaborates further on the permanence of reality:

> In every era, and under the most diverse regimes, they keep watch over the mystery and invoke its permanence. If necessary, they cultivate magic and cast hand shadows on the wall of time with the elements offered by the immediate real. They look for the true reality, the suprareal, the integrated real. (*DC*, 781)[4]

The *Stone Poems*, reflecting Foix's preference for the 'non-rectified object' and the 'document', serve as perhaps the most vivid example of his realistic, unitary, and paradoxical aesthetics. Determined to resist the schematization or replacement of reality with transient images and ideas, Foix outlined in his works an enclosed realm where poets could assert a measure of creative authority. There, he unleashed the proliferation of the poetic real, mirroring the uncontrollable collision of experienced life, art, dream, and imagination. These processes are stimulated by an unlikely expectation: that the poems might eventually illuminate the path toward the comprehension of the complex unity of reality. For this reason, the poet considered stone objects and poems as equal appearances, both poetic fruits of imagination through which he sought 'the integrated real'.

4 In the two previous versions of this text, "Notes and simulacra" (*La Publicitat*, 29-07-1934) and "Poetry and Revolution" (*Quaderns de Poesia*, June 1935), Foix gave more importance to symbolist rhetorical elements, which aided poetry in general – not only one's own – to grasp its potential knowledge, effusively opposing false realisms. In the first case, the text read: "In each age they keep vigil over the Mystery, at its permanence. They cultivate the magic and cast hand shadows on the wall of eternity with the material elements provided by the sad and mobile 'reality'. They look for the true reality, the 'other reality' (the suprareal, the supernatural), which is, don't get startled, the antihistory ("Notes i simulacres", 29-07-1934, 2). In the latter essay, a few significant changes brought the text closer to its final form and adjusted it more to Foix's personal proposal: "In each age, under the most opposed regimes, they keep vigil over the Mystery, at its permanence. They cultivate the magic and cast hand shadows on the wall of eternity with the material elements provided by the sad and mobile 'reality'. They look for the true reality, the 'other reality' (the suprareal, the superreal or the supernatural), which is, don't get startled, the antihistory" (Foix 1935a, 3).

To challenge the principles of art for art's sake and irrational creation of imagery, Foix drew upon the findings of psychoanalysis:

> [A]ssociations of images that appear to be highly absurd, disordered, and devoid of significance are revealed, through analysis, to be linked by a logic of the passions. (*AC1927*, 4; Venuti, 141)

Santamaria de Mingo uncovered that these words are a literal translation of Albert Spaier's *La pensée concrète. Essai sur le symbolisme intellectuel*, published that same year 1927: "[F]ar from incidental, every association of one image with another is *significant*, as Dalí knew perfectly" (Santamaria de Mingo 2007, 131). With this brief, veiled citation, Foix conveyed his understanding of the conceptual core of automatic writing and poetic montage. The "logic of the passions" is not necessarily tangential to discursive logic, but rather a parallel pathway devoted to the exteriorization of the depths of personality.

In the *Second manifeste du surréalisme*, from 1930, Breton argued for the transition from a 'pure' conception of poetic creation toward a defense of the social and psychological function of surrealism:

> And heaven help, once again, the Surrealist idea, or any other idea which tends to assume a concrete shape, or tends to submit, as wholeheartedly as can possibly be imagined in the order of *fact*, in the same sense in which the idea of love tends to create a being, or the notion of Revolution tends to bring about the day of that Revolution. (Breton 1969, 136)

According to Breton, surrealism finds itself aligned with the conceptual foundations of historical materialism (140). Its autonomous and concrete shape is what reveals the actual functioning of thought, because creative practice is stimulated by "the belief in that gleam of light that Surrealism seeks to detect deep within us" (126). The official prescriber of surrealism outlined a method that was analogous to psychiatric practice, and proposed a thorough descent, both external and internal, into a new consciousness,

> casting light upon the unrevealed and yet revealable portion of our being wherein all beauty, all love, all virtue that we scarcely recognize in ourselves, shine with great intensity. (162)

The appropriate literary techniques, such as automatic writing and the description of dreams, among others, would no longer operate at the level of the real and the imaginary, but "*on the other side of reality*" (162).

As Georges Didi-Huberman explained, surrealism upheld a form of idealism that relied on the creative possibilities of imagination

while leaving the fundamental analogical structures of Western thought unchanged, in contrast to more experimental efforts, such as those found in Georges Bataille's works, which sought to rupture these theoretical and practical frameworks (Didi-Huberman 1996, 15). Moreover, Julia Kristeva had analyzed Freud's influence in literature beyond Breton's own scope, emphasizing the impossibility of establishing the analogical relations between exteriority and interiority *a priori*. In fact, the philosopher argued that contradictoriness and significative heterogeneity, key features of modern lyricism, point toward the *a posteriori* determination of novelty and excess (Kristeva 1985, 80). In other words, by rejecting mimesis and resisting the *a priori* alignment of poetic words with predetermined models of representation, obscure and seemingly illogical likenesses are approached from a perspective that does not require their complete adequation to any given meaning. *Signifiance*, Kristeva's term of choice, is the poetic determination of meaning from the perspective of process and practice, according to which an open poetic object corresponds to an equally open subject. However, the fetishization of psychoanalysis that Kristeva detected in Apollinaire and the surrealists distanced them from Lautréamont and Mallarmé's foundational radicalism.

