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

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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)

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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.