6 "Some Considerations" on the Poetic Standpoint

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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

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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).