Foix argued, on the one hand, for the continuity and integrity of reality and poetry, and, on the other hand, maintained a doubtful and prudent distance from the possibility of configuring a poetic sense that could ever satisfy any epistemic expectations. This distance is what stimulated his actions in the first place. In *AC1927*, he invoked the thoughts of the nineteenth-century Catholic philosopher Jaume Balmes (1810-1848)[5] and opposed surrealist imagination, apparently non-logical but indebted to passion, to an eminently Christian idea of imagination:

> With due caution, after assuring himself of the integrity of the sense organs, Balmes stated that imagination is not limited to reproduction, but that it rather forms ideal wholes to which reality does not correspond. Without this faculty, he stated, humanity would achieve nothing new; it would be limited to copying the natural in a fixed and invariable manner. (*AC1927*, 4; Venuti, 142)

According to Hans Urs von Balthasar, aesthetic thought within Christian theology has generally maintained that infinite, divine Goodness, Beauty, and Truth are the diffusive matrix of all human

5 Balmes combined neo-scholastic Thomism with Scottish common-sense philosophy. In his efforts to reform Spanish conservatism, he became widely influential in both philosophical and political circles. His most notable work is *The Criterion* (*El Criterio*), from 1845, in which he treated his epistemological foundations.

imaginative production. Freedom is posited as a requirement for this relationship: God is light unleashed upon creation, freely bestowed upon human senses and intellect. The images fashioned by imagination hinge on this light due to spiritual analogy, and no mathematical proportion between form and platonic idea is admissible as the fundamental connection between the human and the divine (Balthasar 1984, 110-12, 123-9).

The Balmesian understanding of imagination cited by Foix is based on the disconformity between human creativity and the actual state of affairs. It corresponds, consequently, to the "inventiveness of imagination" outlined by Balmes in his *Course of Elementary Philosophy* (1849), right after the description of the merely reproductive imagination, also known as the "memory of imagination". The philosopher suggested a synthetic definition of productive imagination:

> The inventiveness of imagination consists in the ability to combine various sensory impressions, regardless of the mode in which we received them. (Balmes 1849, 22)

The kinds of combinations that seek beauty, usually belonging to artists' imagination, may free themselves from the mechanical necessity enforced by the laws of nature. Balmes believed, thus, that artists apprehend such freedom "when they approach objects that are not subjected to the conditions of the corporeal universe", and he added, moreover:

> In such cases, everything becomes vaporous, airy, and fantastic. Bodies are spiritualized, so to speak. The coarseness of matter disappears, swept away by ideas and feeling. (24)

In *AC1927*, Foix cited another fragment of Balmes' *Course* that evokes one of the Lullian quotations that he would use to head *The Unreal Omegas* in 1949: "when excited by sensory impressions, our spirit acquires the knowledge of incorporeal things" (*AC1927*, 4 [Venuti, 142]; Balmes 1849, 9).[6] The philosopher acknowledged, however, that the soul is excited by imaginative combinations in general, oriented toward science and truth, and toward beauty as well. Under certain circumstances, as Foix pointed out by means of his patchworking, this excitement of the soul must refer to a certain kind of incorporeal things:

6 In line with traditional Christian thought, Balmes uses this reasoning to explain the intellectual continuity between sensual and intellectual knowledge: "The immediate goal of the five senses is to put us in communication with the corporeal world, but this is not their only function, because when our soul is excited by sensory impressions, it apprehends the knowledge of incorporeal things".

> For Balmes, the fecundity of the imagination is at times independent of the will, demonstrating the existence of an order of faculties that are higher than the sense organs. (*AC1927*, 4; Venuti, 142)

At this point, the poet jumped to an entirely different section of the Balmesian *Course*, where the philosopher addressed the formation of ideas in the intellect, after having scrutinized the requirements and conditions of sensual perception. 'Ideology', in his work, is the integrative operation of the sensory data that allows for its association, beyond its mere mnemonic reproduction: "in the continuous and orderly association of things so different, the action of a faculty superior to the sensory order is discovered" (Balmes 1849, 161). Balmes is referring to reason,

> that which sets humans apart from brutes, and which elevates them to such an immense height above all animals, even in matters concerning purely sensory objects. (161)

In the four brief lines of *AC1927* quoted above, Foix conflated these notions with the following one, in which the philosopher addressed the relationship between imagination and free will:

> The exercise of imagination is somewhat subject to free will, but not entirely. Experience shows that we can imagine various objects whenever and however we choose, but it is also frequently true that we cannot evoke images we have forgotten, control reappearing images at will, or make certain images vanish when they appear before us despite our own will. (161)

In the original source, Balmes referred only to "maladies of the brain" and "organic alterations" (161) as accidental causes of such unleashed inventiveness in imagination. Foix's assemblage in *AC1927*, focused solely on artistic imagination, highlighted Balmes' resistance to acknowledging any relationship between the excesses of imagination and creative artistic practices. However, for a conservative Catholic arguing for the alignment of human rationality with God's creative order, the human capacity to generate irrational images, such as visions and even prophecies, was not up for discussion. These images might appear "independently of our will, and thus purely ideal sets [of images] come to us, sometimes beautiful and charming, at other times deformed and horrific" (Balmes 1849, 162). He could never admit, however, that irrationality ruled the world of art, which was subject to the objective rules of beauty according to its proper finality. Hence, Balmes favored a strict hierarchy between reason and fantasy:

> Reason, once it has been invaded by the idea, takes control of fantasy and compels it to fashion one by one each necessary form, and to represent it [the idea] with all its relations. (162)

He suggested that the intense and often prolonged efforts of imagination, which are required to allow reason to fully comprehend an idea, are deeply rooted in and conditioned by the objective order of the cosmos. This divine order provided both meaning and purpose to life, as well as to the entirety of worldly existence, and Balmesian rational dogmatics was systematically upheld and sustained by this universal truth (Widow 2011, 255-8).

Foix's Balmesian quotations and paraphrases sought to represent supernaturalism, the second key strand of thought he considered essential for exploring the role of imagination in the arts, standing in apparent contrast to the Freudian approach. On the one hand, due to its impact on the surrealists and other avant-gardists, psychoanalysis was regarded as one of the most significant modern philosophical critiques of the foundations of post-Kantian philosophical developments, whether in Hegel, Comte, or Krause. On the other hand, Balmes synthesized Christian thought, which had been mobilized and strengthened over the previous decades in response to philosophical and scientific perspectives that either reduced the transcendent and personal God to a mere postulate of reason or denied its existence entirely.[7] Foix could not align himself with either of these strands of thought, and his main critique was that they both concealed and fractured the unity of reality, to which, according to him, the true avant-garde author or artist must sincerely surrender:

> Yet Balmes, with the play of calculated [*arbitrades*] images, interprets idealism; Freud, with his images, interprets a certain reality; we, beyond what these others do, interpret Reality. (*AC1927*, 4; Venuti, 142)[8]

7 The fracture between the Catholic hierarchy and the various secular articulations of modern thought is conventionally traced to one of its most significant historical milestones: Pope Leo XII's encyclical *Æterni Patris* (1879), in which he called for a coordinated effort from all religious intellectuals to study and disseminate patristic and scholastic doctrines, especially those of Thomas Aquinas, in order to restore the vitality and centrality of Christian doctrine and morality in modern scholarship.

8 In *AC1932*, the fragment is identical (*AC1932*, 3), but in the fourth volume of Foix's *Complete Works*, published posthumously, this last paragraph reads: "Yet Balmes, with the play of his calculated images, interprets idealism. Freud, with his images, interprets a certain reality. We, before or beyond what these others do, interpret Reality" (OC 4, 38). The editor of the collection, Manuel Carbonell, confirmed that this and other changes were introduced by the author. I owe this information to Margarida Trias (J.V. Foix Foundation).

As has been showcased throughout the study, the reality attributed by Foix to poetry and its objects is by no means an ideal reality nor is it a superior or a separated reality of any kind, but rather reality without fissures, "a living reality" (*AC1927*, 2; Venuti, 136) and the "integrated real" (*DC*, "On the Poetic Real", 781), as it manifests and conceals itself, boundless and inapprehensible, in daily life and in unexplainable events alike, "through the One and the Uncertain" (*SIDD*, "Blow, Secular Winds…", 98, v. 13). The succinct paragraph in *AC1927*, where Freud and Balmes engage in a dialogue fostered by Foix's patchwork technique, offers valuable insight into his skepticism toward prevailing discourses regarding the creative contribution of human imagination in shaping reality. Although he did not reproduce this specific paragraph again in *AC1965*, its essence was rearticulated and elaborated upon in the conclusion of the lecture. There, Foix simultaneously confronted the two poetic proposals that influenced him the most throughout his life, namely surrealism and religious, late-romantic supernaturalism.

6.3 Pluralistic, Experimental Realism

In *AC1965*, the poet employed different terms to refer to the two artistic tendencies he sought to address:

> We all know the Lucrecian definition of simulacra. Few have better framed them on canvas than the most determined among the metaphysics and the superrealists. (*AC1965*, 166-7)

The latter are also referred to as 'irrealists', a term that accuses them of replacing the world with simulacra, which is a different way of stating that they subjected exteriority to the logic of the passions: "The appearances and simulacra are the other reality that they experience as the only reality" (167). Self-proclaimed as the most steadfast advocate for the unity of the world's fabric, alongside the classical poets he evoked in *Alone, and Mourning* as unattainable models, Foix argued that "under the chlamys and under the bathrobe, humankind is affected by the same passions", and that "the laws of reason are identical at all times" (167), despite the varying philosophical and artistic forms and figurations. It is evident, however, that he embraced this idea precisely in light of his recognition of the inherent instability and fragility of both the self and the world. As highlighted in the introduction to this study, in *KRTU*'s proemial text "Some Reflections on One's Own Literature", he perceived an element of inevitability in his work, closely linked to the growing complexity of his time:

> Within this vast lumber room, where many of us have to live, it is not strange that *disorder* might be, still, the only order possible. (*K*, 41; Venuti, 146)[9]

At the Sant Lluc Artistic Circle, Foix reiterated this same idea, while praising functionalist architecture and Le Corbusier's legacy. He argued that, beyond superficial likenesses, this strand of architectural thought and practice seeks in its creations an order that might adhere to that of exterior reality:

> To surrender to my own asymmetries, to my wandering inside my own labyrinths, I call out for an external order. For poets to fulfill their promises, the rocks must arrange themselves, as hard and silent as they are. (*AC1965*, 160)

In opposition to decorativists, rhetoricians, and florifiers, whom he derided as "hoaxers of order", "false lyricists", and "vegetarians of the rock", Foix concluded, with doubt: "How can I surrender to my disorder amidst so much disorder?" (161). Hermann Broch, who shared Foix's unease and traced its implications until he almost abandoned writing altogether (Arendt 1955, 41-2), similarly synthesized the virtue of poetry research:

> The aim of knowledge in poetry, its aim toward truth, is no longer solely the beautiful in its mercilessness, and it is no longer solely the reality of fate. No, it is, beyond that, also the reality of the soul and its struggle against fate, which it must undertake if it wishes to remain human. (Broch 1955, 66)

The purpose of poetry is, consequently, not to avoid the disorder that surrounds it. It does not try to simulate an order, but to learn how to respond to the hard and quiet order of the rocks – that is, of the classics too, who, like Raphael, Brueghel, and Bosch, are called "eternal and hard" (*SIDD*, "Four colors arrange the world", 78, v. 13). The union of the Real and the Irreal in a single plane pursued this goal (Terry 1985, 114). The disorder observed in the accumulation of aesthetic proposals, from metaphysics to surrealism, as well as the internal and external turmoil Foix encountered in both life and poetry – an experience that deeply tied him to his investigations – reflects the struggles faced by creators when confronting, whether with passion or reason, singular reality:

9 Already in its original publication in *L'Amic de les Arts* (31-03-1929, 11-12), the moral and political undertone of this sentence is clear. The "vast lumber room" refers also to the disarrayed values of his generation and to the disappointing political developments in his country. As the text stated: "This retreat from individual ambition is just a consequence of the retreat from a collective ambition" (*K*, 41; Venuti, 146).

> Some, said Plato, "able to contemplate the immensity of time and the whole of beings", free themselves from terrestrial vertigo by the worship of reason and virtue. The others plunge into the most tenebrous depths of the soul and are called positivist, realist, or living people. (*AC1965*, 167)

The terrestrial vertigo invoked by Foix, attributed to both aesthetic tendencies, along with his explicitly eclectic language choices regarding the natural order – viewed as a divine creation and as an ideal platonic reality – illustrates his understanding of poetry research as something transcending mere scientific curiosity about surrounding phenomena. Research is tightly bound to an experience of utter incapacity and to an intuition of the impossibility of establishing stable criteria for comprehending the disarrayed condition of life. Such vertigo has often been interpreted by the Christian tradition as a constitutive *factum* of human existence, as a universal religious experience, and as a universal experience of 'mystery' (Taylor 2007, 4-8; Duch 2012, 17). This reference to a vertigo shared by all poets invites a closer examination of an earlier passage in the text, which appeared in both *AC1927* and *AC1965*. In it, Foix expressed this common aspect of modern poetic movements with other words:

> Are they, then, romantics? Or perhaps mystics? Or both at the same time? Who can say? It might be more prudent to believe that they give in, not being mentally either one, to a romantic or intellectual experience, or alternatively to both, with perfect lucidity. Their originality might be this: the grand adventure of yielding, whether racing at full speed or with the propeller submerged, navigating the immensely vast sky of imagination, chartless yet with the prescience of emerging unscathed. (*AC1965*, 163-4)

With these words, he indirectly acknowledged his alignment with the avant-garde. He, too, committed to an exploration of the wonderful and labyrinthine world without any compass or red thread. The recurring motifs of the wall and the sea in his poetry abundantly illustrate this commitment, as they simultaneously embody boundary and passage, constraint and possibility:

> You and I get ourselves lost, in unsolved bark,
> Fettered between shadow and wall, to the shortcut
> Of the enclosed street that we looked for hopelessly.
> (*LIO*, "The False Skyscrapers…", 131, vv. 36-8)

For Foix, the designation 'avant-gardist' holds genuinely true only when artists align themselves and their practice with the continuity and unity of time and cosmic laws, precisely anchoring their

standpoint in the fragile, contingent, and unstable singularity of the fleeting moment. The sincerity of poetic endeavor, in its unwavering commitment to preserving the permanence of the instant against all hopes and odds, must always be superlative:[10]

> It is the coming into awareness of each present moment, the instant when the whole dissolves into the manifold, the soul nourishing itself from within that very instant and moving forward through local and temporal insertions. (*AC1965*, 157)

In 1927, Foix navigated a middle ground between Balmes and Freud, distancing himself from both tendencies while praising the shared virtues of metaphysics and surrealists. In 1965, before the predominantly Catholic audience of the Sant Lluc Artistic Circle, he was notably more explicit in advocating for the acknowledgment of a transcendental order – difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend – and the submission to it as a suitable poetic standpoint. He concluded his talk with a final evaluation of the developments and legacy of the two aforementioned modern artistic strands. The first, according to him, branched into two distinct ways of resistance against the unavoidable authority of reality:

> superrealism, a total negation of exterior life and exaltation of what is formal, chimeric, and, at its core, deterministic; and the non-figurativism of those who conflated both tendencies – that is, those who extracted forms from matter but were denied authenticity by any external element. (*AC1965*, 169)

Surrealists and abstract artists were criticized for failing to align poetry with external and objective reality, and, more fundamentally, with life itself. As they could not acknowledge that unity dissolved into the confusing multiplicity of their time, their spurious claims regarding authenticity or truth were seen by Foix as an "exaltation of what is formal, chimeric". The poet did not deny the primacy of mind – or 'Mind', as it was obstinately rendered in *Alone, and Mourning* – in the configuration of likenesses. In his poetry research, he insisted, however, that the depths of personality and dream, along with seemingly meaningless anecdotes and the unexpected, unexplainable events, be

10 Avant-gardism is not, according to the poet, a fight against the lingering influence of the past and of tradition in art. In a review of Paul Éluard's *Facile* in *Quaderns de Poesia*, Foix praised him as the most authoritative surrealist because he "provides, strict and pure, classic verses that have no apt competitors" ("Notes sobre llibres", 1935, 31). And he concluded: "Éluard subdues the form due to the rigor of the new form. He opens the oyster for the pearl. He writes with crystal words, and his rhythm is made of water" (31).

considered equally real, as disarrayed in poetry as they are in life.

Foix's critical and essayistic texts remain closely aligned with the focus and objectives of his literary works. Bound to the act of writing by both personal failure and relentless hope, he revisited this line of thought with every new adventure and poem, where he gathered and accumulated diverse materials. He endowed them with a new tangible reality, bringing them into linguistic existence – a reality that, in the hands of the poet and his readers, proved not only enduring but also open to continuous and significant novelty.

The criticism directed at 'metaphysics' and 'spiritualists' also focused on their problematic relationship with the entirety of reality. However, their formalism and determinism posed a different problem: the subordination of poetic creation to an order of reality rooted in an *a priori* supernatural revelation – historical and narrow – that dictated an analogical practice of image production dependent upon it.

> the spiritualist trend of those who, whether figurative and elemental, or abstract by day, are Christians who, nevertheless, accept the data of nature, articulating it with the conviction that the image of humankind, created in the image of God, is found in its metaphysical identity. (*AC1965*, 169)

These artists, "possible supernaturalists", according to Foix, "try to humanize with present-day plastic means the divine gleams that light the world" (169). He praised, therefore, their experimental scope, derived from "terrestrial vertigo" and individual and epochal feeling of disarray. The essays of the supernaturalists are, however, conditioned by a particular *a priori*: their conviction about the identity of the creative intellect's order and that of its creation, due to their specular relationship of filiation.

It is worth remembering that Foix often relied on the language, narrative, and dramatic frameworks of Christian thought, in order to thematize his poetry research. The sonnets of the sixth section of *Alone, and Mourning*, grouped under the title "Fecit quoque Dominus Adae tunicas pelliceas" ("And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man", Gen. 3.21), showcase the deprivation and unanswered cries of the wounded speaker, who fails in his desperate prayers to an infinitely superior paternal divinity just as he failed in his expansive adventures as a discoverer and a lover in previous sections of the book.[11] There are no images of plenitude among these poems:

11 Carbonell (1991, 84) noted that no clear reference to the New Testament or to the Christian God is found in these poems. The tone of the lamentations and prayers might be arguably shared by any confession with a supreme, father-like God, and Foix aims to preserve the meditative and mournful atmosphere of the book intact, as well as to highlight the insufficiency of religious promise. In an inversion of the poetic *ethos* of Romanticism,

> God and Lord, disperse the vile host
> Of the falsely born, turn heaven, star and air,
> Pure for me, and I am your beggar!
> (*SIDD*, "If the Sky Is High…", 111, vv. 12-14; Boehne 1980, 61)

> All is confused, Lord God, and my name,
> Which I say to myself, aloud, in a closed cove,
> Falls strangely on my ear. And I do not understand so many voices
> (*SIDD*, "Hands as a Cross…", 112, vv. 9-11; Boehne 1980, 62)

The poet who, in *Catalans from 1918*, declared: "there where they reassure themselves, I doubt" (*C18*, 63), concluded *AC1965* with an account of the consequences faced by superrealists and metaphysicians during their respective adventures, in a tone and style so akin to his prose poems that the paragraph becomes almost indistinguishable from them:

> The former, submerged in a sea of blackness, hopelessly call for a message from the paradise of ghosts. The latter, submerged in a sea of love, open their hearts to the hope of possessing the light reflected, with an eternal spark, by mountains, trees, leaves, oceans, sea, ponds, rivers and their branches, fountains, and the eyes of people moved by a faith. The former helplessly implore the arrival of occult magic, the latter greet, in liberated nature, the presence of divine magic. (*AC1965*, 169-70)[12]

The sea sailed by the poet in his adventures, "with the propeller submerged", is the image of open space and of *chiaroscuro* where both condemnation and liberation are discovered as possibilities. This is, as highlighted throughout the study, a poetic reality, meaning that it is actualized during the adventure as such, during the experimentation that allows him to grasp the manifold in its confusing integrity. After that, the poem remains, as a document of reality, and the

and close to modernist aesthetics, Foix's poetry does not convey a more or less transcendental vision, but rather the crisis of such a possibility, which fades away without remedy.

12 In its original context, in an article from 1933 in *La Publicitat* repurposed by Foix in *AC1965*, the poet employed an even more charged language, and referred to the tendencies of superrealism and supernaturalism as two wings spinning around classicism, representing their alternatives: "In the former, submerged in a gooey and black sea, a thousand arms rise erect while calling for a message from the paradise of ghosts, while a mad string of black horses abandon their decapitated heads in the mysterious incandescent nets that imprison humankind. In the latter, submerged in a sea of love, a thousand hearts open up, yearning for the possession of the multiple divine gleams reflected by the leaves of trees, the fountains at the glen, the birds of the wilderness and the eyes of humankind. The former helplessly implore the arrival of occult magic, the latter greet, filled with hope, the presence of divine magic in nature ("Contactes: Llull i el neo-romanticisme", 21-12-1933, 4).

poet must set off on new adventures. The sea, thus, is the same for all, yet it may appear either as a "sea of blackness" or a "sea of love". Poets, much like Icarus (*cum puer audaci coepit gaudere volatu*), long to harness the wings of poetry, only to irremediably fall into this sea, according to Foix.[13]

These words used to depict the sea in which supernaturalist poets drown, "sea of love" (*pèlag d'amor*) are directly borrowed from Ramon Llull's short poem *Song of Ramon* (Mallorca, 1300). In it, Llull recounted his pain, repentance, frustration, and fervor, all caused by his failed attempts to move the entire world to conversion by means of his *Art of Finding Truth*. In the ninth stanza of the poem, the philosopher reminded himself and the readers of his evangelical and martyrial call with a regained and unfaltering breath:

> I want to die in a sea of love.
> I am not afraid of old age,of bad prince or bad shepherd.
> Everyday I think of the dishonor
> made to God the great Lord,
> by those who put the world in error.
> (Llull 1936, 259, vv. 49-54)

For Foix, both seas are remarkably close, for they are equally partial metaphors of the sole world shared by both superrealists and supernaturalists. The poetic standpoint and its corresponding creative practice determine whether the sea is oozy and inhabited by ghosts or scintillating with divine gleams reflected by nature. In his description of the latter, Foix echoed the traditional Christian theme of the analogical relationship between God's supernatural creative Word and natural creation. Even though he rejected Balmesian idealism in *AC1927*, the poet's sincere admiration and sympathy for the experimentalism of Christian poetry is clearer in *AC1965*. He judged this strand of thought to be as equally doomed to failure as any other, thus shifting the focus from the allegedly far-fetched revelatory purposes of poetry to a practice of experimentation and research, driven by unexplainable hope, through which the real could be momentarily grasped in its multiplicity and complexity.

Foix's sympathy for the poetic implications of a cosmovision informed by this sort of modern, experimental Christianism is notable in other texts from the late twenties and thirties. Religious uncertain faith, upheld against all odds, and inspired by a humanist desire for wholeness, is recognizable in Foix's practical, poetic belief. These are the intellectual and intuitive pathways that, slowly

13 Foix acknowledged his early obsession with Ovid in *Catalans from 1918*: "I don't stray from Ovid, whom I try to translate using the limited Latin I learned in school, nor from Dante, whom I strive to understand" (*C18*, 47).

but steadily, brought his poetics, always influenced by the jargon of a universal poetic revolution, closer to an explicit expression of the religious dimension of literary practice. Foix's growing interest in Llull, Augustine, and Pascal, as well as his admiration for the personalist intellectual circle of the French magazine *L'Esprit*, founded by Emmanuel Mounier,[14] have been contextualized as hints of a deep existential crisis that took place between 1933 and 1935 (Guerrero 1996, 277). Foix's harmonization between Christian metaphysics and an avant-gardist delight for the fleeting moment is exemplified by his writings against Pope Pious XI's anachronic defense of neoclassicism as the only valid form of religious art: "To despise the moment is to despise God's gift, who granted Catholics their lives in this time and not anytime earlier" (Foix [1971] 1995, 83).

Foix's works do not center on the themes of confession and conversion, as in the case of Paul Claudel's, and his poetic experience was not shaped by a confessional commitment to Catholic revelation or tradition. In terms of glory, purity, vigor, and originality, Foix regarded the French poet among Valéry, Éluard, and Reverdy ("1920-1960", 1960, 30 [OC 4, 151]), as they all experienced a thirst for the infinity and translated it into their works. And just like Claudel, he understood poetry as an instrument of knowledge capable of pointing to the unity of the world and bringing it into presence. Claudel's fixed metaphysical horizon represented an approach to obscurity and multiplicity filled with hope in God's will – even if his poetic attempts barely managed to fleetingly show its unifying light: "It is by means of Light that God procured the darkness and opacity that He needed for His entire construction" (Claudel 1989, 31).[15]

Foix's sole commitment is to poetry, unfolded with sincerity, irrespective of the style and school to which each poem might be associated. This stance, akin to both surrealism and supernaturalism, takes a step back from metaphysical analogies and asserts realism as its foundation. In *La Publicitat*, Foix reviewed a series of articles by the theologian Maxime Gorce, who pursued a harmonization of Thomas Aquinas and Henri Bergson by means of a concept of realism opposed to Kantian philosophy. According to Gorce, as read by Foix:

14 See Foix's article "Fatherland" in *La Publicitat*, where he praised *L'Esprit*'s third way between dogmatic, dehumanizing authoritarian German and Italian fascism and Soviet communism ("Pàtria", 09-06-1935, 4; Venuti, 147-50).

15 Foix's desire for harmonic alignment between the classics and the avant-garde contrasts with Claudel's subordination of past traditions to the eternal Christian principle: "Classical literature is the result of an effort begun in the sixteenth century to create a purely human fictional world where Revelation has never entered" (Claudel 1968, 997). To the aesthetics of Molière and Voltaire, Claudel opposed an evangelical political program: "Idea: An education that would entirely be the development of the catechism. A *revelation* supported by science, history, and partially by art and literature (in their place)" (998).

> [Bergson] believes that the world exists independently of human thought, without any sort of illusionism on our part. His God is no ghost of the human soul, but an almighty creator. ("Bergson i Sant Tomàs", 12-11-1935, 2)

The poet, in his assessment of Gorce's philosophical writing, glimpsed "the general ideas of realism that constitute the essence of this neo-Thomist philosophy, officially endorsed by the Catholic Church" (2). Foix cautiously acknowledged the theologian's controversial synthesis of Aquinas and Bergson:

> Bergson's *intuition* – always according to Father Gorce – is the *intelligence* of the things of the soul, or rather, of the souls. It is the "finesse" of spirit that Pascal talks about. And it could also be called the *finest example of intelligence*. (2)[16]

The connection between Bergson's absolute knowledge and Pascal's spirit of *finesse* in the opening excerpt of the *Pensées* allowed the Catholic thinker to establish a framework of complementarity between spirituality and geometry, in a modern translation of the co-implication of faith and intellect. For Bergson, who was critical of the development of Kantian epistemology, intuition is "instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely" (Bergson [1907] 1944, 194). Intellect, by contrast, requires immobility to provide clear representations of objects:

> [I]t always starts from immobility, as if this were the ultimate reality: when it tries to form an idea of movement, it does so by constructing movement out of immobilities put together. (Bergson 1944, 171)

Foix's brief review of Gorce is notable for its integration of the theologian's words with other excerpts from "a letter by Bergson himself" ("Bergson i Sant Tomàs", 12-11-1935, 2), in which the philosopher commented on Gorce's interpretation. Foix underlined that while Bergson acknowledged the theologian's work, he refrained from claiming true expertise in Aquinas' philosophical system, even though he tended to agree with its essence. In addressing Bergson's philosophical realism, which Gorce contrasted with a superb and solipsistic idealism, Foix quoted the philosopher's reflection at length:

16 This comparison between Bergson and Pascal is mentioned by the Bergsonian philosopher Douchan Nedelkovitch in *La pensée philosophique créatrice de Pascal* (1925, 39), which belonged to Foix's personal library (*Foi-8-270*, BNC, Biblioteca de Catalunya. Barcelona).

> If I must choose between these two "-isms", I do not doubt for an instant: it is to realism, and to the most radical realism, to which I adhere my points of view. I have never been able to consider knowledge a construction, and this is why, even before my reflections about the present time that guided me and that I outlined in the introduction of *La pensée et le mouvement* [*sic*], I had already rejected Kantism long before the time when the *Critique of Pure Reason* began to inspire an almost religious respect among philosophers. (2)[17]

In the concluding paragraph of his talk at the Sant Lluc Artistic Circle, Foix emphasized that creativity, guided by an understanding of reality akin to his and Bergson's, frees nature from the constraints of mechanical determinism and necessity imposed by rational, discursive thought. An interpretation of Bergson mediated by Christian dogmatics, such as Maritain's 'creative intuition', would keep the communicative pathways between creature and creator, relying on the sempiternal idea that the human being is an "*ens finitum capax infiniti*" (Duch 2012, 129). This is what Foix meant when he said that supernaturalist poets greet the presence of divine magic. Lacking straightforward Revelation to inspire his actions, the poet reaffirmed that his commitment to realism and to a multiplicity of sources and styles stemmed, ultimately, from his enduring rejection of inertial dogmatism and pious doctrinarism, whether from the Parisian Pope of surrealism or the Roman Church – in favor of sincerity and originality.

17 Bergson's cited book is *La pensée et le mouvant* (1934), the last collection of articles and talks published during his lifetime. The philosopher argued that the "relativity of knowledge" imposed by the Kantian transcendentalization of reality obstructs the epistemic pursuits of metaphysics and psychology. In his struggle against what appeared to be an overwhelming force, Bergson contended that the habituation to Kantian thought was nothing more than an accidental, acquired condition: "[These habits] place us in the presence of a reality that is either distorted or reformed, in any case arranged; but this arrangement does not impose itself on us inevitably; it comes from us; what we have done, we can undo; and thus we come into direct contact with reality" (Bergson [1934] 1950, 22).

7 Conclusion: Realistic Commitment

In 1985, Foix headed "The Station", his last-ever written prose poem – or rather dictated, as he had lost his sight some years earlier – with the following epigraph: "*To live the Instant and to grasp the remnants of dream*" (*E*, 557). He regarded this as his lifelong motto and argued that humankind had to live each instant intensely and integrally. The poems are remnants, that is, excessive realities which emerge continuously, yet are not reducible to any other given reality. Thus, poetry is what allowed him to live such a life (Foix 2014, 76). This book has explored the aesthetic and creative intricacies of these excessive realities in which thought and practice converge. Rather than attempting to unravel the enigma of Foix's eclecticism, its purpose has been to understand the poet's rationale for championing a transformative poetology – one not only addressed to himself and not exclusively directed to writers, but to humanity as a whole. Thus, he offfered a universal standpoint for navigating life amid the upheavals of the century.

Through an initial examination of the semantic field of the metaphor of darkness, the investigation showcased that decentering,

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-924-5/007

camouflage, and transformation of poetic objects were the strategies that enabled the poet to craft what he regarded as 'likenesses' of reality. "The ambition of art and poetry would be to satisfy themselves as an immediate instrument of research" (*AC1965*, 156), he reminded his readers often. The discovery of reality's unity through the accumulation of obscure metaphors prompted the consideration of Foix's diverse poetic strategies as a cohesive whole, in which perennial twilight shatters the epistemological metaphor of light and darkness. The poet consistently stood at the threshold of illogical images, giving equal weight and attention to lived, felt, read, and imagined realities. Despite the lack of specific hermeneutic keys pointing to precise biographical references in his poems, the meaningful interpretation of motifs is still possible – motifs that, though obscure, recur throughout his works.

Foix's materials were drawn from a wide range of sources, including the mind and the senses, daily life as well as oneiric visions. Poetic reality is thus revealed as wondrous, complex, ever-changing, and overflowing with captivating and enigmatic beauties, yet always elusive and perplexing. The exploration of this theme is consistent in *Gertrudis* and *KRTU*, where he experimented with styles and images cherished by cubists, dadaists, and surrealists. In *Alone, and Mourning* and in *The Unreal Omegas*, Foix delved deeper into the theme of poetic incoherence, further experimenting with form and style, particularly through the invocation of medieval *trobar clus* and classical sonnet. The invariable grammar of his research is shaped by the accumulation of all these references: above any particular style, he prioritized a unitarian understanding of reality as an ever-growing, all-encompassing complexity.

In his efforts to provide a stable representation of the uniqueness and interdependency of plural reality, Foix materialized multiplicity within each poetic unit. He obstinately combined darkness, dreams, desires, and ideas, with fleeting, mundane, and sensual elements. This practice was inevitably contradictory and fragmentary. It was, as he declared, "a defeated protest" (*K*, 40), but also "*a cry of liberty*" (*LCS*, 6). It was therefore the product of his challenging but uninterrupted pursuit of knowledge about both himself and the world, shaped and mediated by the recurring experiences of frustration, both in poetry and in life.

In the course of his poetry research, whether in the voluptuous sensualities and bitter prayers of *Alone, and Mourning*, or in the uncanny texts of *Daybook 1918*, Foix put into practice a creative proposal that aspired to challenge the aesthetic dogmatism of his time. On the one hand, he despised the conventional formalism and lyrical affectation of academic poetry, as symbolists and avant-gardists generally did. On the other hand, he rejected subjecting his creative process to the doctrine of any school or power that could, in his view,

reduce reality to a limited set of phenomena and replace it entirely with mental products. Each displacement, each transformation, and each failure – that is, each poem – became a constituent component of a poetic reality that, due to his continuous and interconnected creative process, was discovered as a likeness of reality. The poet's meticulous transformation of objects and spaces is crucial, as it allowed him to avoid an ideal – according to him, merely mental – fixation of reality, while also preventing the automatization of conventional poetic strategies that might oversimplify the complex, entangled world.

In sum, Foix advocated for realism against "those who passionately cultivate infrarealism or the false copy of a reality, of a human notion of reality" (*AC1927*, 3; Venuti, 136 [OC 4, 33]). Aiming to explain the family resemblance of his poetology to the aesthetics of surrealism and religious poetry, and seeking to provide a more complex account of Foix's understanding of poetic reality and knowledge, this book thoroughly scrutinized the objects, techniques, practices, and standpoint of his obstinate and incessant poetry research. For the poet, such research would be capable of corresponding to the mobility and variability of reality by means of the proliferation of images that accumulate but make no claim to authority over any definitive or total image of the whole. This is perhaps the meaning of the speaker's confession to Clara Sobirós:

> *The poet, magician, word-speculator, pilgrim of the invisible, unsatisfied, adventurer or researcher on the border of sleep, expects nothing for himself. He doesn't florify, or competitionify, or try to please the little old ladies.* [...] *He'd paste up his poems at dawn, like anonymous posters on the walls, or fling them off rooftops. He'd freely show his displeasure with the great, the satisfied, the settled, the contented, at widows chaste and resigned. The poet knows every poem is a cry of liberty.* (*LCS*, 6; Rosenthal, 3)

Foix's creative activity spanned from before 1918 to 1985. Beyond topics, genres, and styles, his work was a tireless engagement with the proliferation of concrete, obscure likenesses – real, material instances of the world's objects, whether seen, heard, or imagined. The visible and the invisible, oneiric visions and newspaper headlines, fountains and trains: these were the materials of an activity always deeply rooted in the present. Each new adventure into the unknown and every recollection bears striking resemblance: the speaker, a singular manifestation of the author's fragmented personality, sets sail for the cove near his town, or to the tiny, rocky island offshore; he navigates urban streets and traverses gentle hills; he reaches the coastline and feels the foamy sea with his feet, just like the rocks beneath and around him; he takes the train back home. The journey itself constitutes the substance of poetry research, and its material,

fixed forms – the poems – become fleeting likenesses of the complex and plural reality. In the face of disorientation, transformation, displacement, and frustration, the speaker is forced to return, in a *refoulement* of his original ambition. This suspension amidst doubt and uncertainty, however, was what intoxicated Foix and enabled him to push the research further, against all odds, with a glimmer of hope. By highlighting a fragile poetic standpoint and a practice that were neither complete nor purely individual, Foix's life and work aligned with a broad range of experimental practices – both artistic and otherwise – that reflected the expanded concepts of poetry and art that flourished in the twentieth century. As he said:

> *I find it difficult to define a poet – the world is full of them, but they don't write.* (*LCS*, 5; Rosenthal, 3)

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This book offers a comprehensive interpretation of the literary and journalistic works of the poet J.V. Foix (1893-1987), who described his endeavor as a 'poetry research' and articulated a realist and unitarian poetology. It clarifies his position in the fragmentary panorama of the avant-garde and revises traditional surrealist readings of his works. Poetic objects, or 'likenesses,' are the constituent elements of a practice of accumulation of fragments. These likenesses lead him – and us – to an ever-renewing adventure toward the encounter with the common and the unbelievable alike. The book appeals to students, literary critics, and aesthetics scholars interested in modern poetics of knowledge.

Sergi Castella-Martinez earned his PhD in Humanities (Aesthetics, Hermeneutics, and Religion) at Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona, in 2023. He specializes in the intersection of modern literature, particularly the Catalan and French avant-gardes, and medieval philosophy and religion. His dissertation explored the creative dialogue between J.V. Foix (1893-1987) and Ramon Llull (1232-1316), to enquire about the afterlife of the philosopher's contemplative practice in modern, artistic poetics of knowledge. His research has been published in *Romance Quarterly*, *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, the *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, and *Revista de la Sociedad Española de Ciencias de las Religiones*.

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